

## TITLE

## A Quest for Healthy Lifestyle and Learning Experience in Olive Oil Tourism

## ABSTRACT

Olive oil tourism is an emerging tourism avenue and it has recently garnered attention owing to health-related benefits of olive oil. Prior research has investigated olive oil tourists' characteristics, their motivations for olive oil tourism and drivers for satisfaction in the context of traditional markets, such as Spain and Italy. However, there is scant research understanding olive oil tourists' experiences in emerging markets, such as the US. This void is important to fill as olive oil tourists in emerging markets may be different from those in traditional markets in terms of their knowledge in and consumption of olive oil. Drawing on the experience economy framework, the authors show that education (vs. aesthetics, entertainment, and escapist) is more closely related to satisfaction among US olive oil tourists. Olive oil tourism marketers may want to emphasize learning aspects of olive oil tourism via open-house tastings at olive mills, production tours, free sampling of various olive oils and food pairings.

Keywords: olive oil; olive oil tourism; wine tourism; experience economy; California wine countries

## INTRODUCTION

*"If my cuisine were to be defined by just one taste, it would be that of subtle, aromatic, extra-virgin olive oil"* – Alain Ducasse

Olive oils are increasingly present on dining tables, in kitchen pantries and grocery stores. The global consumption of olive oil has nearly doubled from 1.7 million tons in 1990 to 3.1 million tons in 2020 (International Olive Council, 2014; Statista, 2021a). Mirroring this rising demand for olive oil, the global production of olive oil has also doubled from 1.5

million tons in 1990 to 3.2 million tons in 2020 (International Olive Council, 2016; Statista, 2021b). Both production and consumption of olive oil are concentrated in the Mediterranean countries (e.g., Spain, Italy, and Greece) and such countries are considered traditional olive oil markets (Roselli, Carlucci, & De Gennaro, 2016). For instance, those three countries account for 65% of the global production and 40% of the global consumption of olive oil (International Olive Council, 2014). While the growth rate of olive oil consumption in traditional markets has been stalled, non-traditional markets, including the US, Asia, and Russia have witnessed a dramatic rise in demand for olive oil. In particular, the US consumed 322,200 tons of olive oil in 2017 with an approximately 250% increase in 15 years (“Olivae 126,” 2020).

Olive oil tourism, as a new tourism niche, has been discussed in the literature with the focus on traditional olive oil geographies. For example, the extant literature has primarily investigated in the context of Spain, Greece, and Italy (e.g., de la Torre, Arjona-Fuentes, & Amador-Hidalgo, 2017; de Salvo, Hernández Mogollón, Di Clemente, & Calzati, 2013; Kizos & Vakoufaris, 2011; López-Guzmán, Cañero, Moral, & Orgaz-Agüera, 2016; Marchini, Riganelli, & Diotallevi, 2016; Menozzi, 2014; Sabbatini et al., 2016). However, an examination of non-traditional markets for olive oil tourism is limited (for notable exceptions, see Alonso, 2010, Alonso & Krajsic, 2013, Alonso & Northcote, 2010, and Northcote & Alonso, 2011 in the context of Australia). This knowledge gap is vexing in light of the rising demand for olive oil and a growing consumer awareness in non-traditional olive oil markets (Roselli et al., 2016; Xiong, Sumner, & Matthews, 2014),

Prior research indicates that findings from traditional olive oil markets might not generalize to emerging markets (Roselli et al., 2016). Consumers in emerging markets may differ from their counterparts in traditional markets in terms of knowledge in olive oil and experiences in olive oil tourism. In both traditional and emerging olive oil regions, wine and

olive oil venues are closely located as wine grapes and olives require similar growing conditions (Allegretto Vineyard Resort, 2016). Therefore, this research examines the experiences of US tourists visiting wine tourism venues in California. The purpose of this study is to address the following questions: Are wine tourists in California aware of olive oil tourism and how many of them have experienced olive oil tourism? If they have, how satisfied are they with olive oil tourism? Along with these questions, demographics and tripographics of California olive oil tourists are captured.

To frame the study, the current status of olive oil production and consumption in the US, the definition of olive oil tourism and its relationship with rural tourism, gastronomic tourism, sustainable tourism, and wine tourism are discussed. Then, recent literature on olive oil tourism and our theoretical framework based on experience economy theory (Pine & Gilmore, 1998) are presented. The experience economy framework has long been applied to various contexts in the hospitality and tourism industry, including wine tourism (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). This framework is also relevant to olive oil tourism due to its similarities with the experiential aspects of wine tourism. Survey results are presented and implications for stakeholders in the olive oil tourism industry are discussed.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Olive Oil Production and Consumption in the US

The US olive oil companies use two value chains. The first value chain consists of small-scale olive growers using traditional production systems. Although this segment accounts for about 90% of the nation's olive farms, they only produce 20% of US total production (US International Trade Commission, 2013). These farms create niche products which are typically expensive and available at farmer's markets, high-end boutique stores, or over the Internet. On the other hand, the second value chain consists of a small number of

medium and large olive mills using super-high-density (SHD) production systems. Although this production segment accounts for about 10% of the nation's olive farms, they generate 80% of the total US production, and their products are often available in large retail establishments (US International Trade Commission, 2013).

US olive oil production has grown significantly over the past decade. The total olive-bearing acreage devoted to olive oil production is 45,000 acres (American Olive Oil Producers Association, 2021). Nonetheless, the US remains a minor global producer of olives, as it ranks at the 13<sup>th</sup> place worldwide (Atlas Big, 2021). Olive trees can grow only in warmer parts of the US, and 99% of the total US olive oil production is from California, specifically Central Valley. In 2012, there were about 700 olive growers in California (US International Trade Commission, 2013). Outside California, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, and Texas have begun producing olives for oil (US International Trade Commission, 2013).

Despite this increasing production, US-produced olive oil only accounts for 3 percent of its domestic consumption. Olive oil was the fourth most consumed oil by volume in 2009. In 2011, 40% of US households used olive oil mainly for cooking, marinating, and as dressings (US International Trade Commission, 2013). The primary driver of olive oil consumption in the US is health-related benefits. Olive oil is low in saturated fat and high in Omega-3 fatty acids that help reduce heart-related diseases. Unlike some other vegetable oils (e.g., canola oil), olive oil is rich in antioxidants and polyphenols. In addition to these health-related benefits, a decreasing retail price contributes to the rising olive oil consumption in the US (US International Trade Commission, 2013).

What is Olive Oil Tourism?

Olive oil tourism is defined as “a form of tourism, especially in rural areas, related to gastronomy, which allows the essence of the culture encompassing the world of the olive to be captured while deepening knowledge about everything connected to olive oil: food,

accommodation in typical architecture integrated into the orchards, beauty and health treatments, relaxation, etc.” (Millán, Arjona, & Amador, 2014, p. 180). By this definition, it is suggested that olive oil tourism incorporates three types of tourism: rural tourism, gastronomic tourism, and sustainable tourism. First, rural tourism is defined as tourism in a “non-urban territory where any human activity is going on, primarily agriculture; a permanent human presence seems a qualifying requirement” (Dernoi, 1991, p. 4). Rural tourism features the rural geography’s special features, small-scale enterprises, natural environments, open space, and sustainability (Reichel, Lowengart, & Milman, 2000). Olive oil tourism takes place in olive mills or orchards in rural areas and, thus, can be considered one kind of rural tourism.

Second, drawing on Long (1998), gastronomic tourists are those engaging in “intentional, exploratory participation in the food” (p. 181). Olive oil tourists can also be viewed as gastronomic tourists as visits to mills, oil tastings, mill breakfasts, and production tours are tied to the gastronomic tourism (Millán et al., 2014). Third, sustainable tourism meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Garrod & Fyall, 1998). Olive oil tourism can be considered sustainable tourism due to its contribution to the local economy by synchronizing the interests of visitors, the environment, and the local community. According to the European Forum of Olive Regions, olive groves make contributions to areas of great environmental and scenic value as they generate employment and income in the rural areas.

More importantly, olive oil tourism is related to wine tourism. Vineyards in California are adjacent to olive mills as they both require similar growing conditions (Allegretto Vineyard Resort, 2016). Like wine grapes, olives grow well in warm temperature (US International Trade Commission, 2013). Figure 1 shows wine production regions in California and olives are mainly grown in six regions in California: North Coast, Central

Coast, South Coast, Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, and Sierra Foothills. Napa and Sonoma counties are the most popular counties not only for wine tourism but also for olive oil tourism (Olmsted, 2017). Furthermore, wine grape growers tend to grow olives and harvest them during their non-peak seasons for wine grapes and regard olives as ancillary crops. For such reasons, wine tourists might have occasions to tour olive mills or orchards and taste local olive oils with bread, pasta, and wines. This gives the authors a justification for recruiting wine tourists to gauge their awareness and experiences in olive oil tourism.

[Insert Figure 1 around here]

#### Recent Literature in Olive Oil Tourism

Table 1 shows a summary of recent literature in olive oil tourism. Seven articles focus on traditional olive oil markets as study contexts. Four articles, on the other hand, focus on a non-traditional market, Australia. It is noteworthy that only two studies surveyed tourists about their satisfaction with olive oil tourism, while the rest focused on olive oil suppliers and demand forecasting. As such, it is evident that there is a lack of knowledge regarding olive oil tourists' experiences and their perceptions in the emerging markets such as the US.

[Insert Table 1 around here]

#### Theoretical Framework: Experience Economy Theory

Pine and Gilmore (1998, 1999) proposed the experience economy framework in highlighting a paradigm shift from the service economy (delivering services) to experience economy (delivering unique, special experiences). Pine and Gilmore (1999) contended that experiences are different for each individual has his/her personal and unique way of engaging in experiences. They suggested four experience components – education, esthetics, entertainment, and escapist experience. These four components are defined in conjunction with two dimensions of experience, namely, absorption-immersion and passive-active participation. For instance, entertainment experience such as watching TV shows is a

combination of absorption with passive participation, whereas education experience is a combination of absorption with active participation.

Later work has applied the experience economy framework to various industry sectors in hospitality and tourism (e.g., Chang & Lin, 2015; Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung, 2007; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013; Quan & Wang, 2004; Song, Lee, Park, Hwang, & Reisinger, 2015). Such an application of the experience economy framework to hospitality and tourism contexts is justified as creating unique and memorable experiences is an integral part of hospitality and tourism companies (Oh et al., 2007; Quan & Wang, 2004). Particularly, characterized by its hedonic aspect, wine tourism is suitable for experience economy framework (Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Pikkemaat, Peters, Boksberger, & Secco, 2009; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). The absorption/active nature of education experience in wine tourism is evident by wine-food pairing events, wine tasting, and home winemaking seminars (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). The absorption/passive nature of the entertainment aspect is manifested by wine festivals, shows and demonstrations of wine blending at a winery. On the other hand, winescape, including rural driveways and rural landscape surrounding wineries, shows the immersive nature of esthetic experience. At a more active end is the escapist experience where wine tourists pick and crush wine grapes. By taking part in the process of winemaking, they feel engrossed in a different time or place (Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013).

The present study suggests that olive oil tourism has all four experience components. Specifically, learning how to extract oil from olives and how to evaluate olive oil in terms of flavor and taste comprises education experience. Escapist experience manifests as olive mills and groves are usually located in rural areas far from the center of cities. Entertainment experience such as watching olive oil growers pick ripe olives and esthetics experience such as being surrounded by natural sceneries are also prominent during olive oil tourism. Consequently, all the four experience components are related to satisfaction, defined as a

global assessment following a consumption experience or a destination visit (Oh & Parks, 1997).

This study further proposes that the education experience is more closely related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism than the other three experience components. In their exploratory survey, López-Guzmán et al. (2016) find that one of the primary motivations for a visit to Spain among olive oil tourists is to get to know more about the region and olive oil. Menozzi (2014) finds that consumers generally do not know that olive is one kind of traditional food. The lack of knowledge in olive oil is manifested in purchase decisions. For instance, consumers rely on heuristics such as the quality label certification and the origin of raw material in purchasing extra-virgin olive oil (Menozzi, 2014). Particularly, most US consumers are not aware of a wide range of options regarding olive oil, including grades and flavour attributes and tend to base their olive oil purchase decisions on price as a proxy for quality (Butler, 2014; Humphreys & Carpenter, 2018; Roselli et al., 2016; Santosa, Clow, Sturzenberger, & Guinard, 2013; US International Trade Commission, 2013). This research proposes that consumers in non-traditional markets, such as the US, are not well-informed about olive oil and thus education experience in olive oil tourism is more positively related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism than esthetics, escapist, and entertainment. Formally, this research puts forth the following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1 [H1].** Education experience component in olive oil tourism is positively related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism.

**Hypothesis 2 [H2].** Esthetics experience component in olive oil tourism is positively related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism.

**Hypothesis 3 [H3].** Entertainment experience component in olive oil tourism is positively related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism.



**Hypothesis 4 [H4].** Escapist experience component in olive oil tourism is positively related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism.

**Hypothesis 5 [H5].** The positive relationship between education experience component (vs. esthetics, entertainment, and escapist experience components) and satisfaction with olive oil tourism is greater.

## METHOD

### Sampling and Data Collection

Self-administered questionnaires were used, and 479 participants were recruited via Qualtrics, an online consumer panel company. Individuals who resided in the US and have experienced wine tourism in California in the past 12 months were invited to participate in survey. Among 479 participants, 210 of them have experienced olive oil tourism in California in the past 12 months. As a speeding check, participants were screened out if they took less than one-third of the median time for the entire survey. The median time was 8.44 minutes. Participants were asked questions based on their last olive oil tourism in California, followed by demographic questions. Participants were given the definition of olive oil tourism as follows: olive oil tourism involves any of the following activities: (i) a tour of an olive grove, farm, or mill, (ii) a visit to a olive oil tasting room, or (iii) other tours of an olive growing region. All participants received monetary compensation.

### Measures

Sixteen items representing four experience economy components were adopted from previous literature (Oh et al., 2007; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). Items for education ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ), esthetics ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ), entertainment ( $\alpha = 0.86$ ), and escapist components ( $\alpha = 0.91$ ) all exhibited high levels of internal consistency. All items were measured on a 7-point scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Overall satisfaction was measured with three items ( $\alpha = 0.93$ ; bi-polar, 7-point scale; Oh et al., 2007; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013). Two pilot

studies were conducted to ensure clarity of questions and reliability of the measurement items. Data for the two pilot tests (n = 91) were collected via Qualtrics panel. Across two pilot tests, one item from esthetics (i.e., “The setting was pretty bland.”) decreased reliability and thus this item was dropped for the main test. All measures for the main test are shown in Appendix.

## RESULTS

### Demographics and Tripographics

Participants' age ranged from 18 to 78 (Mean [ $M$ ] = 39, Standard Deviation [ $SD$ ] = 15). Forty-four percent of them were male, 48 percent of them had a college degree, and 41 percent of them had annual household income from \$40,000 to \$79,999. The demographic profile of our participants is in Table 2. Thirty-six percent of our participants had their last trip in the past three months and 38 percent of them stayed 1-2 nights during their last trip. Fifty-eight percent of them traveled with family or significant others.

Chi-square tests were run to compare wine tourists with an experience in olive oil tourism (hereafter, olive oil tourists) and their counterparts without such an experience (hereafter, wine tourists) in terms of demographics and tripographics. In terms of gender ( $\chi^2$  (1,  $N = 479$ ) = 0.09,  $p > 0.1$ ) and income ( $\chi^2$  (8,  $N = 479$ ) = 12.04,  $p > 0.1$ ), olive oil tourists did not differ from wine tourists. However, regarding education, olive oil tourists were different from wine tourists,  $\chi^2$  (4,  $N = 479$ ) = 13.62,  $p < 0.01$ . While olive oil tourists are more dispersed across high school, some college education, college degree, and graduate school, wine tourists have more frequencies on college education. In terms of the number of trips made to wine countries in California in the past one year, olive oil tourists were different from wine tourists,  $\chi^2$  (2,  $N = 479$ ) = 24.19,  $p < 0.01$ . Olive oil tourists (vs. wine tourists) made more frequent trips to wine countries in California. In addition, the average length of trip among olive oil tourists (vs. wine tourists) is longer,  $\chi^2$  (3,  $N = 479$ ) = 17.31,  $p < 0.01$ . In terms of travel companion, though, olive oil tourists did not differ from wine tourists,  $\chi^2$  (4,  $N = 479$ ) = 3.27,  $p > 0.1$ .

[Insert Table 2 around here]

### Regression Analysis

To test H1-4, a multiple linear regression was conducted with four experience economy components for olive oil tourism as predictor variables and overall satisfaction with olive oil tourism as a response variable. All predictor variables were mean-centered before entered into the regression model. As a result, the overall model was significant ( $F(4, 205) = 41.92, p < 0.01$ ) with adjusted  $R$ -square of 0.44, indicating that four experience economy components as a whole accounted for 44% of the total variance of overall satisfaction. Multicollinearity was checked with tolerance, variance inflation factor (VIF), and condition index (Hair et al., 2010). Specifically, tolerance values ranged from .29 to .43, and VIF values ranged from 2.32 to 3.48. None of the tolerance values was close to 0, and any VIF value was not close to 10. The highest value in the condition index was 4.05, lower than the cut-off value of 30. In sum, multicollinearity is not salient.

Among four experience economy components, education (unstandardized coefficient [ $b$ ] = 0.32, Standard Error [ $SE$ ] = 0.09,  $t(205) = 3.58, p < 0.01$ ) and esthetics components ( $b = 0.25, SE = 0.10, t(205) = 2.40, p < 0.05$ ) were statistically significant. On the other hand, entertainment ( $b = 0.12, SE = 0.09, t(125) = 1.28, p > 0.05$ ) and escapist components ( $b = 0.05, SE = 0.05, t(205) = 0.87, p > 0.05$ ) were not statistically significant. Regression results are shown in Table 3 and Figure 2. Thus, H1 and H2 are supported, but H3 and H4 are not supported.

[Insert Table 3 around here]

[Insert Figure 2 around here]

To test H5, 95% confidence intervals were computed using a bootstrap procedure (1,000 re-samples; bias-corrected). In comparing the coefficients of education and esthetics components, half of the average of the overlapping confidence intervals was calculated (0.245) then added to the lower bound estimate of education component (0.083), resulting in 0.328. The upper bound estimate of esthetics component was 0.456, exceeding the value of

0.328. Thus, the difference between education and esthetics components in terms of the unstandardized regression coefficient was not significant. Using such procedures (e.g., Cumming, 2009), a difference in coefficients of education and entertainment components was marginally significant ( $0.236 + 0.083 = 0.319$ , compared with 0.313). But, a difference in coefficients for education and escapist components was significant ( $0.188 + 0.083 = 0.271$ , compared with 0.147). In conclusion, H5 is partially supported.

#### Coding of respondents' comments

This section is to supplement our findings from regression that educational experiences are a crucial part of olive oil tourism. We manually coded our respondents' comments on their last olive oil tourism experience. We made such comments optional to reduce respondents' fatigue. As a result, 61 respondents wrote comments based on their last olive oil tourism experience. As multiple themes are allowed per respondent, there is a total of 64 counts of themes (Table 4). Based on coding of their comments, we draw a conclusion that educational experiences of olive oil tourism may stem from tasting olive oils (35.9%), trying out related products (e.g., food pairing) (10.9%), and watching people demonstrate how olives are harvested and processed (9.4%). Educational experiences manifest when respondents stated that they learned a lot especially from tasting different types of olive oils, knowing how to judge good quality of oils, knowing different uses of olive oils, and even buying olive oils at the site:

*"We toured the olive grove and sampled some of the olives and olive oil. We learned a lot, due to my husband's interest in having us experience olive oil and grove tourism. It was an unforgettable experience. I liked sampling the olives and olive oils."*

*"I liked it, they let us sample olive oil with bread and everything, and I learned how to recognize quality olive oil. I chose the destination because it was offered to me at the time and was most convenient for me on my trip to California."*

*"That was a fun experience and I learned so much quality information. It was very informative on not only being able to taste the different varieties and learn about different ways to use and experiment with the different products."*

Our respondents also stated that by watching people demonstrate how olives are harvested, picked, processed for oil they learned more about olive oils. Compared with most consumers just being exposed to the end product of olive oils in grocery stores, our respondents get to see the entire supply chain of olive oils:

*“My last olive oil tourism experience was amazing. We went to olive oil family own farmers and saw the progress of what it takes to make a fine bottle of olive oil. My family and I choose this destination to try something out of the ordinary.”*

*“We saw how the olives are harvested, and watched the process of extracting the oil. I loved the tasting and have purchased California olive oil for the past several years as I feel it is the safest. We were already nearby in Napa so we visited the olive oil farm.”*

Educational experiences discussed above are inextricably related to novelty of olive oil tourism. When people try something that they have not done before, they may feel like that they have ‘learned’ something. Two following quotes resonate with the close relationship between learning and novelty of olive oil tourism:

*“We stopped at an olive oil store where they had samples of the different types of olive oils they were making. I had never been in a shop like this before and you actually were able to taste the different types of olive oils and it was wonderful. They had very unique flavors to taste as well.”*

*“We were out visiting local wineries and stopped at an olive oil tasting room. It was interesting as I had never been at a place like that before.”*

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Recently, olive oil tourism in California has grown dramatically. Ojai olive oil, Olive Hill Farm, Pasolivo, and McEvoy Ranch are olive oil tourism venues in California, all of which are adjacent to vineyards. Accordingly, tourists may enjoy a tour of olive mills and vineyards and olive oil/wine tasting (Olmsted, 2017; Tailwind, 2016; Vora, 2015). Olive oil tourism is a relevant research topic due to consumers’ growing concern in health and traceability of products in the US (Butler, 2012). Thus, the purpose of this research is to extend the experience economy framework to olive oil tourism by surveying tourists in California wine countries. Surveying wine tourists in California is justified as wine grape

growing regions are closely located to olive mills and orchards, and in fact, some of the vineyards in California offer olive oil tasting as well as wine tasting for visitors. As such, olive oil and wine tourism may create a synergistic effect in the local economy.

### Theoretical Implications

This research advances our understanding of factors influencing satisfaction with olive oil tourism among US consumers. The literature in olive oil tourism has dominantly examined the traditional Mediterranean markets (e.g., de la Torre et al., 2017; López-Guzmán et al., 2016; Marchini et al., 2016; Millán et al., 2014; Sabbatini et al., 2016). However, little is known about the emerging markets, including the US. This gap needs to be bridged to understand differences in consumers' knowledge and preferences for various attributes of olive oil in the emerging and traditional markets. Importantly, this research extends the experience economy framework to the olive oil tourism context. Doing so is justified because (1) olive oil tourism is experience-based offerings and (2) the experience economy framework has been applied to various tourism and service industry contexts including lodging (Oh et al., 2007), rural tourism (Loureiro, 2014), cruise (Hosany & Witham, 2009), temple stay (e.g., Song et al., 2015), festival (e.g., Manthiou, Lee, Tang, & Chiang, 2014; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Park, Oh, & Park, 2010), museum (Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Radder & Han, 2015), cultural tourism (e.g., Rijal & Ghimire, 2016) and wine tourism (e.g., Pikkemaat et al., 2009; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2013).

Specifically, the findings from this paper are congruent with previous work showing the importance of education in tourist experience (Hwang & Lyu, 2015; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011; Radder & Han, 2015). Hwang and Lyu (2015) surveyed amateur golfers in the US and found that education, escapist, and entertainment components are related to their well-being. Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) show that education and esthetics are related to satisfaction in the museum context. In a similar vein, Radder and Han (2015) find that

education and entertainment components are related to satisfaction and behavioral intention in the heritage museum context. In short, the importance of education is apparent in the museum, sports training, as well as this current research context, olive oil tourism.

Furthermore, this research shows that esthetics is the second to education in shaping satisfaction with olive oil tourism. This finding is congruent with Loureiro (2014) in that consumers evaluate the esthetics of rural tourism more highly than the other three experience components. As olive oil tourism can be viewed as one kind of rural tourism, esthetics is an important element of satisfaction. In the context of wine tourism, intentions to revisit and recommend are more closely related to esthetics than the other three experience components (Quadri, 2012). As discussed in this research, some wine tourists visit olive oil tourism venues as such venues are located close to wine tourism venues and some of the wine grape producers also harvest olives (Allegretto Vineyard Resort, 2016). In this regard, it may not be surprising that esthetics is highly valued among both wine and olive oil tourists.

In light of a close relationship between wine tourism and olive oil tourism, it is noteworthy to explicate contributions of this paper to the wine tourism literature. From the supply side, Bruwer (2003) investigates wine routes, a variety of wine grapes, sizes of vineyard, ownership structure, and a variety of facilities in wine routes in South Africa. From the demand side, Brown and Getz (2005) find that consumers tend to choose a destination for wine tourism based on their preferences for certain origins of wine (e.g., France). Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2013) examine consumers' experiences upon choice of a wine tourism destination. The authors reveal that education and esthetics components of experiences (vs. entertainment and escapist components) are positively associated with satisfaction with wine tourism. Such findings resonate with our findings that education and esthetics components are positively related to satisfaction with olive oil tourism.



In contrast, the relative importance of education and esthetics on satisfaction with olive oil tourism somewhat diverges from prior research in the cruise context (e.g., Hosany & Witham, 2009) and the festival context (e.g., Manthiou et al., 2014; Mehmetoglu & Engen, 2011). Hosany and Witham (2009) demonstrate that esthetics and entertainment components of the tourist experience are related to satisfaction and intention to recommend a cruise experience, while education and escapist components are not. Their findings may stem from the passive participation of cruise tourists and thus the two experiential dimensions requiring active participation (i.e., education and escapist) do not relate to satisfaction and intention to recommend a cruise experience. Conversely, olive oil tourism involves relatively more active participation among tourists (e.g., smelling, tasting and evaluating various olive oils), thereby leading to the importance of education. Similar to Hosany and Witham (2009), Mehmetoglu and Engen (2011) show that only esthetics is related to satisfaction in the music festival context. Such a finding is congruent with the nature of festivals highlighting esthetics, music, and nature.

#### Practical Implications

Findings from this research suggest that olive oil tourism marketers should emphasize learning aspects of olive oil tourism, thereby increasing visitors' satisfaction. Folgado, Hernández, and Campón (2011) suggest that gastronomic itineraries convey the knowledge of a particular native culinary specialty. As noted in our literature review, olive oil tourism can be understood in conjunction with gastronomic tourism. Thus, olive oil tourism stakeholders might want to consider educating consumers through open-house tastings at olive mills. Free sampling of various olive oils and pairings with some pantry items may also be useful in enhancing educational experiences. Marketing communications, such as booklets at olive tourism sites, could appeal to the educational value of olive oil tourism (e.g., "Discovering the world of olive oil, enriching your knowledge in olive oil"). For instance,

educational videos on how to evaluate olive oil quality and how to use olive oil for cooking are available in the California Olive Oil Council website. Online courses based on a compiled set of such videos may enable interested audience, such as wine tourists, to learn more about olive oil. Online learning opportunities are paramount in the pandemic period.

Since vineyards and olive groves share geographical areas (Caputo, 2018), pairing wine tourism programs with olive tourism programs (e.g., Round Pound Estate, Chancewater Winery & Olive Mill) might result in synergy in a local economy. Marketers in olive oil tourism take heed that the US olive oil markets are heterogeneous (Roselli et al., 2016). The US consumers' preferences for olive oil tourism are likely to be diverse and thus segmenting and targeting strategies are vital. Lastly, olive oil tourism and wine tourism managers may need to work closely together. As shown in Table 4, 14 percent of respondents who wrote a short essay about their last olive oil tourism experience indicated that olive oil tourism was part of wine tourism. Accordingly, we compared wine tourists (n=279) with olive oil tourists (n=210) in terms of tripographic and demographic characteristics. As wine and olive oil tourists are largely similar in terms of demographics, wine and olive oil tourism managers should maintain similar segmentation and targeting strategies based on demographic factors. Meanwhile, olive oil tourists have more frequent trips and stay longer than their wine tourists' counterparts and thus olive oil tourism managers may need to send promotional materials more frequently to their customers and design a package tour with an extended period of stay.

#### Limitations and Future Research

As with other studies, this research has several limitations, some of which open avenues for future research. Our sample is based on the US consumer panel, and as such, findings from this research might not generalize to consumers in other countries. This research suggests that similar findings might arise in other emerging markets where

consumers do not have sufficient knowledge in olive oil and thus value learning experiences of olive oil tourism. Nonetheless, it might be illuminating to validate our findings to other countries. It is also meaningful to validate our findings concerning the importance of education by content analyzing online reviews from visitors to olive oil tourism venues.

In addition, it would be worthwhile to examine how informational and experiential familiarity with olive oil (e.g., Seo et al, 2013) moderate the relationships between the four components of experience and satisfaction with olive oil tourism. Specifically, consumers with high levels of familiarity with olive oil might not value the education component of olive oil tourism, and thus, other experiential forms may play a more important role in influencing visitor satisfaction. Future research may also consider comparing tourists' experiences in large scale olive farms with their counterparts in small scale olive farms.

Lastly, future research is needed to explore how olive oil tourism experience influences subsequent olive oil purchase behavior. As previous research is disparate in discussing olive oil tourism experience or olive oil purchase behavior separately, linking two research streams merits future investigations. Specifically, how consumers' knowledge in olive oil is enhanced from their olive oil tourism experience and the extent to which such enhanced knowledge is factored into subsequent olive oil purchase decisions may be illuminating topics. Such purchase decisions, in turn, may influence subsequent olive oil tourism experiences. The relationship between olive oil purchase and olive oil tourism experience can be bi-directional and its long-term relationship merits further investigations. In sum, we believe that there are considerable avenues for future research in olive oil tourism.

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Table 1.

*Relevant Literature in Olive Oil Tourism*

Reference	Region	Purpose
de Salvo et al. (2013)	Spain and Italy	Compare Spain and Italy in terms of stakeholders, development, and production of extra virgin olive oil
Marchini et al. (2016)	Umbria in Italy	Explore determinants of satisfaction with open oil mills event, including territorial aspects and product attributes using SEM
Millán et al. (2014)	Andalucía in Spain	Forecast the demand for olive oil tourism using an ARIMA model based on the five-year data
de la Torre et al. (2017)	Andalucía in Spain	Examine the profile of businesses and their assessments about the gastronomic route and olive oil via survey
Sabbatini et al. (2016)	Greece	Investigate determinants of purchase intention of Cretan olive oil, including sociodemographic and tripographic variables
López-Guzmán et al. (2016)	Andalucía in Spain	Survey tourists for their demographic profile, travel motivations and satisfaction with attributes in tourist destinations (e.g., accommodation, safety)
Alonso (2010) & Alonso and Northcote (2010)	Western Australia	Interview olive oil growers to investigate their cooperation with local hospitality and tourism businesses and challenges that growers face
Alonso and Krajsic (2013)	Australia	Describe the motivations and involvement of olive growers in Australia who are migrants from Mediterranean countries and challenges that they face
Northcote and Alonso (2011)	Western Australia	Explore factors influencing decisions on diversification in farming and auxiliary services in olive oil tourism
Menozzi (2014)	Emilia-Romagna in Italy	Examine strengths and weaknesses of extra-virgin olive oil production based on interviews with producers and determinants of willingness to pay, including production method and manufacturer location.

Table 2.

*Participant Demographics and Tripographics*

Demographics/ tripographics	Categories	Olive oil tourists n (%)	Wine tourists n (%)
Gender	Male	90 (42.9)	119 (44.2)
	Female	120 (57.1)	150 (55.8)
Income	Less than \$19,999	14 (6.7)	14 (5.2)
	\$20,000-\$39,999	33 (15.7)	55 (20.4)
	\$40,000-\$59,999	38 (18.1)	61 (22.7)
	\$60,000-\$79,999	46 (21.9)	51 (19.0)
	\$80,000-\$99,999	20 (9.5)	32 (11.9)
	\$100,000-\$119,999	20 (9.5)	20 (7.4)
	\$120,000-\$149,999	12 (5.7)	17 (6.3)
	\$150,000 or above	25 (11.9)	14 (5.2)
	Prefer not to say	2 (1.0)	5 (1.9)
Education	High school or equivalent	38 (18.1)	36 (13.4)
	Some college education	51 (24.3)	58 (21.6)
	College degree	82 (39.0)	146 (54.3)
	Graduate school/ professional degree	39 (18.6)	29 (10.8)
Most recent visit	Within three months	69 (32.9)	78 (29.0)
	Within six months	68 (32.4)	92 (34.2)
	Within one year	73 (34.8)	99 (36.8)
Length of stay during last olive oil tourism	A day trip, no overnight	80 (38.1)	59 (21.9)
	1-2 overnights	84 (40.0)	101 (37.5)
	3-4 overnights	26 (12.4)	83 (30.9)
	Five overnights or more	20 (9.5)	26 (9.7)

(Continued)

Table 2.

*Participant Demographics and Tripographics*

Demographics/ tripographics	Categories	Olive oil tourists n (%)	Wine tourists n (%)
Travel companion during last olive oil tourism	Alone	28 (13.3)	41 (15.2)
	With family members/ significant others	131 (62.4)	156 (58.0)
	With friend(s)	49 (23.3)	68 (25.3)
	With organized group tour	2 (1.0)	4 (1.5)
Total		210 (100.0%)	269 (100.0%)

Table 3.

*Multiple Linear Regression Results*

	Un- standardized regression coefficient	Standard error	Standardized regression coefficient	<i>t</i> - value	<i>p</i> - value	95% CI lower bound	95% CI upper bound
Constant	3.225E-6	0.05		0.00	1.00	-0.107	0.094
Education experience	0.32	0.09	0.33	3.58	< 0.01	0.083	0.637
Esthetics experience	0.25	0.10	0.23	2.40	0.02	0.029	0.456
Entertainment experience	0.12	0.09	0.12	1.28	0.20	-0.076	0.313
Escapist experience	0.05	0.05	0.07	0.87	0.39	-0.051	0.147

Table 4.

*Major Themes from Olive Oil Tourism Experience*

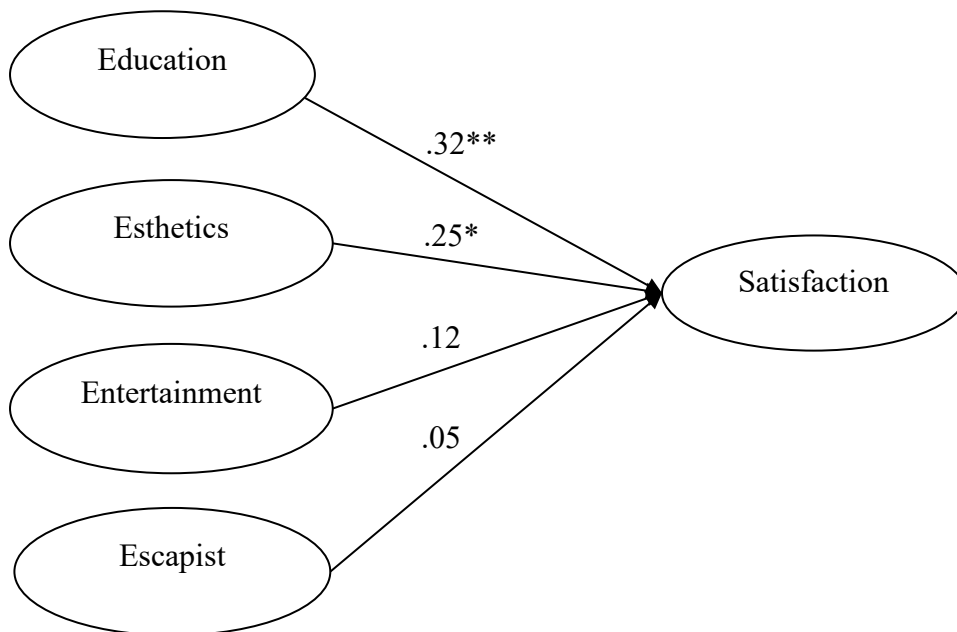
Themes	Number of responses	Percent of responses
Fun	7	10.9%
Novelty of experience	10	15.6%
Tasting olive oils	23	35.9%
Trying/ buying related products	7	10.9%
Restaurant going/ farmers market	2	3.1%
Demonstration (being harvested, processed, etc.)	6	9.4%
Part of wine tourism	9	14.1%
Total	64	100%

Note. Based on coding of 61 respondents. Multiple themes allowed per respondent (e.g., a respondent mentions novelty of experience and olive oil tasting).



Figure 1. California wine production regions. Adopted from “USA: California Wine Map,” by Wine Folly. Retrieved from <https://shop.winefolly.com/products/usa-california-wine-regions-map-poster>





\*\* $p < 0.01$  \* $p < 0.05$  Adjusted  $R^2 = 0.44$

Figure 2. Results from multiple linear regression

## Appendix. Measurement items

Construct	Items
Education experience	The experience has made me more knowledgeable
	I learned a lot
	It stimulated my curiosity to learn new things
Esthetics experience	It was a real learning experience
	I felt a real sense of harmony
	Just being there was very pleasant
Entertainment experience	The setting was very attractive
	Activities of others (e.g., farms, other consumers) were amusing to me
	Watching others perform was captivating
	I really enjoyed watching what others were doing
Escapist experience	Activities of others were fun to watch
	I felt I played a different character there
	I felt like I was living in a different time or place
	The experience there let me imagine being someone else
Satisfaction	I completely escaped from reality
	The overall experience of my most recent olive oil tourism makes me feel...
	Very dissatisfied-very satisfied
	Very displeased-very pleased
	Terrible-delighted