

REQUIREMENTS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF OLIVE TOURISM: THE CASE OF CROATIA

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Review
Received 4 April 2019
Revised 3 May 2019
30 November 2019
Accepted 15 December 2019
<https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.26.1.1>

Abstract

Purpose – The aim of this paper is to identify necessary requirements for development of olive tourism and compare the findings with the situation in Croatia in order to provide guidelines for the future development of this particular form of tourism.

Design/methodology/approach – In this preliminary study, the method of secondary sources data analysis was used.

The data includes searching of relevant scientific articles and official web sites such as web pages of the Ministry of Agriculture, Tourist Boards, etc.

Findings – The analysis revealed the existence of eight requirements necessary for olive tourism developments, such as: oil mills open for visitors, museums and interpretation centers dedicated to olives and olive oil, olive farms, protected geographical indications, olive groves, events/fairs devoted to olives and olive oil, *Olive Oil Roads*, specialized shops for olive oil – *oleotece*. The results could help in future research for planning and development of olive tourism in other countries. Olive tourism requirements already exist in Croatia, but there is insufficient available information about stakeholders who offer activities related to olive tourism.

Originality of the research – This study has identified necessary requirements for olive tourism development. It is oriented to olive tourism in developing countries, which have received little prior research attention.

Keywords Olive tourism, elements of olive tourism, development, Croatia, gastro tourism, rural area

1. INTRODUCTION

Gastronomic tourism is gaining popularity in many European countries, due to a more selective demand on the part of tourist consumers who prefer a select quality product adapted to their tastes and needs (Vázquez de la Torre et al. 2017). Modern tourists are looking for specific experiences, such as learning vacations, agriculture tours, and gastronomy, among others (Wolf 2002). In the literature, various expressions related to gastronomic tourism can be found such as: „culinary tourism“, "gastronomy tourism", "gastro-tourism", „wine tourism“, "food tourism" and "gourmet tourism" all of them can be define as "being in pursuit of unique experience of eating and drinking" (Hall and Mitchell 2005; Groves 2001, Green and Dougherty 2008). Culinary experience can contribute to increasing tourist offer by combining culture, landscape, local food and winemaking it an unforgettable experience in the destination (Hjalager and Richards 2002).

Tourism represents today's one of the most important economic sectors and leisure time spending activities. In fact, that it has a significant multiplier effect economically and can cause directly and indirectly an activation in many sub - sectors make it an ideal development means especially this is important for rural areas (Sormaz et al. 2016 according to Cagli 2012).

In the past few years it is also possible to find the term of olive tourism in relationship with gastronomy (Orgaz-Agüera et al. 2017). A group of authors define olive tourism as a form of tourism which involves tourists in activities related to olives and olive oil (Vázquez de la Torre et al. 2017). For the development of this form of tourism, the territory more precisely olive growing areas are the key elements.

Growing the olives and olive oil production is closely related activities to the Mediterranean basin, and it represents one of the most important agricultural activities for many farmers in this region. More than, 60% of the world production of olive oil takes place in Europe (IOC 2018). In the context of tourism Mediterranean area is one of the most important tourism regions in the world, accounting for approximately more than one - third of total tourism revenues and half of international arrivals. Also, Mediterranean destination provides tourist products essential for the North and Eastern European markets (Alper 2014).

Take all of these facts into consideration the development of olive tourism could represent the sustainable development perspective for an integral tourist product which connects rural development, local agricultural products with an accent on olive oil creating a new tourist experience. Although the interest in olive tourism has been increasing, still there is a lack of research about supply of olive tourism.

The first aim of the paper is to identify necessary elements for developing olive tourism based on secondary data. The second aim is to compare the findings with the situation in Croatia, and the third goal is to provide guidelines for the future development of this particular form of tourism.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next paragraph will be provided with the relevant scientific literature about olive tourism, then the situation in the field of olive tourism in Croatia. In the end, will be given the identification elements of olive tourism in Croatia and the perspectives for future developing of this particular form of tourism.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Olive tourism is a type of tourism which involves tourists getting into contact with olives, olive oil and other olive products, motivated by their desire to get more familiar with this product, learn something more about the production methods and taste olive oil characteristic for each cultivation area (Alonso and Northcote 2010; Ruiz Guerra et al. 2011; Valentin et al. 2011; Murgado 2013; Campón-Cerro et al. 2014; Vázquez de la Torre et al. 2017).

The term olive tourism, oleotourism or olive oil tourism has appeared in the literature over the last 20 years. Research from the field of olive tourism is relatively weak (Murgado 2013; Campón-Cerro et al. 2014), because this tourist activity is very young (in both foreign and national literature (Orgaz-Agüera et al. 2018; Ivanović et al. 2016). Terms tourism and olive growing include different concepts such as agritourism, olive tourism and olive oil tourism (López-Guzmán et al. 2016).

Olive tourism is also related to other selective forms of tourism such as cultural (Alonso and Krajsic 2013; Millán et al. 2014; Tudisca et al. 2015; Vazquez de la Torre et al., 2017; Greg 2018), medical (López-Guzmán et al. 2016), agritourism (Alonso and Krajsic 2013; Millán et al. 2014; Tudisca et al. 2015) and culinary (gastro) tourism (Alonso and Krajsic 2013; Millán et al. 2014).

Most olive tourism research is conducted in Spain, which can be explained by the fact that Spain is the world's biggest producer of olive oil. Some authors have explored the olive tourism situation and possibilities in other countries producing olives and olive oil, such as Croatia (Grković 2005; Žužić 2014; Ivanović et al. 2016), Australia (Alonso and Northcote 2010), Italy (Tudisca et al. 2015), Turkey (Bora and Kunter 2014; Arikan 2017). Some major studies have addressed the supply and demand of this tourism modality, but there are weaknesses in the analyses of some stakeholders involved in this tourism activity. Consequently, future research should further the comparative analysis of the profile of olive tourism visitors (Orgaz-Agüera et al. 2018).

The key factor for olive tourism development is the territory (Orgaz Agüera et al. 2017) that gives an advantage to Croatia and other countries that produce olive oil concerning other tourist destinations located outside of the olive cultivation areal.

Olive tourists are people who devoted a part of their vacation to explore olives and olive oil further and to participate in some olive tourism activity (Vázquez de la Torre et al. 2017). Olive tourists have been identified according to the socio-demographic profile (López-Guzmán et al. 2016, and Moral Cuadra et al. 2017). Those are mainly older women (60 and older), with an average income (1,501–2,500 EUR) and a college degree. López-Guzmán et al. (2016), with their research on a sample of tourists who participated in olive tourism activities, isolate the following motives according to their average rating: get to know the geographical area (3.94), learn about the world of olive oil (3.75) and taste traditional products (3.55) as primary reasons for visiting this geographical area.

Table 1: **Profile of the tourists included in activities of touring the *Olive Oil Roads* for 2017 with regard to age and company during the trip**

Variables	Categories	Share (%)
Age (Years of age)	bellow 29	5.8
	30–49	9.3
	above 50	11.1
Company	partner	9.4
	family members	10.3
	friends	4.9
	without the company	6.2

Source: TOMAS LJETO Institute for Tourism 2017.

In activities of olive tourism, more participants are of older age, which corresponds to the research conducted by López-Guzmán et al. (2016). Regarding the company during the trip, the *Olive Oil Roads* activity is chosen more by families and partners, that is, married couples (Table 1).

Olive tourism represents a potential benefit for a set of stakeholders included in its development (Alonso and Northcote 2010). Those are primarily: 1) olive growers who can add value to their olive oil by direct sales to the tourists, 2) tourists to whom the product will be available at the olive oil production destination, 3) service providers in tourism by creating itineraries that will include olives and olive oil (López-Guzmán 2016).

Table 2: Elements and activities of olive tourism

No.	Elements	Activities – explanation
1	Oil mills open for visitors	Visits to oil mills that are open for visitors both at the time of harvesting and processing and throughout of the year. During the visit, olive oil tasting is usually organized.
2	Museums and interpretation centres dedicated to olives and olive oil	Educate visitors on tradition and heritage of olive growing and olive oil production.
3	Olive farms open for visitors	Visits to farms engaged in olive cultivation that are also opened for visitors. During the visit, olive oil tasting is usually organized.
4	Protected geographical indications (protected designation of origin – PDO and protected geographical indication – PGI) of olive oil	The existence of olive oils with protected geographical indications enables additional recognition of the olive oil production region.
5	Olive groves	Visits and walks through olive groves that represent landscape elements, particularly centuries-old and ecological olive orchards. Participation in olive harvesting activities is one of the main activities in olive groves.
6	Events/fairs dedicated to olives and olive oil	Visits to theme events and fairs dedicated to olives and olive oils.
7	<i>Olive Oil Roads</i>	Formed itineraries for visitors – <i>Olive Oil Roads</i> that connect stakeholders of olive tourism (producers, caterers, etc).
8	Specialized shops for olive oil – <i>oleotece</i>	Visits to specialized shops for olive oil – <i>oleotece</i> , shops with a wide range of different kinds olive oils.

Source: Ruiz Guerra et al. (2011), Murgado (2013), Campón-Cerro et al. (2014), Tudisca et al. (2015), Vázquez de la Torre et al. (2017).

According to the elements and activities presented in Table 2, it can be concluded that a certain infrastructure that will, except for olive groves, offer tourists an experience and motivation to choose to participate in this form of tourism, should exist to develop olive tourism. Economic situation, partnership level between business entities, local and regional authorities and existing level of tourism service will affect olive tourism

development in a certain region (Alonso and Northcote 2010). Several authors indicate the possibility of connecting olive growing with tourism in Croatia. Grković (2005) states that olive harvesting and olive oil production are becoming more and more attractive tourist products. Žužić (2014) noted that olive oil generates enormous interest not only as a high-quality product but as a product containing the potential for development in tourism. Ivanović et al. (2016) analysed selective forms of tourism in Croatia and he identified gastronomic, wine and olive oil tourism as one of the types of tourism. With the development of olive tourism, the tourists have the possibility of direct contact with the producers – olive growers, where mutual gain is generated, olive grower can achieve higher price for his product via direct sale to the tourist, and the tourist experiences unique and authentic sensation at the destination, which is one of the preconditions for successful positioning of the destination. Also, this kind of contact between the product and the tourist at a destination stimulates the possibility of export of the product which the tourists will search for in their own countries after returning from vacation (Madaleno et al. 2017).

3. MATERIALS AND METHODS

Regarding the nonexistence of papers on conditions and perspectives of olive tourism development in Croatia, this paper uses secondary data sources – external sources, to evaluate the situation of olive tourism in Croatia. Secondary data can serve as a baseline for research and development analysis of the new product (Maričić et al. 2008), as is the case with this form of tourism.

In this preliminary study, the method of secondary sources data analysis was used.

In this research is used relevant web pages to identify the supply of olive tourism, Terziyska, (2018) use a similar approach in the contents of the wine tour.

The research is divided into two parts. In the first part, a theoretical background was presented in order to define the concept of olive tourism and elements required for its development. Scientific databases (Google Scholar, Web of Science and Scopus) were used for data collection, with the following words used for searching: olive tourism, oleotourism, olive oil tourism and gastro-tourism.

In the second part of the research, the paper deals with the identification of olive tourism condition in Croatia was analyzed. For this purpose, relevant public data sources were used: 1) Official pages of the Ministry of Agriculture, 2) Official pages of the Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development, 3) Croatian Bureau of Statistics – Statistical Yearbook, 4) Official pages of Tourists Boards at national, county and local levels, 5) Official pages of the Institute for Tourism, 6) Official page of the olive growing and oil production magazine *Maslina*. The following key words were used for searching: olive groves, olive oil, tasting, producers, geographical indications of olive oil, *Olive oil roads*, itineraries, tourism, events and fairs, *oleoteca* olive oil shops.

Data were collected and analyzed in the period from December 2018 to February 2019. Collected data were compared with the previously isolated elements of olive tourism from scientific literature to assess the condition of olive tourism in Croatia. Results obtained are quantified with numerical values and percentage. Guidelines for future activities that are required for the development of olive tourism in Croatia have been suggested according to the results obtained.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To understand the potential for olive tourism in Croatia is given a short review of olive production and quality of olive oil produced in Croatia according to the available secondary data sources. After that the elements for developing olive tourism found in the scientific literature (Table 2) were compared with the elements found in Croatia through secondary data sources.

4.1. Olive production in Croatia

The volume of olive production in Croatia is shown with an overview of areas covered with olives, olive production and olive oil production (Table 3).

Table 3: **Areas covered with olive groves, olive production and olive oil production in Croatia**

Year of production	Areas covered with olives (ha)	Olives produced (t)	Olive oil produced (t)
2017	18,683	28,947	5,000
2016	18,184	31,183	5,000
2015	19,100	28,267	5,000
2014	19,082	8,840	1,100
2013	18,590	34,202	4,600

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics (Crop Production 2013–2017) for data on surfaces covered with olives and olive production, International olive council (2018) for data on the quality of olive oil produced.

In the period from 2013 to 2017, there were no significant oscillations in terms of areas covered with olive trees. In connection with olive oil production, the significant decline in production was in 2014 when substantially smaller yield of olives was recorded, caused by a considerable amount of rainfall throughout the cultivation area, and large epidemic of diseases and pests, that caused drastic decline in olive oil production (Mesić et al. 2015). Due to unpredictable climatic events, it is not possible to plan the quantity and the quality of the product with certainty, which is why the agriculture is exogenously very sensitive business activity (Millán et al. 2014).

Croatia ranks 6th among European countries according to the quantity of olive oil produced, behind leading Spain (1,290,600 t), Greece (195,000 t), Italy (182,300 t), Portugal (69,400 t) and Cyprus (6,000 t) (IOC 2017).

The existence of a sufficient number of processing capacities – oil mills, is a prerequisite for successful olive oil production and olive tourism planning. There are currently 189 oil mills in Croatia. By comparison of the number oil mills in Croatia from 2010 and 2018, an increase in number of oil mills has been recorded in almost all counties except in Lika-Senj County, which remained at only one oil mill. The most significant increase in the number of oil mills is recorded in Zadar and Split-Dalmatia County, where 17 new oil mills have been built in each county (*Maslina* magazine 2018). With the increase of the number of oil mills, the quality of olive oil is increasing because of the shorter waiting period for crop processing and the possibility of harvesting and processing in the same day. Oil mills are open for processing two to three months a year, i.e., during the olive harvesting period, and they cannot be used for other processing purposes, making them relatively poorly rentable. To increase their income, oil mills can diversify their offer in olive tourism segment with smaller investments and do business throughout the year by accepting groups of visitors, to whom they would offer olive oils tasting with the possibility of buying them.

4.2. Olive oil quality

Tourism based on quality agricultural products in rural areas can be a stimulator of economic development (Millán et al. 2014.). By changing the habits of consumers, the interest in high-quality and differentiated products is also increasing, thus increasing the demand for that kind of products. Therefore, agricultural products are being protected by geographical indications, mostly by evidence of product origin that confirms that the process of production, processing and preparation has been conducted at the defined area (Millán et al. 2014). Geographical indications can convince the costumers that it is an original, unique and high-quality product (Broude 2005). In the tourism context, products with additional features (ecological, traditional or products with geographical indications) can contribute to tourist offer differentiation, by encouraging agritourism activities and direct sales of agricultural products (SgROI et al. 2014). Five olive oils with the indication of origin were registered in Croatia, where two protected oils are located in Primorje-Gorski Kotar County, and one in Istria, Split-Dalmatia and Dubrovnik-Neretva County (Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Croatia 2018). Croatia has even more possibilities in the segment of olive oil labelling, by means of which it will be additionally profiled as a high-quality olive oil-producing country. The north part of Croatia is characterized by the pedoclimatic effect of a north Mediterranean area having an impact on olives trees, which results in high-quality and distinct olive oils, rich in unsaturated fatty acids (Benčić 2000; Aparicio et al. 1994). This can represent an additional add value to countries with these positions.

4.3. Elements of olive tourism identified in Croatia

Identification of olive tourism elements in Croatia was conducted by searching relevant web pages listed in the Materials and Methods section.

Table 4: Elements of olive tourism identified in Croatia

No.	Element	Source of data	Location	Number	Percentage (%)
1	Oil mills open for visitors	Official pages of counties TBs	Istria County	14	74%
			Split-Dalmatia County	5	26%
2	Museums dedicated to olives and olive oil	Official pages of counties TBs	Istria County	1	50%
			Split-Dalmatia County	1	50%
3	Olive farms open for visitors	Official pages of counties TBs	Istria County	108	77%
			Split-Dalmatia County	32	23%
4	Protected geographical indication of olive oil origin	Official pages of the Ministry of Agriculture	Istria County	1	20%
			Primorje-Gorski Kotar County	2	40%
			Split-Dalmatia County	1	20%
			Dubrovnik-Neretva County	1	20%
5	Olive groves	Official page of the Paying Agency for Agriculture, Fisheries and Rural Development (APPRRR)	Istria County	3,648 ha	20.3%
			Primorje-Gorski Kotar County	681 ha	3.8%
			Lika-Senj County	197 ha	1.9%
			Zadar County	3,173 ha	17.7%
			Šibenik-Knin County	2,648 ha	14.8%
			Split-Dalmatia County	4,898 ha	27.3%
			Dubrovnik-Neretva County	2,699 ha	15%
6	Events/ fairs dedicated to olive oil	Official page of the olive growing and oil production magazine <i>Maslina</i>	Istria County	5	33%
			Zadar County	2	13%
			Šibenik-Knin County	1	7%
			Split-Dalmatia County	6	40%
			Zagreb city	1	7%
7	<i>Olive Oil Roads</i>	Official pages of counties TBs	Istria County	1	50%
			Split-Dalmatia County	1	50%

No.	Element	Source of data	Location	Number	Percentage (%)
8	Specialized shops for olive oil - <i>oleotece</i>	Google search with <i>oleoteca</i> as the key word	Istria County	5	23%
			Primorje-Gorski Kotar County	3	14%
			Lika-Senj County	0	0%
			Zadar County	4	18%
			Šibenik-Knin County	2	9%
			Split-Dalmatia County	4	18%
			Dubrovnik-Neretva County	4	18%

* note: TBs (Tourists boards).

The most significant number of elements of olive tourism on the territory of Croatia is identified in Istria County and Split-Dalmatia County (Table 4). This situation can be explained with the fact that these two counties have the most significant surfaces under olive production and, accordingly, the need for development of additional market possibilities for olive oil placement, one of them being olive tourism.

The existence of *Olive Oil Roads* is an assumption for further development of olive tourism at a specific area. By searching available data for Croatian area, the most significant step forward is made in Istria County, that has been conducting the *Olive Oil Roads* project for almost ten years (TB of Istria County). *Olive Oil Roads* include 108 olive growers and 14 oil mills with the possibility to accept visitors and organize olive oil tasting. At the official pages of its TB, Split-Dalmatia County has a list of 32 olive growers and five oil mills involved in the *Maslinovi puti* project. Additionally, pages of local TBs where olive oils with a protected indication of origin are located have been searched. TB of the Island of Cres contains description and contact data of local agricultural cooperative that has the possibility of accepting visitors. The list of olive growers with their contact information is available at the official pages of the TB of the Island of Krk. TB of the Island of Korčula and TB of the Island of Šolta do not contain available information on olive growers at their area.

Regional events/fairs can play an important role not only in economic growth but also in the tourist one by creating additional value to the existing tourist product (Du Rand et al. 2003; Quan and Wang 2004; Du Rand and Heath 2006, Cela et al. 2007,). There are 16 events/fairs dedicated to olives and olive oil at the Croatian area (*Maslina* magazine 2018.). According to the number of events, Istria County with five and Split-Dalmatia County with seven events are in the lead; it is interesting to point out that one event is held in the City of Zagreb, which can be an additional encouragement to olive oil promotion in the continental part of the country. Events/fairs are held during winter, spring and fall period, that additionally attracts tourists to visit olive cultivation destinations outside the tourist season.

Table 4 singles out olive tourism elements recorded in Croatia. With regard to 8 singled out factors, it can be concluded that there is a more significant number of activities required for the development of this form of tourism.

One of the obstacles regarding the further development may be constituted by the fact that browsing so many web sites were necessary, to identify the aforementioned elements, for certain elements to be set aside, that is, for their existence to be verified. It would be necessary to position all available aspects of olive tourism on TB web pages to make them more accessible to tourists during further planning.

According to the information from the Institute for Tourism, Tomas Summer research (2010, 2014 and 2017) in activities related to olive tourism at a destination during the tourists' time of stay in Croatia, trends of tourist activity on *Olive Oil Roads* can be pointed out, where including tourists in olive tourism activity has been reported, which varies by years, so 18.2% was included in the activity in 2010, 20.6% in 2014 and 9.1% in 2017 out of the total number of tourists in Croatia.

Identified elements of olive tourism in Croatia and share of tourists participating in it indicates the existence and conduction of that particular form of tourism in Croatia, which should henceforth be given extra attention in research.

5. CONCLUSION

The combination of olive growing and tourism, two quickly developing economic activities in Croatia, spontaneously asserted a new tourism product – olive tourism. This form of tourism stands out, especially because of olive oil as a tourism attraction associated with its organoleptic properties and as one of the main components of the Mediterranean diet.

Based on results we identified eight elements of olive tourism in Croatia. As expected, the counties with the highest potential for the development of olive tourism in Croatia are Istria County and Split-Dalmatia County, which have the highest number of olive farms and Oil mills open for visitors. “Among other identified products of olive tourism, there are only two Museums of olives and olive oil and two *Olive Oil Roads* that have not been adequately promoted. In last decades, a large number of olive oil events and Olive oil fairs have been organized in Croatia. Most of this events/fairs are organized in bigger cities and they are an ideal way to sell and promote olive oils. Also, there is an increase in the number of open specialized shops for olive oil – *oleotece*. Based on this results, we can conclude that Croatia have great potential and all elements necessary for further development of olive tourism. One of the limitations is the fact that information on olive growers and their tourism offer on most tourism board web pages does not exist, indicating insufficient support from local institutions. The development of *Olive Oil Roads* should be encouraged not only in the area of Istria County and Split-Dalmatia County, but also in the remaining five Adriatic counties.

In state level, there is only one official document “Croatian Tourism Development Strategy until 2020” where the development of this specific form of tourism was briefly touched, mostly with an emphasis on wine and dine theme routes. *Olive Oil Roads* were only mentioned, and this is not a sufficient level of development plan elaboration for this form of tourism which has significant development potential.

Owing to its strategic position, Croatia has a massive potential for further development of olive tourism. The proximity to outbound tourism market (Germany, Austria, Italy, Slovenia), natural range for growing olives along the Adriatic coast and production of high-quality olive oil are vital presumptions for successful planning and development of activities in olive tourism. When planning this form of tourism, efforts should be focused on the promotion of Croatia as a country of high-quality olive oils, especially through the promotional channel most frequently used by tourists. Additionally, initiation of *Olive Oil Roads* activities is necessary in all the Adriatic counties that have not initiated them up until this point. In the counties with the network of *Olive Oil Roads*, with the aim of further development, it is necessary to create routes that will include several elements of olive tourism.

The development of olive tourism will realize a series of advantages for a number of stakeholders involved. Olive growers will have a new channel for the sale of olive oil, the tourism sector will gain a new, attractive product to offer to the tourists, and the tourists will be able to experience something new, authentic and characteristic of the olive-growing region and production of olive oil.

The aforementioned research results provide an informative basis for improving the offer and developing marketing strategies for all participants of olive oil tourism. The olive oil tourism marketing strategy should be market oriented, including olive oil growers, cultural institutions, organizers of olive oil events/fairs, and all those who can contribute to creating an offer in line with the preferences and expectations of potential olive tourists.

Through the study a set of eight identified elements for developing olive tourism are given. Future research must address all parts of olive tourism market, especially to the olive tourism providers and the users (visitors) engaged in olive tourism. In future research is extremely important to explore the motivation of visitors for participating in each of the elements of olive tourism because between them can exist differences in motivation. The researchers should be focused to explore every segment involved in the elements of olive tourism and compare them to find possible differences between the groups.

In particular, for researchers focusing in analyse Croatian olive tourism, this study can facilitate the planning because gives a detailed list of olive tourism providers along the Croatian coast.

For future research it is important to apply quantitative data collection through exploratory researches.

This preliminary research was done with the use of available secondary sources available online only, to research the situation in Croatia regarding the development of olive tourism, which may, as a consequence, involve certain limitations.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that such research was necessary to assess the situation and provide guidelines for further research regarding this selective form of tourism.

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Please cite this article as:

Čehić, A., Mesić, Ž., Oplanić, M. (2020), Requirements for Development of Olive Tourism: The Case of Croatia, *Tourism and Hospitality Management*, Vol. 26, No. 1, pp. 1-14, <https://doi.org/10.20867/thm.26.1.1>



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