

The use of a semi-qualitative methodology in food tourism re- search: Different ways to satisfy a highly demanding tourist

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Abstract

When it comes to revitalizing rural areas and securing their population, food tourism can play a useful role. As such, there is a need for an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of the food tourism market, in order to better tailor it to tourists' demands. Accordingly, this paper centres on the analysis of satisfaction as a tool for better understanding these tourists and ensuring the tourism offer is appropriately oriented towards the elements that influence their satisfaction. To do so, this paper takes a subsector within this niche market and conducts a survey of food tourists, yielding a total of 489 responses. A semi-qualitative model is applied to those responses, with the sample divided into domestic and international tourists. The results show that international tourists' satisfaction relates to a comprehensive offer of activities, while the potential offer for domestic tourists is more flexible. These results can help to better understand the complex behaviour of tourists who engage in this type of tourism and to design adequate strategies to ensure their satisfaction, involving the provision of different sets of activities that take into account different tourist segments.

Keywords: Food tourism, Tourist satisfaction, Oleotourism, International tourism, Domestic tourism, fsQCA

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1. Introduction

Food tourism is currently one of the most important types of tourism and a major motivation for visiting a destination (Berbel-Pineda *et al.*, 2019). It can be understood as a sensory activity complemented by a series of ancillary resources, where the food and gastronomy of a given territory is the key attraction for the tourist (Kuhn *et al.*, 2023). Thus, the act of discovering, experiencing and tasting food in a destination is accompanied by other elements such as culture or tradition, allowing the tourist to engage in complementary activities (Ellis *et al.*, 2018; Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). This type of tourism provides a tool for management by opening up a market segment that can be tailored to local and regional circumstances, producing goods and services linked to agricultural production or the food industry (Hall and Gössling, 2016; Di-Clemente *et al.*, 2020), which will help these territories to achieve sustainable economic development and uphold their traditions (Everett and Aitchison, 2008). Therefore, public and private agents can use food tourism to revitalize their socioeconomic environment; to do so, however, a better understanding is needed of this tourism segment and its many unique features.

Food tourism is a critical segment of the tourism market in all the countries of the Mediterranean basin, with olive oil being a draw for many tourists and a key element in the local diet (Alonso and Krajsic, 2013; Rachão *et al.*, 2019). Within this area, Spain is one of the leading destinations for international tourists, many of whom cite the culinary richness of the country as one of the motivations for their visit (Hernández-Mogollón *et al.*, 2019; Barreal *et al.*, 2023). It is also the largest producer in the European Union (EU), accounting for 70% of Extra Virgin Olive Oil (EVOO) production, and almost 50% of global production (Barreal *et al.*, 2023). Beyond Spain, many areas in other countries such as Italy, Portugal, Greece, Tunisia and Argentina depend on the cultivation of olive trees, with combined exports of EVOO valued at around \$10 billion (Vilar, 2018). These countries are also beginning to develop food tourism markets (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023), given the numerous high-quality culinary resources in the agricultural sector that enable differentiation within the tourism sector (López-Guzmán and Sánchez-Cañizares, 2012). In Spain, notable examples include wine and ham, as well as fish and seafood products; in many cases, this country stands out as one of the world's leading producers. Indeed, while Spain is the foremost olive oil producing country (IOC, 2023), it is also the third most popular tourist destination in the world (UNWTO, 2021). This opens up a very large potential market within the tourism sector and offers a way of diversifying its activity, while at the same time enabling the olive oil industry to generate new sources of income.

An understanding of customer satisfaction is crucial to identify the factors that could alter the customer's perception of goods and services provided by a business, company or market. It has repercussions on brand reputation, positive word-of-mouth by customers and even consumption (Chen *et al.*, 2013). In terms of food tourism, although this topic has sparked huge interest in the recent literature (Okumus *et al.* 2018), little attention has been paid to the satisfaction of the food tourist. The few studies that have addressed it have tended to do so by measuring tourists' general satisfaction with the activities related exclusively to the culinary experience itself (e.g. Lai, 2020; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2021; Rachão *et al.*, 2021; Hernández-Rojas *et al.*, 2022). Some studies have examined how satisfaction with the destination can help in the co-creation of certain activities (Rachão *et al.*, 2021), while others have focused on the relationship between tourist satisfaction and interest in food and its quality (Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2021). Authors such as Lai (2020) explore tourists' satisfaction with different transactions carried out in the destination, while others simply analyse the overall experience (Hernández-Rojas *et al.*, 2022) However, all these studies have overlooked the fact that the different activities that can be carried out in a food tourism destination actually complement each other, even other types of activities unrelated to gastronomy (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). Nevertheless, there are no studies that attempt to analyse the entire set of activities that lead to the satisfaction of a culinary tourist, something that is of utmost importance given the variety of activities that can be done in this type

of destination (cultural, gastronomic, nature-based activities...) (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023).

For that reason, the objective of this study is to understand how food tourists' satisfaction is shaped by the different experiences that the destination can offer. To this end, the paper begins by reviewing the literature to formulate the research questions. The next section presents the sample with which the research is conducted; that is, the information collected from 489 tourists engaged in olive oil tourism in the province of Jaén (Spain). After the tourists had enjoyed their stay in the destination and the different culinary experiences that it offered, they were invited to take part in the survey, which asked them about their satisfaction with the different activities they had done during their stay. The methods employed are presented in the same section, with a description of the semi-qualitative fsQCA technique used to analyse the different combinations of activities that lead to tourist satisfaction, distinguishing between domestic and international tourists. The subsequent presentation and discussion of the results suggests that there are multiple ways to ensure the satisfaction of domestic tourists, whereas international tourists demand a complete experience to meet their expectations and thus be satisfied. The conclusions reached are outlined in the final section, from which a series of implications for academia and the management of food tourism destinations can be drawn. Whereas other studies have approached satisfaction in a more traditional way without knowing what specific activities lead to satisfaction or whether there are different combinations of activities that satisfy a culinary tourist, to the best of our knowledge, this paper represents the first attempt to study the satisfaction of food tourists taking into account different combinations of activities that they can do. This can open up a new avenue for research on satisfaction in food tourism, as well as related segments such as wine or beer tourism, where the main activity is complemented by a series of complementary activities that help shape the overall satisfaction of the tourist.

2. Literature review

2.1. *Introducing food tourism as a type of special interest tourism*

Food tourism is related to tourist activities that enable the discovery of and experimentation with foods that reflect local, regional or national food, heritage and culture, offering a unique and memorable experience (OCTA, 2015; WFTA, 2018). The main aspect that sets it apart is the focus on the culinary strengths of destinations; hence local food and dining plays a fundamental role in shaping food tourists' decisions when choosing a destination and their enjoyment of the experience (Kivela and Crofts, 2005). Since the last decades of the 20th century, there have been numerous scientific contributions that relate the management of culinary or food-based destinations with the tourism sector (e.g. Belisle, 1983; Elmont, 1995). In addition, during the first years of the 21st century, various articles were written that laid the foundations for food tourism research; for example, Kivela and Crofts (2006) highlighted the influence of gastronomy on the tourist experience, Hall and Sharples (2003) explored the development and management of food tourism, and Long (2004) examined the influence of food tourism on the local culture and population. Likewise, notable studies that examine the promotion of local identity and development of a territory through food tourism include those of Hall and Sharples (2003) or Carneiro (2014). The authors highlight the special influence of the local population on food tourism, since the landscape of food and gastronomy is interpreted by local producers and chefs; conversely, this tourism also has a direct impact on the local population. Thus, the promotion of the territory and the culinary wealth it contains is key to the development of a tourism market around the gastronomic products produced in said territory. Despite local differences, tourists' search for knowledge about the local culture focuses tourism experiences and contributes to the territorial development of these producing regions (Rachão *et al.*, 2019).

The definition of food tourism has not evolved smoothly over time. The Ontario Culinary Tourism Alliance (OCTA) and the World Food Travel Association (WFTA) moved away from the use of the term

culinary tourism, preferring the term food tourism as it focuses more on the offer (e.g. farms, artisanal producers, food facilities and factories) while culinary "*can sometimes have an exclusive or elitist ring to it*" (WFTA, 2018, p. 7). On the other hand, the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) adopted Hall and Mitchell's (2001) definition of food tourism as tourism motivated by tourist demands to do activities linked to the food sector, such as visiting food producers, restaurants or tasting food. Spaces for the consumption of food are thus becoming a new economic factor, undergoing a transformation from being merely the place of physical consumption to providing areas where the culture and the image of the destination is expressed (Kim *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the spaces that OCTA and WFTA have included in their expanded definition of food tourism are clear manifestations of the importance of a destination's food in guaranteeing a unique experience (UNWTO, 2012; OCTA, 2015).

Gastronomy plays a vital role in conveying the way of life in a territory, forming the basis for the supply and demand of new food products that highlight the local culture and that represent an additional factor to consider in tourist destination management (Armesto and Martín, 2006). A relevant aspect to highlight here is the importance of chefs with international recognition, such as Michelin stars (Rita *et al.*, 2022), as they can be seen as interpreters of the territory through food (UNWTO, 2012). The UNWTO (2012) identifies a number of resources and activities related to food tourism, such as visiting primary and secondary food producers, going to food festivals, visiting and eating in restaurants, bars and culinary spaces, buying or tasting food in specific food tasting locations, or the attributes of a specialist food production region (vineyards, olive groves, livestock...) (Alonso, 2010; Hall and Mitchell, 2001). All these activities account for a substantial proportion of a destination's tourism revenues (Eurostat, 2021), which in many regions represent an economic and social stimulus.

Food tourism also involves tourism experiences related to beverages. This field is mainly linked to wine-related activities but can also include other types of beverages such as beer or whiskey (Sthapit, 2017; Murray and Kline, 2018). Given its major relevance for the destinations in question, wine tourism is a very important field of research and is beginning to be seen as a standalone category in food tourism (Charters and Fountain, 2006). Also, part of the food tourism framework, olive oil tourism lies within a protected designation of origin where local customs and their relationship with gastronomy are crucial to the identity of the destination (Alonso, 2010; Alonso and Krajsic, 2013). This identity as a location of special interest, based on natural, cultural, ethnographic and above all culinary heritage, can be harnessed to offer the visitor a unique experience. Indeed, various studies have analysed the relationship between agri-food products associated with protected designations of origin and geographical indications and the potential for food tourism (Millán and Morales, 2012; Barreal and Jannes, 2021). Other studies point to local customs and gastronomy as keys to the development of unique experiences (Kim *et al.*, 2019).

Furthermore, food tourism contributes to the sustainability of the territory, mainly by helping to promote sustainable development objectives. As such, it contributes to the economic, environmental, cultural and social development of a territory (Barreal *et al.*, 2023). Tourism involving food heritage is based on experiences, whereby tourists find out about the producers in a particular territory and the physical and human context in which a food product has its origins. Likewise, the protection of production areas to ensure more sustainable models of food production encourages the development of environmentally-friendly products and diversifies the economy in line with the "new rural paradigm", leading to the emergence of food tourism entrepreneurs (Everett and Aitchison, 2008; Hjalager and Johansen, 2013). From the point of view of digitalization, the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the transition towards a digital environment, and food tourism is no exception in the shift towards digital models. These digital models offer solutions aimed at the internationalization of destinations, the sharing of knowledge

through social networks, and the proliferation of food influencers. In terms of the evaluation of experiences and destinations, the digitalization of food tourism is viewed positively by tourists. (Hjalager, 2022; Ali *et al.*, 2024).

2.2. *Olive oil tourism in the context of food tourism*

One type of food tourism is olive oil tourism or oleotourism, which is based on experiences rooted in the local culture and olive oil as an element of the diet in producing regions (Orgaz *et al.*, 2017). Olive oil tourism can be defined as a set of activities that revolve around olive oil as a food (Murgado *et al.*, 2021). These include visits to the olive groves, sometimes coinciding with the olive harvest, visits to the oil mills, and tastings of olive oil and typical local dishes in which olive oil is the star ingredient (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). They are complemented by other activities related to nature and the local culture that allow visitors to immerse themselves in the regional atmosphere of the territory (Murgado, 2013), which is also a very important element in the economic development of these predominantly agricultural destinations (Morales *et al.*, 2015).

The term "oleotourism" originated in the 1980s, when traditional mills began to transform into more open and consumer-oriented businesses, as part of what was known as "farm tourism" (Murphy, 1985). There is currently a growing trend of oleotourism, in which oil mills, places previously dedicated solely to olive oil production, become attractive, wealth-generating tourist destinations. Among such destinations in the Mediterranean basin, the case of Andalusia (Spain) stands out. With 869 oil mills, it is the leading olive oil producing region in the world, contributing 30% of global olive oil production with an average production of 1,000,000 tons of olive oil per year. Spain is followed by Italy, particularly the region of Puglia, with a set of historic oil mills that carry out agrotourism and harness their tourist resources for territorial development, as is the case with the Italian national association Città dell'olio. Other examples of oleotourism can be found in Greece, with the development of "tasting points" for olive oils or tourism activities in the producing region of Kalamata. Australia, the United States, the southern cone countries of Argentina and Uruguay, and some countries in southern Africa. (Millán Vazquez de la Torre *et al.*, 2014; Orgaz *et al.*, 2017; Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023).

2.3. *Different activities, different ways of satisfying the tourist*

A basic and essential activity in food tourism is the consumption of local foods, with the entire tourist experience structured around it (Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). In this section, studying tourists' demands when it comes to this type of tourism is essential for establishing the different activities in a food destination that promote the consumption of local products or traditions in food producing areas (Apak and Gürbüz, 2023). However, while some studies examine food consumption in the tourism sector and the hospitality industry in general (Okumus *et al.*, 2018), few focus on the importance of culinary experiences for tourists, or on tourists' demands regarding a destination's culinary offerings and the overall image of the destination.

Satisfaction is undoubtedly one of the fundamental issues in the tourist experience, especially in cases of emerging tourism segments, such as food tourism and, more specifically, olive oil tourism (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). The study of tourist satisfaction is of particular importance, especially in areas where tourism has not traditionally been the main economic activity and which are starting out in this highly competitive industry. This is the case with many gastronomic destinations that are more focused on the agricultural sector, but are cultivating a tourism industry that can generate a stable income base (Barreal *et al.*, 2023). High levels of tourist satisfaction and its consequences (recommendation and revisiting) can generate a reliable source of additional income that complements producers' main source of income (Cañero *et al.*, 2015), thereby improving the economic sustainability of these destinations, encouraging young people to continue living there, and ensuring their own survival (Vilar *et al.*, 2017).

The determinants of tourist satisfaction in food tourism destinations have attracted considerable interest in recent literature (e.g. Lai, 2020; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2021; Rachão *et al.*, 2021; Hernández-Rojas *et al.*, 2022; Karasakal *et al.*, 2022; Kesgin *et al.*, 2022; Jiang *et al.*, 2023; Rodrigues *et al.*, 2023). In particular, it has been shown that tourists' attitudes towards food or their food lifestyle can affect their satisfaction in this type of destination (Kesgin *et al.*, 2022). Similarly, other studies, such as that by Rodrigues *et al.* (2023), focus on attitudinal rather than behavioural aspects at the destination. Jiang *et al.* (2023) and Toudert and Bringas-Rábago (2021) suggest a more traditional model, concluding that it is the quality of the products that ultimately determines the satisfaction of food tourists at the destination. Again focusing on the experiences or activities on offer in a food tourism destination, authors such as Lai, (2020), Rachão *et al.* (2021) or Karasakal *et al.* (2022) analyse tourists' satisfaction with various experiences, such as visiting a restaurant or tasting local food. However, despite the fact that the gastronomic culture of a place has been identified as a major motivating factor in tourists' decisions to travel to specific destinations (Rachão *et al.*, 2019), we must understand these destinations as a combination of activities, rather than as a single isolated experience (Gannon *et al.*, 2017). In this vein, the study by Prayag and Ryan (2012) is worth highlighting as it underscores the potential of this type of tourism if it is presented as a complete experience rather than an isolated activity during a visit to the destination. Following the paper by Rachão *et al.* (2021), which focuses on wine tourism, we see how this type of tourism is not structured as an isolated experience consisting of tasting the product itself, but rather as a set of related activities, which could include coming into contact with the environment, visiting shops related to the products, visiting the places where they are made and taking part in the production process, or other types of activities related to nature or cultural features of the destination (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012; Kim *et al.*, 2015; Chen, 2018).

Taking into account this variety of services that can be offered as part of food tourism (beyond the tasting of the actual products), we should consider the different ways to satisfy the tourists who choose to visit a destination for its gastronomy and how to meet the expectations of these discerning visitors (Hjalager and Wahlberg, 2014; Kim *et al.*, 2015). This conception of destination satisfaction as a function of a set of complementary activities, not just the one that defines the destination, has been demonstrated in other types of tourism, such as cultural tourism (Vena-Oya *et al.*, 2021). In this respect, there is an important gap in the literature on satisfaction in food tourism, as it has previously been analysed as a set of unrelated activities (e.g. Lai *et al.*, 2020 or Karasakal *et al.*, 2023), rather as a destination capable of offering different experiences. This paper thus seeks to address said gap.

In addition, the heterogeneity of the market must be accounted for, given the pull that food tourism has for both domestic and international tourists, and particularly considering that the knowledge tourists may have about the local cuisine (mostly determined by geographical proximity) can affect their preferences about the activities in which to participate (Gálvez *et al.*, 2017; Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). Previous literature has shown how tourists' interest in the activities they carry out can differ depending on their profile (Oplanić and Čop, 2020). Tourists' country of origin is one of the most influential factors, especially when it comes to activities related to a country's gastronomic culture, as domestic tourists show a greater interest in and enjoyment of it (Hwang and Quadri-Felitti, 2022). We should bear in mind that people from non-producing countries lack knowledge about the food product in question (Roselli *et al.*, 2016), which may reduce their interest in a specific food activity and increase their interest in other activities that can be done in the destination. It thus seems clear that, depending on tourists' provenance, there may be differences in their interests and the ways to satisfy tourists in a food tourism destination.

Therefore, given the variety of services that olive oil tourism can offer, as well as the heterogeneity of olive oil tourists, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: There are different combinations of activities that can lead to the satisfaction of different types of food tourists (domestic vs. international).

3. Methodology

3.1. Sample and development of the questionnaire

The sample was collected between October and December 2022 at different points of culinary interest hosting tourist activities in the province of Jaén (Andalusia, Spain). The sample is composed of 489 tourists, 51% of whom came from Spain and the remaining 49% being international visitors, mainly from other parts of Europe, North Africa and America. Given that this type of tourism is not yet well established at an international level, and international tourists lack knowledge about the sector (Dancausa-Millán and Huete-Alcocer, 2022), it was decided to separate the sample in order to obtain more precise results on the different activities that can satisfy each type of tourist. During the sampling process, the tourists had to fill out a survey about the different activities they had done in the destination. Before the survey was sent out to olive oil mills, it was validated through a pre-test carried out with 50 students from the University of Jaén. The survey was sent and managed by Oleotour Jaén (convenience sampling) (<https://www.jaenparaisointerior.es/es/>), which has 30 olive mills offering olive oil tourism activities. Those mills were responsible for providing the survey to the tourists. This survey can be seen in Appendix 1 (forms.gle/ks9s4xpRLQcBXGcn8). Tourists completed the survey after having visited one of the olive mills that were part of the study, meaning that all the tourists had done at least one activity related to food tourism. In the questionnaire, tourists were asked about their satisfaction with the different activities they had done during their visit. These activities were extracted from different studies on olive oil tourism (Murgado, 2013) and were subsequently grouped into four factors following a confirmatory factor analysis (see Table 2). Following the relevant literature, these different factors were renamed based on the main activities related to food tourism (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012; Kim et al., 2015; Chen, 2018, Rachão et al., 2021), taking into account the particular characteristics of olive oil tourism as a form of food tourism. Thus, the factors were visiting the oil mill, interacting with the environment, seeing the production process, and other activities. The satisfaction variable was measured with a single item (from 0 to 5), in line with authors such as Bigné et al. (2005) or, more recently, Vena-Oya et al. (2021).

Table 1. Summary of the sample

	Total (%) (n=489)	Domestic (%) (n=252)	International (%) (n=237)
Men	280 (57.26%)	135 (53.57%)	145 (61.18%)
Women	209 (42.74%)	117 (46.43%)	92 (38.82%)
Age (Mean/SD)	42.19 (9.81)	43.79 (10.36)	40.49 (8.91)
The reason for your visit was (leisure/work)	404 (81.62%) / 85 (17.38%)	211 (83.73%) / 41 (16.27%)	193 (81.43%) / 44 (18.57%)
You have visited with (family or friends/work colleagues/alone)	386 (78.9%) / 103 (21.1%)	201 (79.77%) / 51 (20.23%)	185 (78.06%) / 52 (21.94%)

3.2. Methods

To answer the research question, the semi-qualitative fuzzy set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) technique has been used (Ragin, 2008). This technique can be used to identify the asymmetric relationships between a given set of conditions and an outcome (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). This technique has been successfully implemented in other recent studies, such as that by Durán-Román et

al. (2023), who analysed the different paths that countries follow to achieve sustainability, or in studies on COVID-19 and tourism (Castañeda-García *et al.*, 2022). In the study of tourist behaviour, fsQCA has mostly been used to analyse behaviours that can be complex and require an equally complex explanation, such as the relationship between attributes of wellness tourism and tourist behaviour (Al-Ansi *et al.*, 2024), or the satisfaction of tourists visiting ski resorts (Zekan and Mazanec, 2022). However, despite having a long track record of application in tourism research, this technique is not commonly used in food tourism research, and is limited to studies that attempt to segment this type of tourism using a fuzzy method (Martín *et al.*, 2020). The fsQCA technique has been gaining ground over other semi-qualitative tools such as csQCA or mvQCA as it is better suited to Likert-type scales, which are commonly used in marketing studies (Rihoux and Ragin, 2008; Pappas and Woodside, 2021). Despite being designed for studies where the sample is not particularly large (Mendel and Korjani, 2012), other papers suggest that it is equally valid when the sample exceeds 500 cases or even as many as 3,000 (Pappas *et al.*, 2016). Among the main benefits this type of technique offers over other quantitative models is that whereas symmetrical models examine the variables in an environment of competition, the fsQCA focuses on the complex and asymmetric relationships between the outcome of interest and its antecedents (Woodside, 2013). Thus, in a QCA analysis the different variables are combined with each other to yield a certain outcome. In our case, the different activities done in a food tourism destination will act together to generate tourist satisfaction, and not in competition against one another, as most quantitative models suggest. This represents an important advance in the study of food tourist satisfaction, since most related studies measure satisfaction with traditional methods (e.g. Kim *et al.*, 2015; Lai, 2020; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2021) that treat satisfaction in the destination in a general way without taking into account the different types of activities usually on offer, which can complement each other to shape the final satisfaction of the tourist. This is precisely where the main advantage of QCA models lies: they are able to analyse the interrelationships between the different conditions (set of activities) required to reach an outcome (satisfaction) in a collaborative environment and through different pathways (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). This idea that a variety of different pathways can lead to the same final outcome is known as the concept of equifinality.

To implement the model, following Pappas and Woodside (2021), a sound literature review must first be conducted to identify all the factors that may be of influence in the study in question. This was done by referring to the papers of Murgado (2013) and Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González (2023), which summarize all the activities involved in olive oil tourism. After grouping the different activities, they have been included in four factors in the study: visiting the oil mill, interacting with the environment, seeing the production process, and other activities. The confirmatory factor analysis and reliability tests carried out confirm that all the factors have a Cronbach's Alpha greater than 0.7 (Table 2), so they can all be considered reliable (Nunnally, 1994).

Table 2. Reliability Analysis

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha
Visiting the oil mill and tasting the EVOO	0.89
Interacting with the environment	0.87
Seeing the production process	0.79
Other activities	0.82

Next, we verify the assumption of an asymmetric relationship between the outcome variable (the overall satisfaction of the tourist) and the different conditions (the identified activity factors). This assumption of asymmetry dictates that the correlations between them must be less than 0.7 (Woodside, 2013); none of them exceed a value of 0.5 (Table 3).

Table 3. Correlation analysis with the outcome

Factor	Correlation with the outcome
Visiting the oil mill and tasting the EVOO	0.37
Interacting with the environment	0.45
Seeing the production process	0.48
Other activities	0.36

Once this assumption has been verified, the variables must be calibrated to give them a value between 0 and 1 (Ragin, 2008). To do so, we apply a continuous calibration in line with other authors such as Roig-Tierno *et al.* (2017) and Oana and Schneider (2018). This approach to calibration is the most appropriate when there is no previous literature suggesting other thresholds or cut-off points for the degrees of membership associated with each condition; in this case, the 95th, 50th and 5th percentiles have been used (Table 4) (Rihoux and Ragin, 2008; Fiss, 2011). This percentile-based calibration is widely used when working with Likert-type scales (Pappas and Woodside, 2021). Based on these three cut-off points, the variables are rescaled to a scale of 0 to 1, where 95% indicates full variable membership (presence), 50% neither presence nor absence, and 5% absence of the variable or attribute. Once the calibration has been carried out, the truth table is calculated and the analysis of necessity is conducted using fsQCA software (Ragin and Davey, 2016). The result, presented in the next section, will be the key for analysing the relationship between satisfaction and the different conditions included in the model.

Table 4. Percentiles to determine membership

Factor	Mean (SD)*	95th/50th/5th
Visiting the oil mill and tasting the EVOO	4.01 (0.87)	4.91/4/2.5
Interacting with the environment	3.91 (0.85)	4.72/4/2.5
Seeing the production process	3.72 (0.91)	4.88/3.67/2.33
Other activities	2.77 (0.92)	4.45/2.67/1.33
Satisfaction	3.87 (1)	4.95/4.31/2.27

*Scale from 1 to 5 points

4. Results

Table 5 shows the analysis of necessary conditions for the two groups under study (domestic and international tourists). This preliminary step allows us to identify those conditions in terms of need, i.e., they must be present for the outcome (satisfaction) to occur. In other words, a condition will be necessary if it is present in all instances of the outcome (Roig-Tierno *et al.*, 2017). Consistency assesses the degree of perfection of a relationship among sets (Ragin, 2008; Roig-Tierno *et al.*, 2017). If the consistency is above 0.9 it indicates that the condition is necessary and therefore must be present in the final solution (Ragin, 2008). It should be noted that these conditions can be included as either present (the activity should be carried out, indicated in capital letters) or absent (the activity should not be carried out, indicated in lower case letter) in the path to the outcome (satisfaction). Thus, we can see that for domestic tourists the only necessary activity is *Visiting the Oil Mill and Tasting The EVOO*, while for international tourists the activities *Visiting the Oil Mill and Tasting the EVOO*, *Interacting with the Environment* and *Other Activities* are necessary for the outcome to occur; that is, these activities should be carried out if the tourist is to be satisfied. This may have important implications for the management of these destinations, since the first set of activities (*Visiting the Oil Mill and Tasting the EVOO*) appears as necessary for domestic tourists, while all of them are necessary for international tourists. This finding will be analysed in more depth in the conclusions chapter. Along with this analysis, we have to check whether any of these necessary conditions can be considered trivial (it always appears, even if the outcome does not occur, e.g. air is a trivial necessary condition for fire). In Figure 1, we confirm that all of them are

relevant and the concept of trivialness, according to the scheme proposed by Goertz (2006), does not apply to any of them.

Table 5. Analysis of necessary conditions

Condition	Domestic	International
<i>Visiting the Oil Mill And Tasting the EVOO</i>	0.96	0.95
visiting the oil mill and tasting the EVOO	0.21	0.47
<i>Interacting with the Environment</i>	0.89	0.95
interacting with the environment	0.25	0.43
<i>Seeing the Production Process</i>	0.81	0.88
seeing the production process	0.35	0.48
<i>Other Activities</i>	0.43	0.90
other activities	0.72	0.47

Once the necessary conditions have been analysed, the next step is the analysis of the truth table shown in Table 6. In the table, the combinations that have a consistency of over 0.8 are selected (Dul, 2016). Additionally, we check whether the conditions are peripheral (they appear only in the intermediate solution) or core (they appear in both the intermediate and in the parsimonious solution) and indicate a strong relationship (Ragin, 2008; Pappas and Woodside, 2021). Core elements indicate a strong causal relationship with the outcome, and peripheral elements indicate a weaker relationship (Fiss, 2011; Pappas and Woodside, 2021). According to the columns in Table 6, three solutions should be retained for domestic tourists and only one for international tourists. This reflects a high degree of heterogeneity in domestic tourists, as well as the exacting demands of the international tourist, who must have a complete experience to be satisfied with a visit to a food destination. Generally speaking, it can be seen that the way to satisfy a domestic tourist who wants to engage in food tourism is simply through a tasting of the products. From that base, the solution can become more specialized by incorporating other activities to generate satisfaction. That is, the domestic tourists of Solution 1 are not interested in seeing the process of making the products or doing other types of activities; they come solely for culinary reasons; thus, we see how this first activity is not only necessary, but also sufficient to satisfy this segment of tourists. Solution 2 tourists want a more complete experience: in addition to tasting the local products, other experiences such as interacting with the environment or observing the process of making the products are required to generate high levels of satisfaction. In addition, managers should pay special attention to the activities involving interaction with the environment and the EVOO production process as core conditions. In the last of these solutions (Solution 3), we find a type of hybrid national tourist who enjoys both culinary experiences and doing other types of activities, such as visiting cultural attractions or engaging in adventure tourism. In the case of international tourists, there is a single solution (Solution 4) wherein tourists demand a complete service in order to be satisfied. They not only want to engage in food-related activities, but are also looking for other types of experiences with which to complement their visit and thus be satisfied with it. That said, it should be noted that if we were to analyse international tourism separately from domestic tourism, then we would do so using a simple linear regression since a single optimal solution has been identified. We can also see here how all the necessary conditions are not sufficient to achieve satisfaction and need to be complemented by the others. Moreover, they are all core conditions, so managers must provide a 360° experience that includes all these activities provided to a high standard in order to ensure the full satisfaction of the international food tourist. Meanwhile, domestic tourists, who are more knowledgeable about olive oil production and customs, have more defined objectives and it is therefore easier to find different ways to satisfy them (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). This may be due to the fact that this type of domestic tourist is not expressly looking for this type of experience, but sees it as complementary, possibly due to a lack of

knowledge (Dancausa-Millán and Huete-Alcocer, 2022); the pathway to satisfaction therefore needs to be more complete way.

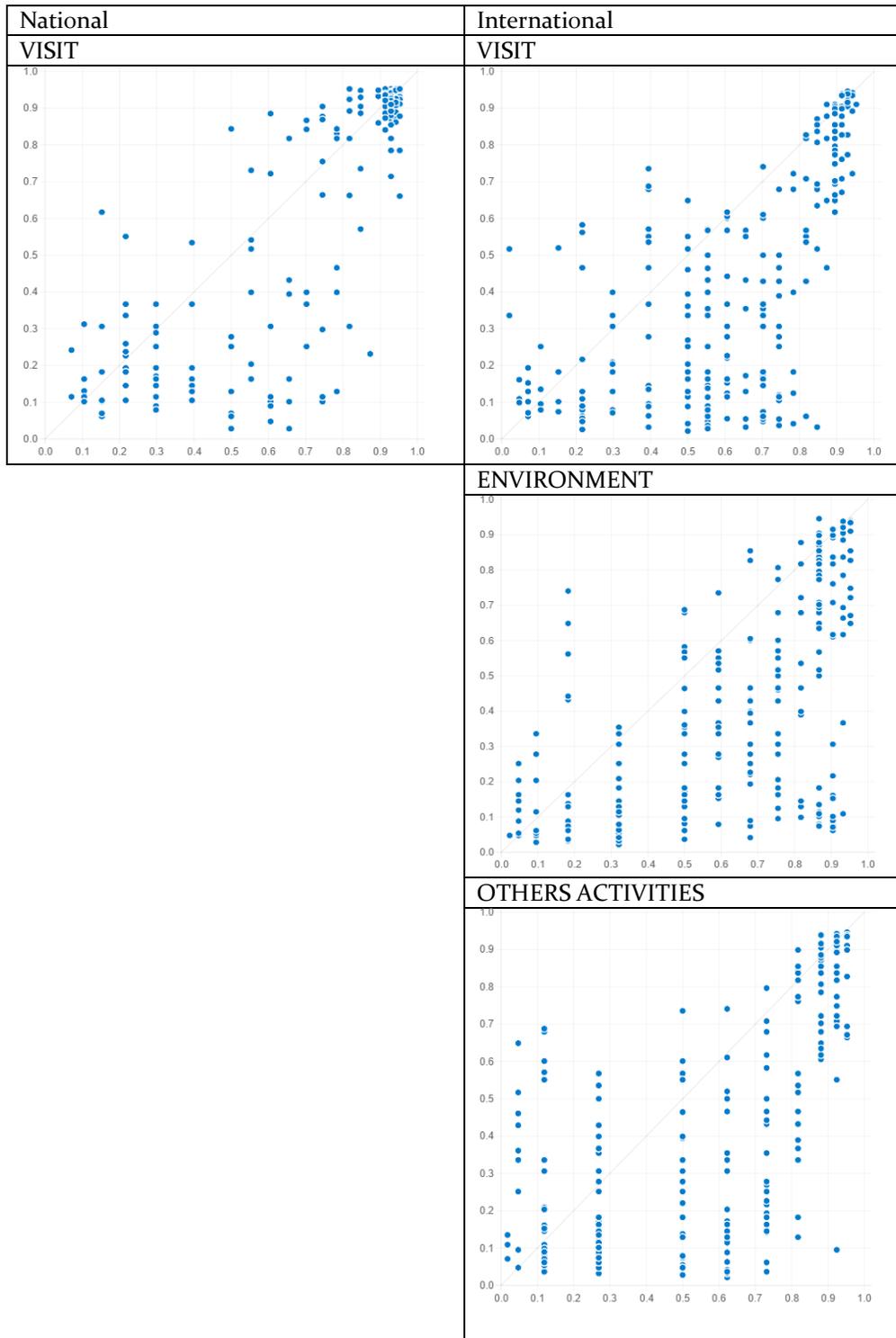


Figure 1. Trivialness analysis

These results confirm the hypothesis raised, which posited that there are different combinations of activities in food tourism that can lead to the satisfaction of the different types of tourists who engage in these activities. Finally, we observe a good overall fit of the model with a consistency (a statistic similar to R₂ in a regression model) of 0.87 and a coverage (the explicit connection between a combination of causal conditions and an outcome) of 0.86 for the solutions of domestic tourists, and a coverage and consistency of 0.84 in the case of international ones.

Table 6. Summary of the truth table

	Domestic		International	
	<i>Solution 1</i>	<i>Solution 2</i>	<i>Solution 3</i>	<i>Solution 4</i>
	Visiting the oil mill	Complete olive oil tourism experience	Visiting the destination as a whole	Complete visit to the oil mill and the destination
Visiting the oil mill and tasting the EVOO	●	●	●	●
Interacting with the environment		●		●
Seeing the production process	X	●		●
Other activities			●	●
Raw coverage	0.33	0.76	0.42	0.79
Unique coverage	0.03	0.32	0.02	0.84
Consistency	0.83	0.91	0.87	0.97
Solution coverage		0.86		0.84
Solution consistency		0.87		0.84

● Core Condition; ● peripheral condition; X absence; Empty cell: no effect.



Figure 2. Venn Diagram of the different configurations that lead to the satisfaction of the food tourist

Based on the above solutions, Figure 2 summarizes in a Venn diagram the combinations of activities with which the demands of domestic and international tourists can be met. It shows the importance of placing international tourism at the centre of the combination of all the proposed activity options. As for the domestic tourist, when planning the offer to satisfy this market segment, their needs can be met by other, simpler combinations. In this diagram, we can see how all four solutions require the first quadrant (visiting the mill) to achieve this satisfaction. On the other hand, we can see how solution 4 is in the centre of the diagram, which indicates that the tourists of this solution (international tourists) require all four sets of activities to be satisfied. Domestic tourists are more heterogeneous and can be satisfied with just the visit to the olive mill (S₁), with a complete oleotourism visit (S₂) or by complementing it with other activities (S₃).

5. Discussion of the results

A basic and essential activity in food tourism is the consumption of local foods, with the entire tourist experience structured around it (Kandampully *et al.*, 2018). Although the cuisine is in itself a factor that can attract many visitors (Apak and Gürbüz, 2023), destinations need to establish other types of activities that complement these culinary experiences. This will not only help encourage tourists to stay for longer, but the synergies with other activities will also increase their satisfaction with their visit (Rachão *et al.*, 2021; Vena-Oya *et al.*, 2021). This study has shown that there are different combinations of activities that, combined with the main activity in a food tourism destination, lead to the satisfaction of the tourists. This represents a step forward in the related research, which thus far has addressed the issue in little depth and through linear relationships (e.g. Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2021; Hernández-Rojas *et al.*, 2022). This finding is in line with authors such as Quadri-Felitti and Fiore (2012), Kim *et al.* (2015), Gannon *et al.* (2017), Chen (2018) and Rachão *et al.* (2021), who view this type of tourism as a set of activities rather than as an isolated activity.

Specifically, this study identifies three different combinations of activities that lead to the satisfaction of a domestic food tourist. The first proposal is to offer domestic tourists a high-quality culinary experience, as they are only interested in this activity. This is in line with the findings reported by Hjalager and Wahlberg (2014), who noted that tourists, as consumers highly familiar with fine cuisine, are looking for superior culinary experiences. Another result we found is that tourists also want to carry out activities related to interacting with the environment and with the process of making the product they are going to taste, meaning they are demanding a more complete experience (Chen, 2018). We also detected a last group of tourists that, in addition to tasting the typical products of the area, will want to do other activities such as rural or sporting activities, and may even want to engage in another type of tourism such as cultural tourism (Quadri-Felitti and Fiore, 2012).

We can see that the optimal combination to satisfy international tourists is to offer them a complete experience. This may be due to several factors, such as international tourists' limited knowledge of local gastronomy, which means they have to do other activities to be satisfied with their visit (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). Furthermore, this type of tourist is usually more demanding than the domestic tourist, as they have invested more time and money in reaching the destination; this makes them eager to engage in a larger number of experiences once they have arrived at the destination, which will increase their final satisfaction (Vena-Oya *et al.*, 2021).

The international market is characterized by its heterogeneity, shaped by the nationality of the visitors (Kozac, 2022). Due to cultural and even income differences between countries, this nationality can play a moderating role in the relationship between the perceived quality of a destination and the ultimate satisfaction experienced (De Carlos *et al.*, 2019; Barreal-Pernas *et al.*, 2023; Li *et al.*, 2024). As such, the behaviour of this segment is more complex and unpredictable. Therefore, the corresponding marketing strategies could benefit from incorporating the findings of this paper if they accurately represent the

diversity of international customs. However, if the foreign visitors are relatively uniform, then the destination should conduct a thorough analysis of its international tourism demand.

Furthermore, considering the substantial knowledge gap about the olive oil market among visitors from non-olive oil producing countries (Roselli *et al.*, 2016), there is a preference for more general activities over specific culinary experiences. Consequently, the region primarily attracts visitors from countries such as the United Kingdom, France, or Germany (Barreal *et al.* 2023), where olive oil consumption is relatively low and it has little cultural significance (Vilar *et al.*, 2018). Meanwhile, domestic visitors share a cultural heritage linked to olive oil consumption, irrespective of their region of origin. This disparity could explain why the analysis reveals a single solution involving core elements for the international segment, while providing three tailored solutions for domestic visitors, which require specific factors to achieve high satisfaction rates.

These findings corroborate international outcomes similar to those observed by Prayag and Ryan (2012), highlighting the importance of delivering a comprehensive experience to satisfy this niche market. However, national approaches differ from the proposal put forward by Rachão *et al.*, 2021, which advocates for offering more than just isolated experiences, a strategy deemed effective for international visitors. For instance, the first solution predominantly emphasizes the satisfaction derived from visiting the mill and tasting extra virgin olive oil.

6. Conclusions

The main objective of this study is to identify the different ways to satisfy the demands of a highly exacting type of tourist; namely, the food tourist. The analysis yields a series of conclusions that allow this field to advance at both at the academic and destination management levels. Regarding the academic implications of this study, and despite the fact that other studies have already measured satisfaction in food tourism (e.g. Lai, 2020; Toudert and Bringas-Rábago, 2021), this is the first time that the satisfaction of this type of tourist has been examined by taking an overall perspective of the visit, including other activities that act together with gastronomy to shape tourist satisfaction. Another academic implication lies in the novelty of applying fsQCA to analyse satisfaction and the combination of factors that determine it. Thus, although fsQCA has been widely used in other studies on tourism, this is one of the first to use it to analyse food tourism and the link with satisfaction. It has enabled us to combine sets of activities that lead to satisfaction in a type of tourism featuring heterogeneous preferences. In turn, a distinction can be made between domestic and international tourists, which opens new doors to the study of food tourism. The model also indicates that the analysis conducted here would not be appropriate if the methodology were applied to international tourism alone. This suggests that any future studies using the items proposed here to explore the demands of international tourists and their satisfaction should use comparative techniques as a complement, as has been done in other studies (e.g. Castañeda-García *et al.*, 2022). The fsQCA technique has also helped to discover different ways to satisfy two very different food tourism segments; namely, domestic and international tourists (Vena-Oya and Parrilla-González, 2023). While the domestic segment shows a high degree of heterogeneity in terms of the different combinations of activities that can satisfy them, the international tourist demands a complete experience, and the main activity of this type of tourism—discovering and sampling the local gastronomy—is not enough.

Furthermore, we identify some management implications for this type of destination. The first of these is clear: such destinations must account for the heterogeneity of the sector in order to respond to the different demands of food tourists. Moreover, we can see that the requirements differ within domestic tourism to a greater extent than among international tourists. Thus, first of all, destinations must offer a differentiated gastronomy service to meet the demands of the tourists corresponding to the first solution. However, the destinations must be prepared to complement their offer with other activities such

as visiting factories, distilleries or oil mills. In order to do so, the relevant companies must diversify internally or look for new business partners to set up a more complete experience. In addition, to address the requirements of the third group, they must consider the synergies with other types of tourism, such as rural, sports or cultural tourism. Regarding international tourism, an appropriate strategy for ensuring the satisfaction of this group would be to offer a complete experience in the destination. This suggests that market stakeholders should offer a comprehensive range of offerings, including core products and complementary activities, to ensure the satisfaction of international customers. Conversely, they should maintain the same set of activities but tailor it for each solution aimed at domestic visitors. Regardless of the segment, visiting the olive mill and tasting the EVOO is a necessary activity to achieve satisfaction, meaning providers should work to ensure the highest possible quality for this type of activity. As shown by our results, doing so will not only make it possible to satisfy these tourists, provided the activities meet their demands, but will also help encourage these tourists to stay for longer thus generating more income at the destination (Vena-Oya *et al.*, 2021).

Finally, like any other study, this work has certain limitations. The first is the use of a single item to measure satisfaction. This decision was made due to the length of the questionnaire, with tourists having to answer more than 40 questions about their visit to the destination and satisfaction with the activities they had done. Nevertheless, this choice is in line with other authors who use a single item to measure this construct (Bigné *et al.*, 2005). In relation to sampling, the use of a convenience sample introduces a series of limitations, such as the bias that this generates. However, given the localized nature of this type of tourism, even in its initial phase, convenience sampling is the most appropriate way to obtain a suitable sample. Other limitations include the fact that the analysis accounts for single type of food tourism, namely olive oil tourism, and that the geographical scope of the study was restricted to different points in the province of Jaén (Spain). As future lines of research, we therefore suggest expanding the geographical scope of the study and applying it to other types of culinary tourism, such as wine tourism. The methodology used also entails a limitation. The use of QCA does not allow us to solve problems as precisely as with SEM, but it does give us a more accurate idea when we focus on a complex reality such as the study of the satisfaction of the food tourist. However, this technique does not allow us to test hypotheses, so the results (no p-value or similar statistic) have to be taken with a degree of caution, especially in an emergent field of research such as food tourism. The methodology used in this research has significant implications for both the scientific and business domains, especially within the olive oil tourism industry. Its potential for replication across different sectors highlights its practicality and relevance. Researchers can utilize this methodology to investigate satisfaction and establish universal behavioural guidelines, while business managers can employ it to assess customer satisfaction levels.

Appendix 1: Olive Oil Tourism Experience Questionnaire

Dear tourist, as researchers at the University of Jaén we would like to know your opinion about the experience you have just had. This will help us to improve the tourist service and thus help the development of the region. It will take no more than 10 minutes and your input is of great importance to us.

In this first part we would like to know what activities and experiences (whether you have done them or not) you consider important when it comes to achieving a full oleotourism service.

Express the degree of importance that each of the following services has for you in obtaining a full oleotourism experience:

Item	No Important	Less important	Important	Very Important	Extremely important
Visit the olive oil Mill					
Visit an olive oil Museum					
Visit an olive oil Museum					
See the olive oil collection harvest					
Collect the olive oil by my own					
See the olive oil elaboration process					
Elaborate and mill the olive oil myself					
Acquire products related to the olive oil culture (cosmetics, olives, chocolate, gel ...)					
Visit other cultural attractions in the area					
Do urban tourism					
Do other activities related to rural tourism (hiking, horse riding, visiting natural parks ...)					
Do sports tourism (water sports, climbing ...)					
Be in contact with nature in a sustainable way for the environment					
Interact with residents					
Know and taste the local gastronomy					
Enjoy a quality accommodation service					

Accessibility and adequate transportation service					
Have complete information on all the attractions of the destination before my arrival					
Escape from mass tourism					
Carry out sustainable tourism with the environment					
Carry out a quiet tourism					
Safety when I enjoy this experience					

Express the degree of satisfaction with the performance of the company in each of the following services during your oleotourism experience

Item	I have not been offered this activity	Not satisfied at all	Little satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied	Extremely satisfied
Visit the olive oil Mill						
Visit an olive oil Museum						
Visit an olive oil Museum						
See the olive oil collection harvest						
Collect the olive oil by my own						
See the olive oil elaboration process						
Elaborate and mill the olive oil myself						
Acquire products related to the olive oil culture (cosmetics, olives, chocolate, gel ...)						
Visit other cultural attractions in the area						
Do urban tourism						
Do other activities related to rural tourism (hiking, horse riding,						

visiting natural parks ...)						
Do sports tourism (water sports, climbing ...)						
Be in contact with nature in a sustainable way for the environment						
Interact with residents						
Know and taste the local gastronomy						
Enjoy a quality accommodation service						
Accessibility and adequate transportation service						
Have complete information on all the attractions of the destination before my arrival						
Escape from mass tourism						
Carry out sustainable tourism with the environment						
Carry out a quiet tourism						
Safety when I enjoy this experience						

Finally, some information about you:

Gender:	Male Female
Age:	
The reason for your visit has been:	Leisure Work
You have visited with	Alone Family (no children) Family (with children) Friends Work colleagues

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