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Businesses

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Suggested Citation: López-Castro, Jose Antonio; Parrilla-González, Juan Antonio (2024) : Marketing strategies for olive oil: A supply-side perspective from Spain, *Businesses*, ISSN 2673-7116, MDPI, Basel, Vol. 4, Iss. 4, pp. 553-565,
<https://doi.org/10.3390/businesses4040033>

This Version is available at:

<https://hdl.handle.net/10419/338778>

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Article

Marketing Strategies for Olive Oil: A Supply-Side Perspective from Spain

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Abstract: Olive oil, a staple of the Mediterranean diet, encounters substantial commercial obstacles in Spain and other olive oil-producing nations. Historically, these obstacles have been examined from a consumer demand standpoint, focusing on aspects such as quality enhancement, pricing issues, and consumer awareness deficiencies. This study shifts the focus to the supply-side perspective, providing novel insights into the factors affecting the marketing and sale of olive oil. To investigate these factors, a comprehensive consultation with an expert panel consisting of industry leaders from olive oil mills was conducted. These experts evaluated 13 critical factors identified through a literature review and their practical experience. The findings from this panel offer immediate practical applications, emphasizing the importance of marketing strategies, professionalization, internationalization, and the utilization of social networks and e-commerce in driving olive oil sales. The implications of these findings suggest that companies must restructure to become more professional and market-oriented to navigate and surmount the traditional commercial barriers in the olive oil industry. Overall, this research enhances our understanding of the supply-side dynamics influencing the marketing and sale of olive oil in the Spanish context and beyond.

Keywords: olive oil; marketing; sales; expert panel; internationalization



Citation: López-Castro, J.A.; Parrilla-González, J.A. Marketing Strategies for Olive Oil: A Supply-Side Perspective from Spain. *Businesses* **2024**, *4*, 553–565. <https://doi.org/10.3390/businesses4040033>

Academic Editor: Lincoln C. Wood

Received: 5 July 2024

Revised: 16 August 2024

Accepted: 30 August 2024

Published: 12 October 2024



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1. Introduction

The olive oil industry is of enormous economic, cultural, nutritional, and environmental importance, playing a crucial role in the global economy and in the lives of numerous communities. This industry is not only vital due to its economic value but also due to its impact on the Mediterranean diet, which is globally recognized for its health benefits. Exploring this industry offers opportunities to delve into various fields, from agronomy and marketing to nutrition and sustainability, underscoring the multifaceted relevance of its study.

In particular, understanding the factors that influence olive oil-producing companies in the marketing and sale of their products is essential for developing strategies that enable these companies to adapt to changing market demands. Despite extensive research on the marketing of agri-food products, including significant studies on the marketing of wine, cheese, and craft beer, the literature on olive oil marketing from a supply-side perspective remains limited. For example, Sassenber et al. [1] and Pickering et al. [2] have explored wine marketing, while Papoutsi et al. [3] have focused on cheese marketing. In the craft beer sector, Haddad et al. [4] have analyzed marketing strategies, and Loh and Hassan [5] have investigated food safety in food trucks. However, olive oil, despite its growing popularity as a healthy and nutritious food, has not been the subject of exhaustive studies from the supply-side perspective.

The continuous growth in olive oil production and demand, driven by its perceived health benefits and increased awareness of the importance of a balanced diet, has led to

greater investment in technology and production efficiency [6,7]. Nevertheless, this growth also presents significant challenges, such as competition among producers, the need to ensure product quality, and the provision of adequate information to consumers. Therefore, this study aims to identify the key factors that influence the marketing and sale of olive oils from the supply-side perspective, addressing a critical gap in the existing literature.

The primary objective of this research is to identify the most influential factors in the marketing and sale of olive oil from a supply-side perspective, providing olive oil-producing companies with the necessary tools to improve their marketing strategies [8]. To achieve this objective, the research is structured as follows: first, the theoretical framework is presented, describing the historical and current context of the olive oil industry. Next, a literature review is conducted, highlighting the most influential factors in the marketing and sale of olive oils, culminating in a table of 13 important factors for the commercialization of these products. Subsequently, an expert panel is conducted to identify the key factors and formulate specific recommendations for supplying companies. Finally, the conclusions summarize the work carried out and present the practical implications of the study.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Theoretical Framework

This section presents a review of the literature on the most influential factors in the marketing and sale of olive oil, from a supply-side perspective [9]. We reference previous studies that have conducted an overall analysis of these factors in order to identify relevant and influential factors to explore in our study of olive oil companies. We therefore start with an exploratory analysis of different business perspectives in order to establish a theoretical framework on which to base our study [10], centring on the variables of quality, origin, certifications, marketing, price, packaging, and sustainability.

Before that, we examine the data and statistics on the production, marketing and sales, and consumption of extra virgin olive oil, as well as the structure of the national olive oil industry and the operators that comprise said industry. By so doing, we aim to highlight the importance of this study and the relevance of addressing the marketing problems that olive oil faces at a global level.

2.2. Background of the Olive Oil Industry

Spain is the world's leading producer of olive oil, accounting for approximately 50% of global production. Italy is the second biggest producer, followed by Greece and Tunisia [11]. In the European Union, production in the 2022/2023 season as dropped by 33.8% compared to the previous season. In Spain, it fell by 47.7%, while Italy and Portugal also experienced a significant decline. Greece, on the other hand, increased its production by 50.9% [12].

According to the International Olive Council (IOC), global olive oil production decreased by 19.7% in the 2022/2023 season compared to the previous one. The main imports in the European Union are those of Spain and Italy, with increases of 38.6% and 32.2%, respectively. In terms of exports, they fell in France (−63.9%), Spain (−35.8%), and Italy (−20.9%), but registered an increase in Greece (14.3%).

Climatic factors such as droughts and frosts can cause fluctuations in olive oil production [13]. Prices at source have increased in Spain due to the unprecedented drop in production. World consumption in the 2022/2023 season decreased by 5.7%, and Spain was the European Union country registering the biggest drop (27.6%).

Olive oil is an essential component of the Mediterranean diet and has associated benefits for cardiovascular health and longevity. Although Mediterranean countries are the biggest consumers of olive oil, consumption is expanding globally due to its nutritional benefits [14]. The sustainable production of olive oil is becoming more prominent, with practices such as regenerative agriculture, efficient water management, and the use of renewable energy [13].

2.3. Factors Influencing the Marketing and Sale of Olive Oils

In this section, we conduct a literature review of the factors that influence the marketing and sale of olive oil and consumer perceptions of it. After doing so, we can then perform a methodological analysis and address our research objective. The variables that we seek to analyze are the quality of the oil and its certifications, the timing of harvest, the origin, marketing strategies, price of the product, packaging, sustainability, languages, type of company (cooperative), varieties of olives, presence on social networks, technology and modernization, and lastly, health.

The first factor we study is the quality of the olive oil, as it is critical for marketing and sales as well as consumer perceptions. Companies aim to produce high-quality oils, highlighting their unique characteristics such as taste, aroma, and colour [15]. Consumers value quality that meets their sensory expectations and provides health benefits, which in turn secures their loyalty and encourages positive recommendations.

Quality also adds value to the product and sets it apart in a competitive market, such that consumers are willing to pay more for a high-quality olive oil [16]. When companies meet production, quality, and food safety standards, this contributes to the prestige and reputation of the brand [17]. In addition, they must comply with national and international regulations in order to access new markets [18].

The timing of harvest also influences the quality of the oil. An early harvest results in a higher-quality olive oil, with lower fatty acid content and more antioxidants [19]. Companies that opt for this early oil obtain a more intense, fresher flavour, which makes it attractive for consumers who want high-quality, strong flavours [20].

Recognized certifications allow companies to differentiate their products and build trust with consumers [21]. Notable certifications include Protected Designation of Origin (PDO), Protected Geographical Indication (PGI), and the IOC quality seal [22].

In short, the quality of the olive oil and the timing of harvest are crucial factors for its marketing and sale and perception by consumers. Consumer satisfaction, market differentiation and regulatory compliance are key aspects influenced by product quality, while an early harvest endows the oil with distinctive sensory characteristics that are appreciated by consumers and chefs [23]. However, other factors such as the extraction process, storage, and advertising also play an important role in the successful marketing and sale of olive oil [24].

The place of origin of olive oil is important for consumers, who value regions with a tradition and reputation in olive oil production [25,26]. Drawing attention to the origin in the marketing adds value and credibility to the product and brings to mind tourist experiences and emotions related to the region [27,28]. The origin can also be a factor for differentiating the oil and positioning it in premium market segments [29].

The brand image is fundamental in the marketing and sale of olive oil, setting it apart in a competitive market and building loyalty and trust in consumers [18,26]. A good marketing strategy can influence the marketing and sale of the product, as well as the perception of its value and positioning in premium segments [30,31]. The brand image helps it to stand out on the shelves and capture consumers' attention in a saturated market [32,33].

The price is another key factor, as it influences the demand, competitiveness, and profitability of the product [9,34]. A competitive price attracts consumers, while an excessively high or low one can affect the perception of quality [35]. Moreover, the price can influence the perception of value, positioning the product in premium segments [18,36].

The packaging also plays a crucial role in the marketing and sale of olive oil. It protects the product and conveys the brand identity [10]. An attractive and distinctive design by the company catches the consumer's eye and improves the perception of the product [37]. The label provides the consumer with essential information and a satisfactory experience [38]. Generally speaking, a well-designed package contributes to the successful marketing of olive oil [33].

Sustainability in the production and marketing of olive oil is crucial due to the growing demand for sustainable products by consumers and the importance for olive oil-producing companies of building a positive brand image [15,39]. The concept of sustainability encompasses sustainable agricultural practices, energy efficiency, social responsibility, and sustainable labelling [39]. The adoption of sustainable practices by companies can build trust and secure consumers' loyalty, as well as facilitating access to demanding international markets [40–43]. Furthermore, sustainability contributes to the conservation of the environment and social aspects such as labour equity and the wellbeing of agricultural workers [44,45]. In general, sustainability is not only ethically desirable, but also offers long-term business benefits [21].

Languages play a crucial role in the global marketing and sale of olive oil. They make it possible to reach different international markets, connect with consumers, and adapt culturally [46]. What is more, languages ensure effective communication and resonate with local consumers [47,48]. In a globalized market, mastering several languages offers a competitive advantage by allowing access to a wider audience [49]. In addition, regulations require labelling in the country's official language, which makes language a decisive factor [50].

Being a cooperative is also relevant in the marketing and sale of olive oil, since it offers advantages in terms of alliances, control of the value chain, economies of scale, market access, and social responsibility [44,51–53]. A cooperative can strengthen its position in the market and achieve long-term success [54].

Olive varieties are fundamental in the marketing and sale of olive oil due to their influence on flavour, aroma, quality, and nutritional profile. Each variety has distinctive characteristics, making it possible to offer a wide range of olive oils to satisfy consumer preferences [33]. Furthermore, some varieties are considered suitable for producing high-quality extra virgin olive oil, which generates greater demand and enhances the value of the product [55]. Designations of origin also play an important role, offering guarantees of authenticity and quality by the producing companies [24]. Some varieties are better suited to different culinary uses, which makes it possible to target specific market segments [38]. In addition, highlighting native varieties can help showcase cultural aspects and regional traditions [56].

Social networks and the internet are fundamental tools for the marketing and sale of olive oil, reaching a global audience and allowing direct interaction with consumers [57,58]. Attractive content, segmented promotions, and data analysis contribute to the success of the marketing strategy [16,59].

Technology and modernization are crucial elements in the marketing and sale of olive oil, improving efficiency, quality, traceability, and innovation in products and packaging [56,60,61]. They also facilitate the management of the supply chain and help ensure the product reaches the consumer in optimal conditions [62].

Finally, health plays an essential role in the marketing of olive oil due to its benefits for the heart and brain, weight control, and disease prevention [63]. Its nutritional profile and the studies that provide evidence of these benefits positively influence consumer perceptions and stimulate demand for the product [64].

To provide the reader with a useful summary of the most important factors affecting olive oil-producing companies when it comes to the marketing and sale of their product, we present Table 1, below:

Table 1. Factors for the marketing and sale of olive oils.

Factor	Description	Author
Quality	This factor is hugely important as companies seek to produce high-quality oils, contributing to the prestige and reputation of the brand.	[15–18]
Timing of the harvest	This factor influences the quality of the oil, yielding a fresher, more intensely flavoured product, which is a strong selling point.	[19–22]
Origin	This factor adds value and credibility to the product, evoking experiences and emotions related to the region where it is produced.	[25–29]
Brand image	This factor is fundamental for differentiating the product in a competitive market. A good marketing strategy influences consumer perceptions and the marketing and sale of the product.	[18,26,30–33]
Price	This factor influences the demand, competitiveness, and profitability of the product for the company.	[9,18,34–36]
Bottling and packaging	This factor plays a very important role as it protects the product and conveys the brand identity.	[10,33,38]
Sustainability	This factor builds a positive brand image by responding to the strong consumer demand for sustainable products. It covers sustainable agricultural practices, energy efficiency, social responsibility, and sustainable labelling. It generates trust, consumer loyalty, and access to international markets.	[40–43,45]
Languages	This factor allows olive oil-producing companies to reach different international markets, connect with consumers, and adapt culturally.	[46–50]
Cooperative: social economy	This factor is crucial in the marketing and sale of olive oil since it offers advantages in terms of alliances, control of the value chain, economies of scale, market access, and social responsibility.	[44,51–54]
Varieties of olives	This factor influences the marketing and sale of the oil due to the taste, aroma, quality and nutritional profile. Some varieties are better suited to different culinary uses. Certain varieties can showcase cultural aspects and regional traditions.	[24,33,38,55,56]
Social networks and the internet	This factor is fundamental in the marketing and sale of olive oil, allowing direct interaction with consumers as well as access to a global audience, by creating attractive content, promotions, and other marketing strategies.	[16,57–59]
Technology and modernization	This factor improves efficiency, quality, traceability, and innovation in products and packaging. In addition, it facilitates the management of the supply chain and helps ensure the product reaches the consumer in optimal conditions.	[56,60–62]
Health	This factor is fundamental in the marketing and sale of olive oil, given its benefits for the heart and brain, weight control, and disease prevention.	[7,63,64]

Source: By the authors.

2.4. Methodology

In this section, we present the methodology applied in this research, which follows the process established by Parrilla-González and Ortega-Alonso [61] as a model of expert panel methodology applied to the olive oil sector with scientific impact in their study of the dimensions of social innovation in the olive oil industry and the study of Sánchez Escobar et al. [65] on innovation and transfer in the olive oil industry using an expert panel approach. Given the characteristics of this research, the chosen methodological tool is an expert panel, which has enabled the study of the variables that companies consider fundamental for the marketing and sale of olive oil. To that end, one of the aims of this research is to build a model of the key factors in the marketing and sale of olive oil.

We thus put together a group of different types of experts related to the marketing and sale of olive oils, drawn from the main Spanish olive oil mills. To implement the

methodology, we first developed a questionnaire, which was given to the experts with an explanation of the content and how the methodology works, highlighting that it is based on the principles of olive oil marketing and sales.

An expert panel can be defined as a group of independent specialists with experience in the topic to be evaluated, who are asked to make a consensus judgement on that topic [66]. The advantages of this method primarily lie in the experts' in-depth knowledge of the subject under evaluation, which enables considerable time and cost savings, lends greater credibility to the conclusions, and means it can be adapted to any different situations that may arise as it is being implemented.

Among the limitations of this method, it is worth mentioning that experts who are older or of a higher professional rank can impose their opinions on others and that there is no guarantee that the results will be consistent with other data relating to the variable under analysis.

Figure 1 below sets out the expert panel procedures, which have been divided into 4 phases:

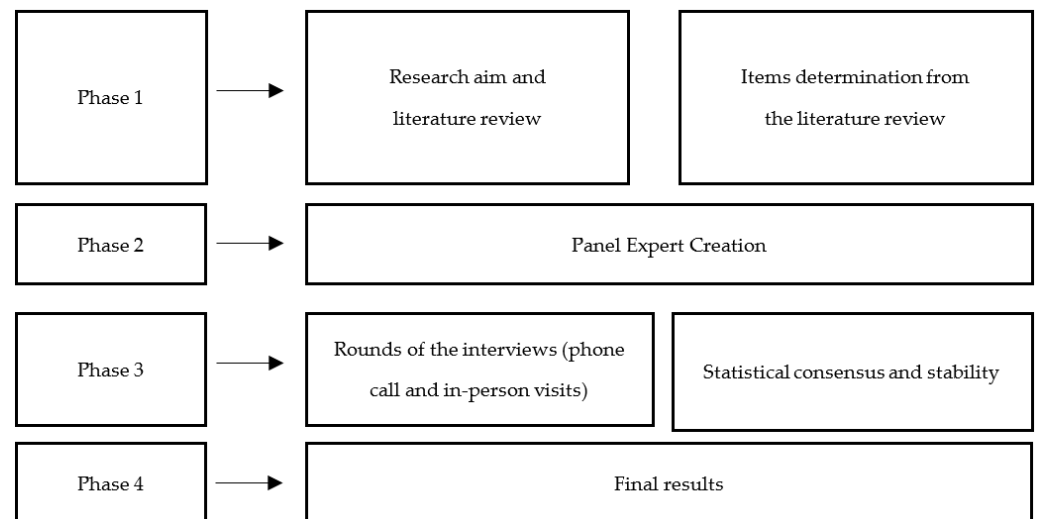


Figure 1. Expert panel proceedings. Source: by the authors.

The expert selection criteria were based on studying those olive oil companies from Andalusia, which account for 50% of the olive oil produced in Spain and 35% worldwide [11], whose turnover exceeds EUR 15 million, who have an olive oil bottling line, and who have been engaged in international export activities for more than 10 years (taking 2013 as a reference year). Another absolute prerequisite for participating in the group was that the experts must have held representative positions on the management and executive boards of olive oil companies and have recognized expertise on the subject under evaluation, applied to the industry in question. As a result, the group of experts that participated in this research consisted of 23 people (Table 2).

While the final number of experts who participated in this research is small, it can be considered appropriate, given that the research on the subject under analysis here is in its early stages and there are few experts to consult on the subject who are sufficiently knowledgeable to reliably respond to the questionnaires [67,68].

Regarding the characteristics of the questionnaire, it was structured with 13 items or statements, corresponding to the definitions formulated in the theoretical framework on factors in the marketing and sale of olive oil, as shown in Table 3. The mean score was structured on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 means "totally disagree" and 7 is "totally agree". Each expert answered by indicating one of the possible options. The graph shows the mean values of the answers to contextualize the factors shaping companies' marketing and sale of olive oils.

Table 2. Technical data sheet on the expert panel.

Sample Size	23 Experts
Profile	Board chairmen and managers of olive oil companies focused on marketing and sales from Andalusia. Criteria based on studying those Andalusian olive oil companies whose turnover exceeds EUR 15 million, who have an olive oil bottling line, and who have been engaged in international export activities in the last 10 years (taking 2013 as a reference year).
Date of the empirical work	May 2023
Type of study	In-person expert panel

Source: By the authors.

Table 3. Items corresponding to the factors in the marketing and sale of olive oils.

Item	Description
i1	Quality as a differentiating factor in the marketing and sale of olive oils. Companies seek to gain a better reputation by improving the quality of olive oil production.
i2	The timing of the harvest as a factor that differentiates the company and develops an organizational culture oriented towards early harvesting, producing fresher oils and therefore seeking out market niches for the marketing and sale of olive oils.
i3	Origin as a factor that promotes the use of PDO or PGI labels.
i4	Brand image as a factor focused on the development of marketing variables.
i5	Price as a factor that influences demand.
i6	Packaging as a factor for protecting the product and conveying the brand and its values through the development of marketing variables.
i7	Sustainability as an emerging factor and generator of a positive company image for the marketing and sale of olive oils.
i8	Languages as a factor to facilitate access to different international markets, connect with consumers, and adapt culturally.
i9	Social economy or cooperative legal form as a factor linked to social responsibility and the values of cooperation and cooperative ethics for the marketing and sale of olive oils.
i10	Olive oil varieties as a factor that enables adaptability to different culinary uses.
i11	Social networks and the internet as a factor linked to the digitalization of companies.
i12	Technology and modernization as a factor aimed at improving product quality and traceability.
i13	Health as a factor highlighting the health benefits of olive oils and differentiating this fat from others.

Source: By the authors.

The procedure for administering the questionnaire involved the selection of experts. This was followed up with a phone call and in-person visits to get to know the olive oil mills and companies dedicated to the sale of olive oil. By so doing, we could confirm that the wording of the questionnaires was clear and that deadlines were met and check the answers provided by the experts for their subsequent statistical treatment.

This statistical treatment was carried out using an Excel spreadsheet from Microsoft Office 2020 software. We assigned numerical values from 1 to 7 depending on the possible answers presented in the questionnaire. The arithmetic mean was used as a measure of the concentration of the opinions given by the experts. This is the sum of all the values divided by the number of values. As a measure to assess the statistical significance of the agreement reached by the expert panel, Pearson's coefficient of variation was used, which is the ratio of the standard deviation to the mean. The higher this co-efficient, the greater

the heterogeneity in the experts' opinions. For the purposes of this study, a consensus is considered to have been reached when the level of agreement on the mean is significant, that is, when Pearson's coefficient of variation is less than or equal to 0.3.

3. Results

After consulting the expert panel and assigning scores to the proposed items, we extracted the centrality and dispersion, which were precise and reliable measures that allowed us to interpret the findings and design a model defining the main factors that influence the marketing and sale of olive oils.

From this table, and based on the in-depth review of the literature carried out, 13 statements were composed about factors in the marketing and sale of olive oils. The people in the panel of experts responded to these statements. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Responses to items on the factors in the marketing and sale of olive oils. Measures of centrality and dispersion.

Item	Mean	Variance	SD	CV	q1	q2	q3	IQR
i1	5.2	0.81	0.90	0.17	5.00	5.00	6.00	1.00
i2	4.8	0.45	0.67	0.14	4.50	5.00	5.00	0.50
i3	6.1	0.48	0.69	0.11	6.00	6.00	7.00	1.00
i4	6.5	0.62	0.79	0.12	6.00	7.00	7.00	1.00
i5	4.3	0.96	0.98	0.23	4.00	4.00	5.00	1.00
i6	5.7	0.47	0.69	0.12	5.00	6.00	6.00	1.00
i7	3.9	0.39	0.63	0.16	3.50	4.00	4.00	0.50
i8	6.3	0.57	0.75	0.12	6.00	6.00	7.00	1.00
i9	3.8	0.36	0.60	0.16	3.00	4.00	4.00	1.00
i10	4.0	0.59	0.77	0.19	3.00	4.00	4.50	1.50
i11	6.2	0.42	0.65	0.11	6.00	6.00	7.00	1.00
i12	4.0	0.59	0.77	0.19	3.00	4.00	4.50	1.50
i13	5.0	0.77	0.88	0.17	5.00	5.00	5.50	0.50

Source: By the authors.

As can be seen in the table, the dispersion is generally minimal, with no values exceeding $CV < 0.2$. The responses are thus very close to one another, which indicates that most experts have very similar opinions about the importance assigned to the items.

Figure 2 is extracted from these findings; it corresponds to a Likert scale, graphically depicting the key points in the marketing and sale of olive oil for olive oil cooperatives.

Regarding the items on the key marketing and sales factors for the olive oil mills, items i3, i4, i8, and i11 stand out for scoring more than 6 out of 7 points on the scale of responses. Item i3 concerns the origin of the product or the certifications of origin such as PDO and PGI, as well as the production in unique territories or olive oil-producing areas; it is found to be an important factor when it comes to marketing and sales, as pointed out by authors such as Pérez and Gracia [69]. Another notable item as a marketing and sales factor for olive oil mills is the brand image (i4). This is understood as the marketing and communication tools that highlight the values and ideas of a brand in the market, which authors such as Zamora et al. [70] have identified as indispensable for the efficient marketing and sale of olive oils. The third noteworthy item is languages (item i8), since they are a key factor for olive oil companies seeking to internationalize and break into new markets in order to diversify and gain market share. They are also an indicator of companies' professionalization and enhancement of their social capital, in line with the ideas expressed by Viruel et al. [71]. Lastly, the fourth notable item is social networks and

the internet (i11), mainly because the expert panel points out that olive oil companies take on the challenge of promoting sales through social networks and e-commerce by creating web pages, developing new channels, and improving their marketing and sales. This finding is in line with the claims made by authors such as Bernal Jurado et al. [56] and Fernández-Uclés et al. [72].

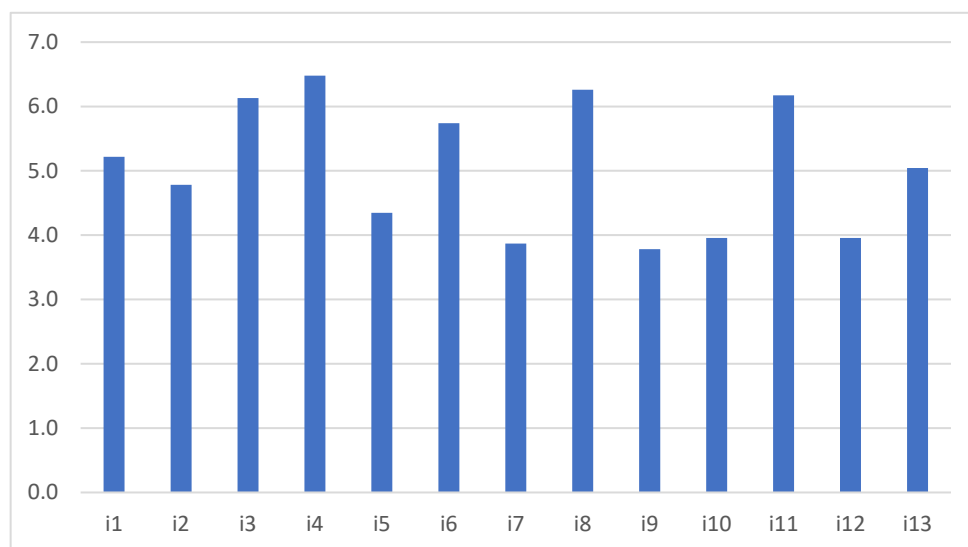


Figure 2. Likert scale of the items on the factors in the marketing and sale of olive oil. Source: By the authors.

On the other hand, the items that received the lowest scores from the expert panel—specifically, a score below 4 points out of 7—are i7, i9, i10, and i12. Regarding i7, which relates sustainability to the marketing and sale of olive oils, it is worth noting that the expert panel does not consider sustainability to be a relevant factor, as indicated in the study by Parrilla-González and Ortega-Alonso [61] on the sustainable development goals and the development of the industry itself. The experts believe that this factor is not sufficiently mature enough to incorporate it as a key factor for marketing and sales. There are sustainability programmes promoting certified olive oils—such as the Olivares Vivos programme [73]—which encourage the incorporation of certifications for sustainable olive groves. The programmes that are being developed will probably change people’s opinions about the influence of sustainability on the marketing and sale of olive oils, but for the time being, they are not important enough for this item to be considered key. Another item that has relatively little impact on the marketing and sale of olive oils is the cooperative legal form, with experts indicating that the legal form has minimal influence. Some studies, such as those by Sánchez-Martínez et al. [74] and Moral and Uclés [75], identify the degree of innovation in olive oil companies, and especially cooperatives, as a factor that improves the competitiveness and sales of olive oils, but in this case, experts do not consider it relevant. The third of these relatively unimportant items is i10, regarding olive varieties. They are not considered to have a major impact on the promotion of culinary uses, mainly due to the general level of knowledge about the industry and the lack of information provided to chefs and professionals [76], so experts deem it a variable that has little influence on marketing and sales. Finally, i12, which relates to the technology and modernization of olive oil mills, is also one of the least valued by experts. They consider its impact to be greater on the productive side than on marketing and sales, with only an indirect influence on the latter.

4. Discussion

To conclude this discussion, we note the items that are considered important for marketing and sales but are not key factors, whose values range between 4 and 6 out

of 7. Specifically, these items are i1, i2, i5, i6, and i13, which correspond, respectively, to the quality of the product, the timing of the harvest, the price, the packaging, and the healthy aspects. The experts emphasize that these are fundamental aspects and that consumers deem them to be minimum requirements for the sale of an olive oil, as reported in previous studies [71]. Since these items are considered basic conditions, the experts gave higher scores to items that wholly affect business management, such as professionalization, internationalization, digitalization, and marketing and communication. Conversely, they assigned lower values to aspects that they consider to be of relatively little importance or only relevant for technical production, such as those described in the previous paragraph relating to sustainability, technification and modernization, or olive varieties.

Furthermore, as detailed above, aspects such as product quality, harvesting time, price, packaging, and health aspects are considered important for marketing and sales, although they are not perceived as key factors, as they are seen as minimum requirements expected by consumers. However, to stand out in a competitive market, companies need to focus on strategic differentiators such as professionalization, internationalization, and digitalization. These elements have a significant impact on business management and should be the focus of marketing and communication strategies. Furthermore, although technical aspects such as sustainability and technification received lower priority, integrating them in a way that supports key areas of management can strengthen long-term competitiveness. In short, companies need to go beyond basic requirements and focus on strategic factors that add value and enable effective differentiation in the market.

5. Conclusions

In this research article, we have conducted an exhaustive review of the literature on the key aspects of marketing and sales in the olive oil industry. Following this analysis of the literature, we summarized the 13 key factors identified (Table 1).

We then consulted an expert panel composed of a small group of members of the management and executive boards of cooperatives and mills that sell olive oil. From them, we gained relevant information to inform an empirical understanding of the most relevant factors for the efficient marketing and sale of olive oils, as well as those that can be considered somewhat less or minimally important. The results have allowed an in-depth discussion of the key marketing and sales factors employed by olive oil mills, which represents a powerful tool and guide with practical implications for mills.

Specifically, from an academic point of view, this article offers a new scientific perspective into olive oil studies offering a new contribution to the research on the efficient marketing of olive oils, identifying the most relevant variables and items to consider in marketing and sales strategies. The practical implications of this article will help companies to better choose their strategies for the marketing of olive oils in supermarkets and for the export of their olive oils by using effective marketing strategies. Some key issues that emerge are that languages, social networks, a commitment to origin, and a good brand image are important for developing the marketing work of companies. On the other hand, other issues such as whether it is a social economy company, or the varieties of olives that are marketed, as well as whether a company is more or less sustainable, are aspects that were considered less relevant, probably because there is some barrier or difficulty when it comes to selling these products with these premises in a supermarket.

Finally, with regard to the limitations and future research lines of this paper, we find those inherent to the methodology used, although it offers a vision based on experience in marketing and sales. In a subsequent investigation, it will be possible to establish, on the one hand, a quantitative data analysis as a complement to this paper, and, on the other hand, the possibility of studying a larger sample of companies, segmenting with new premises such as company size, legal form, or production method.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, J.A.L.-C.; methodology, J.A.L.-C. and J.A.P.-G.; formal analysis, J.A.P.-G.; writing—original draft preparation, J.A.L.-C.; writing—review and editing, J.A.P.-G.; supervision, J.A.P.-G. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Ethical review and approval were waived for this study due to all data processing has been carried out in accordance with the Spanish national law (Ley Orgánica 3/2018, de 5 de diciembre, de Protección de Datos Personales y garantía de los derechos digitales).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding authors.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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