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RESUMEN AMPLIADO

Título: KEYS TO INTERNATIONALISATION FOR THE SPANISH AGRICULTURAL FOOD SECTOR

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Resumen:

1.INTRODUCTION

Analysing the export activity of the olive sector is a task of vital importance to obtain conclusions, guidelines, resources and appropriate strategies to guarantee the success of olive companies and ensure a more competitive development of this activity (Parras et al., 2013). Olive mills are beginning to respond to the demands and aspirations of a global world through internationalisation (Parra-López et al., 2016) and are facing a unique opportunity to develop global initiatives capable of taking advantage of the extraordinary richness of olive culture.

It is also important to highlight the historical, heritage, social and economic value that the olive oil sector gives to the Mediterranean regions, where olive oil is the central element of the so-called Mediterranean Diet, declared Intangible Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in 2010 (Medina, 2018). In this way, we should point out that there are two types of exporting companies in relation to when they start this process. Some do so

within the first three years of their creation (Knight et al., 2004; Knight and Liesch, 2016), which are called Born Global and must also generate at least 10 per cent of total sales in foreign countries (Crick, 2009) and others that do so later (from here onwards not Born Global).

Born Global companies play a key role in economic systems (Zander et al., 2015) as they contribute to GDP and employment growth and thus to territorial development. Moreover, these types of companies can increase sales more quickly and, consequently, the chances of higher profits. In short, the sooner companies manage to export, the sooner all these positive effects will occur, especially in a sector with historical marketing problems (Parras et al., 2013). Of course, for companies to internationalise at an accelerated pace and become Born Global, it will be necessary for them to follow a set of international market orientation (IMOS), international network orientation (INOS) and international entrepreneurship (IEOS) strategies.

Given the importance of the Spanish olive sector and its weight in global production (Informe de Coyuntura Oleícola, 2021) and in the field of internationalisation, the research objective of this article is to study the need for companies to implement each of the strategies mentioned in the previous paragraph and the necessary combination of these strategies in order to determine which are the most appropriate to lead to better results and, in this way, enable olive companies to become Born Global.

This article begins with a review of the literature that provides a solvent theoretical framework for the study of the weight of the olive oil sector at a national level and the definition of internationalisation orientation strategies, studying in depth the different typologies related to the object of study. Subsequently, the methodological section is dealt with, through the application of the Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) method using the fuzzy sets approach (fsQCA), for the establishment of study variables on the most appropriate internationalisation strategies for the companies that make up the olive oil sector that the Sabi database has available. The results obtained are interpreted in the form of a discussion, linked to the objective of our research, as well as proposing practical implications for founders and/or managers of olive oil companies and presenting the limitations of the study and future research. Finally, a series of conclusions are drawn regarding the necessary implementation of these strategies in

companies and the main effects and repercussions of their development and implementation in the olive oil sector.

2.THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

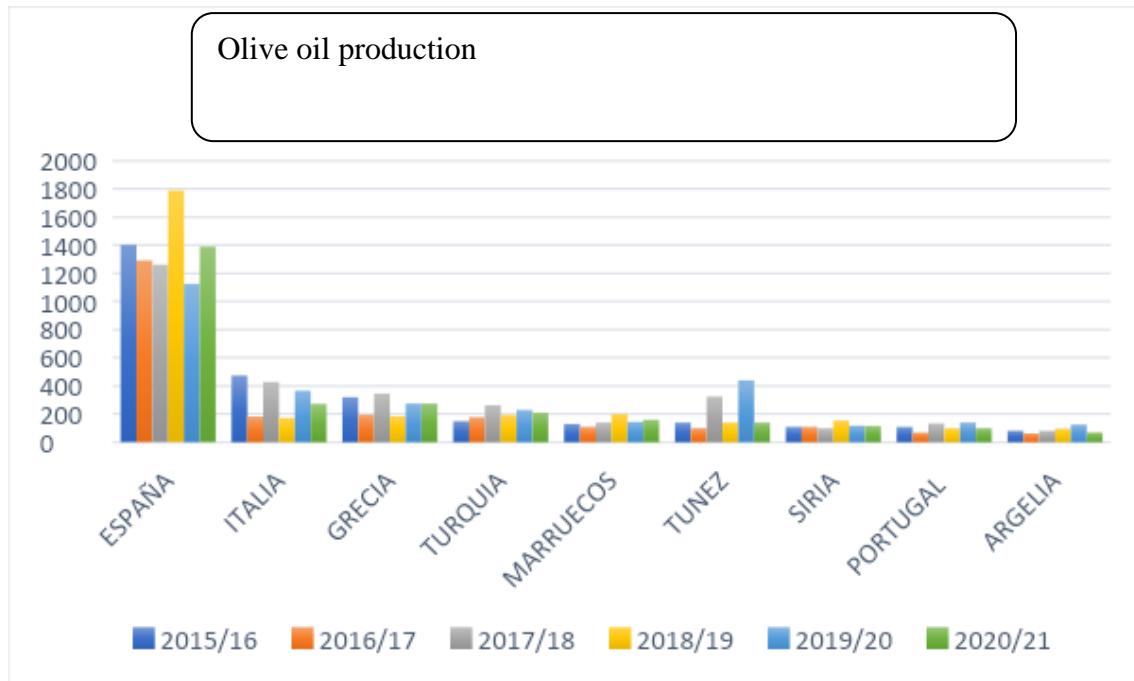
2.1.Importance of olive oil cultivation

In recent decades, olive oil consumption has grown steadily worldwide and is now regularly consumed in 164 countries (Cárdenas and Vilar, 2012). However, consumption in the major producers, i.e. Italy, Spain and Greece, still accounts for more than 42% of the world total, with per capita consumption of 10.3 kg/year, 11.4 kg/year and 15.5 kg/year, respectively (IOC, 2021).

According to Gómez and Parras (2017), these figures give an incomplete idea of the consumption pattern in these producer countries, as they do not refer to a single product but to olive oils as a whole, which can also act as alternative products (and even substitutes when there is a lack of effective differentiation on the part of the consumer). Thus, the percentage of virgin olive oils (VOO) consumed in Spanish households represents only 35-45 % (MAPAMA, 2021), far from the 70-80 % that these oils represent in Italy, and closer to 50-60 % in Greece, although it is worth noting the great importance of self-consumption for the Greek olive oil sector.

When analysing the national market, we can see in graph 1 that, although Spain is the main producer country, the percentage of virgin olive oil consumption in households is low, as can be seen in table 1, with the distribution of this olive oil consumption being very uneven between the different regions, in some cases up to 6 kilograms per person per year, as in the case of Murcia and Cantabria, for example. What is most striking in this analysis is that the consumption of olive oil (containing exclusively refined olive oil and virgin olive oil) is higher than that of virgin olive oil.

Graph 1: Olive oil production in the Mediterranean basin (tonnes)



Source: own elaboration based on IOC data

In summary, due to the importance of the Spanish olive oil sector for the production and export of olive oil worldwide, it is interesting to know the keys that are necessary for companies in the olive oil sector to become international in the shortest possible time after their creation.

2.2. Internationalisation strategies in the olive sector

To address product commercialisation challenges, firms often follow a gradual or accelerated internationalisation process (Paul and Rosado-Serrano, 2019). The gradual model focuses on stage-based internationalisation, where firms first target countries that are physically and culturally closer and then move to countries further away. Thus, at each stage they reduce uncertainty and expand their investment (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977). The accelerated internationalisation model focuses on Born Global firms, which are characterised by internationalisation within three years of founding (Knight et al., 2004; Knight and Liesch, 2016) and generate at least 10 per cent of total sales in foreign countries (Crick, 2009) and are proactive, innovative and competitive (Etemad, 2019).

One of the factors that may influence the pace of internationalisation of firms could be the strategies they carry out to adapt their business to the volatile foreign market environment (Falahat et al., 2018). Therefore, our theoretical framework focuses on

proposing a set of strategies aimed at business internationalisation from a market, network and entrepreneurship perspective, which imply that the firm can initiate an accelerated internationalisation process. On this basis, three important propositions are put forward in order to develop a subsequent methodology focused on QCA analysis.

2.2.1. International Market Orientation Strategies (IMOS)

They are those that are customer-centric, coordinate and plan on an organisation-wide basis and are externally focused (Jansson et al., 2017). Thus, according to Daengs and Soemantri (2020) the main objective of market orientation is to provide greater value to the consumer based on knowledge derived from customer and competitor analysis, whereby this knowledge is acquired and distributed among the elements of the organisation and enables small agri-food manufacturers to improve their capabilities and compete with other larger players, seek opportunities and earn higher profits (Kamarulzaman et al., 2021). Therefore, market knowledge can influence the tailoring of the product to the customer's needs by obtaining information on market size, product characteristics, existing infrastructures, labour conditions, currency type or financial transactions (Zakery and Saremi, 2020).

In summary, following IMOS entails obtaining objective knowledge of the foreign market (e.g. through market research), as well as knowledge derived from the experience of the founder and/or export manager from previous internationalisation processes (e.g. knowledge of customers, markets, competitors, institutions, etc.), since companies wishing to internationalise should review the experiential knowledge of staff in foreign markets, as it influences and improves market orientation (Faroque et al., 2021). This allows them to adapt the product to the needs, tastes and demands of potential customers. Therefore, foreign market orientation is important to accelerate the process of business internationalisation. According to the theoretical approach, those companies that develop internationally with experience in internationalisation or that have years of experience in the international market thanks to export initiatives and institutions such as the Spanish ICEX-NEXT programme for the support of internationalisation, will be developing international market orientation initiatives (IMOS). In line with the above arguments, the following proposition is put forward:

Proposition 1: International market orientation strategies (IMOS) are necessary for the internationalisation of Born Global olive companies.

2.2.2. International Network Orientation Strategies (INOS)

These are oriented towards creating international networks. Johanson and Mattsson (1988) propose a networking model in which firms can overcome their limitations in foreign markets by acquiring resources, technology and knowledge through their position in business networks. Thus, according to Kurniawan et al. (2020) networking enables the firm to obtain, create and share knowledge and establish a partnership with key stakeholders, including customers to consolidate strategic partnerships, as well as to obtain information and competencies quickly, which consequently makes a firm strategically agile as it is well positioned in its core strategic network. Thus, by having this positioning, firms can capture better and faster opportunities and cope with any potential competition and threats (Liu and Yang, 2019). In this way, firms can successfully internationalise by building and developing meaningful positions in these foreign networks (Sanyal et al., 2020).

According to Kryeziu et al. (2021) firms acquire knowledge, experience and information from international networks. Thus, knowledge is used to improve product quality, experience is used to implement the knowledge accumulated by international networks and compete in international markets, and information gathered from international networks is used to satisfy customer tastes, adapt products accordingly and set competitive prices. Likewise, attendance at international trade fairs is particularly relevant in terms of gaining knowledge, experience and information, since not only contacts are established, but direct knowledge of the tastes of customers and distributors is obtained, which adds value to the product on offer. The socialisation that takes place at trade fairs plays an important role in building and developing relationships (Gopalakrishna et al., 2019). In this direction, previous studies show that participation in international trade fairs creates an excellent opportunity to enter new markets for companies, especially for SMEs, leading to an increase in exports that facilitates the internationalisation of their business (Kalafsky and Gress, 2020; Kryeziu et al., 2021; Mendonça-Silva et al., 2022).

The ability to network is positively related to the marketing activities undertaken by the firm. In this work marketing activities are considered to be planning, developing distribution channels, pricing and developing innovations (Gilmore et al., 2006). Thus, marketing is an important conduit through which the firm interacts in target markets, as well as it should help early internationalising firms to lead to serve international customers more effectively in an uncertain market environment (Falahat et al., 2018). In line with the above arguments the following proposition is put forward:

Proposition 2. International network orientation strategies (INOS) are necessary for the internationalisation of Born Global olive companies.

2.2.3. Strategies for international entrepreneurship orientation (IEOS)

These focus on the founder's entrepreneurial and innovative spirit and creative capacity (Daengs and Soemantri, 2020). Thus, innovation propensity, risk attitude and proactivity affect progress in the early stages of firm growth (Zahoor and Lew, 2021) and in the search for opportunities (Silva et al., 2021). In this way, following IEOS becomes a conduit for the firm to gain competitive advantages necessary for internationalisation, as innovative behaviour enables it to offer new products/services and capabilities ahead of competitors (Dias et al., 2021; Zahoor and Lew, 2021).

The characteristics of the entrepreneur according to Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019) influence the decision and the pace of internationalisation of the company, especially for those following a Born Global or accelerated approach. Therefore, the founder must meet the following characteristics: (1) autonomy: is the independence and freedom to give birth to an idea or vision and carry it through to the end, (2) innovativeness: is the tendency to realise and support new ideas, novelty, experimentation and creative processes that can lead to new products, services or technological processes, which can facilitate the internationalisation process, such as the creation of environmentally friendly products or that can break into new markets (3) proactivity: is a forward-looking perspective that accompanies an innovative activity and allows it to think and see new means and ends ahead of others, (4) proclivity: is the tendency to enter foreign markets, which is associated with its values, (5) competitive aggressiveness: is the propensity to achieve international market entry by challenging competitors such as opening commercial offices and new headquarters in countries as an example of

entrepreneurship and international business development (Kreiser et al., 2002). In line with the above arguments, the following proposition is put forward:

Proposition 3. International Entrepreneurship Orientation Strategies (IEOS) are necessary for the internationalisation of Born Global olive companies.

In summary, as table 1 indicates, in this paper we are going to study the necessary and/or sufficient configurations between the attributes of IMOS (experiential and objective knowledge of the international market), INOS (network of international contacts and attendance at international fairs) and IEOS (founder's characteristics and offering innovative products) in accordance with the proposals put forward for olive sector companies to become international within the first three years of their creation.

Table 1. Keys to business internationalisation

Keys strategies	Authors	brief description	Main activities
IMOS	Zakery and Saremi (2020)	Experiential knowledge of managers and/or internationalisation managers	Managers with experience in internationalisation
	Daengs and Soemantri (2020) Kamarulzaman <i>et al.</i> (2021) Faroque <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Objective knowledge of the international market	Implementation of internationalisation support programmes (ICEX-NEXT).
INOS	Kurniawan <i>et al.</i> (2020) Sanyal <i>et al.</i> (2020)	International networking	The olive oil company has prescribers, chefs, international distributors, etc.
	Kryeziu <i>et al.</i> (2021) Mendonça-Silva <i>et al.</i> (2022)	Attending international trade fairs and implementing marketing actions	Olive oil company attends international trade fairs
IEOS	Paul and Rosado-Serrano (2019) Zahoor and Lew (2021) Dias <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Founder's characteristics: proactivity, proclivity, competitive aggressiveness	Opening of new international business units as an example of entrepreneurship (new commercial offices to develop the brand abroad).
	Silva <i>et al.</i> (2021)	Offering innovative products	Offer innovative products (e.g. organic EVOO or sustainability-related products).

Source: own elaboration

We will now test whether the IMOS, INOS and IEOS strategies are necessary for the internationalisation of Born Globals olive companies using the QCA method.

3.METHODOLOGY

3.1.Population, materials and methods

This study has focused on analysing the factors of the internationalisation of companies in the Spanish olive oil sector, considered the main olive oil producing region in the world in terms of heritage, culture, social and economic factors.

In order to delimit the population under study, data was consulted via the IBSAS (Iberian Balance Sheet Analysis System) web tool and a register was obtained with the entities that include the activity of "Manufacture of olive oil", under the CNAE code 1042. The total number of companies examined was 541 organisations. From here, the age of these companies was studied, the internationalisation profile both in exports and imports, as well as the variables considered IMOS (international market orientation strategies): Managers with experience in internationalisation (IMOS1), Years of experience in the international market through ICEX initiatives (IMOS2); INOS (International Network Creation Strategies): olive oil company has prescribers, chefs, international distributors (INOS1), olive oil company attends international trade fairs (INOS2); and finally IEOS (Entrepreneurship strategies for the internationalisation of companies): The company diversifies its activities abroad as a form of entrepreneurship (IEOS1), number of commercial offices opened abroad considering commercial offices as elements of international entrepreneurship (IEOS2).

By way of summary, the characteristics of this study are detailed in the following table.

Table 2. Study fact sheet

Study Universe	Olive mills belonging to the SABI database with CNAE code 1042: a total of 541 organisations are considered.
Geographical scope	Spain
Date of realisation	March de 2022 a May de 2022

Population register	Iberian Balance Sheet Analysis System (IBSAS)
Sample size	541 oil mills
Sampling unit	Entity producing and marketing olive oil with international activity registered under "manufacture of olive oil" national activity code number 1042.

Source: own elaboration

The QCA technique, based on Boolean algebra, uses a verbal, conceptual and mathematical language that offers results from both a qualitative and quantitative approach, combining their main advantages (Ragin, 1987). In this way, by applying QCA it is possible to systematically analyse a set of cases to determine causal patterns in the form of necessity and sufficiency relationships between a set of conditions and an outcome (Schneider and Wagemann, 2010). The development called fuzzy sets (fsQCA) is positioned as one of the most widely used variants of QCA, as it solves one of the main drawbacks and criticisms of the initial approach called csQCA, which is its strictly dichotomous approach (Ragin, 1987). The fsQCA technique was developed for small sample or population settings (Ragin, 1987), so it is not a drawback for this research, in which the study sample is small. For the correct execution of this technique, the phases recommended in the literature are followed (Schneider and Wagemann, 2012), centred on the calibration of the variables that require it, both of the conditions and of the result, the subsequent analysis of necessity and, finally, the analysis of sufficiency. Nor is it necessary to assume linearity or other types of a priori relationships between the explanatory and explained variables.

Finally, fsQCA outputs one or more combinations sufficient for a particular outcome, such as: $X1 * \sim X2 * X3$ sufficient for an outcome (Y). Making use of the symbology of this technique

$$X1 * \sim X2 * X3 \rightarrow Y$$

Being: X1, X2 and X3, antecedents; Y, the result; * the union and ~ the absence or negation, in this case the opposite value of X2 (1- X2).

4. RESULTS

The fsQCA technique is applied together with different variables related to the strategies oriented towards internationalisation according to the theory of accelerated internationalisation that offer the perspective of Born Global companies, whose age of internationalised start-ups is less than three years, and which were taken into account to obtain the data. The variables that make up the proposed model are detailed in table 3.

Table 3. Variables considered for the fsQCA technique

Outcome variable	Description	
Born Global	Accelerated internationalisation (within the first three years of their creation) of olive companies	Dichotomous variable
Condition variable	Description	
IMOS1	Managers with experience in internationalisation	Dichotomous variable
IMOS2	Years of experience in the international market through ICEX initiatives	Categorical variable
INOS1	The olive oil company has prescribers, chefs, international distributors, etc.	Dichotomous variable
INOS2	Olive oil company attends international trade fairs	Dichotomous variable
IEOS1	The company develops environmentally friendly products and new niche markets such as those related to sustainability.	Dichotomous variable
IEOS2	Number of business units abroad or commercial offices opened abroad (considering commercial offices as elements of international entrepreneurship)	Categorical variable

All the categorical variables considered have been calibrated according to Rihoux and Ragin (2009).

Source: own elaboration.

Qualitative Comparative Analysis (QCA) has been carried out using the fuzzy sets approach (fsQCA), in order to establish variables that allow and favour the internationalisation of olive oil companies according to components of international market orientation (EOMI), international network orientation (EORI) and international entrepreneurship orientation (EOEI) with the aim of associating them with a higher degree of internationalisation of these companies considering their degree of seniority.

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Palabras Clave: *Internationalization, Born Global, agri-food sector, International orientation strategy, Qualitative Comparative Analysis, intellectual capital,*

Clasificación JEL: F2, M2, Q1