

Short communication

Chemical composition of volatile organic compounds of *Artemisia vulgaris* L. (Asteraceae) from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau



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ABSTRACT

Plants growing in different climate retain the general direction of the biosynthesis of the volatile organic compound (VOC). The aim of this study was to investigate the VOC composition in *Artemisia vulgaris* L. growing on the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau. The VOCs were isolated by hydrodistillation or by headspace extraction, and their composition was analyzed by gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC–MS). There were 96 VOCs identified in the samples, accounting for 91–97% of the total. Monoterpenes (80.33%) were the main components of VOCs released by headspace extraction. The major components of essential oil obtained by hydrodistillation were monoterpenes (44.49%) and sesquiterpenes (29.98%). The monoterpenes 1,8-cineole, camphor, and α - and β - thujones were the main VOCs detected after both hydrodistillation and headspace extraction. Sesquiterpenes (*cis*-davanone, germacrene D) also accounted for a significant proportion of compounds in the essential oil. A principal component analysis (PCA) based on the types of components of essential oils of *A. vulgaris* collected from different countries showed that the moisture conditions at the collection site was the main factor explaining variations in VOC composition, and were located between “European” and “Siberian” chemotype, which indicated that the essential oil profile does not fully reflect zonal climatic features.

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1. Introduction

Plants produce and store a wide variety of substances, many of which are volatile compounds. In most cases, the term volatile organic compound (VOC) refers to plant secondary metabolites—organic chemicals with a high vapor pressure at room temperature. The VOCs are responsible for most plant scents or odors. Essential oils are mixtures of natural volatile compounds isolated by hydrodistillation. Another method to isolate and analyze volatile compounds is headspace extraction, which sends VOCs into the vapor headspace.

The genus *Artemisia* is the largest and most widely distributed genera within the family Asteraceae. Many members of the genus *Artemisia* are aromatic plants. *Artemisia* species are well known for their volatile oil that is used in the food and pharmaceutical indus-

tries and in folk medicine to treat gastrointestinal diseases (Turi et al., 2014). The chemical composition of essential oils from various *Artemisia* spp. in the flora of Qinghai and Buryatia have been analyzed in previous studies (Shang et al., 2012; Soktoeva et al., 2013; Zhigzhitzhapova et al., 2014a,b,c). Many *Artemisia* species are distributed in Europe, Asia, and North America, but *Artemisia vulgaris* L. is the species that has been recognized as having medicinal properties. As well as having a therapeutic effect, the essential oil of *A. vulgaris* has insecticidal properties (Wang et al., 2006; Govindaraj and Ranjitha Kumari, 2013), and some components of the essential oil exhibit allelopathic effects (Barney et al., 2005).

The aim of this work is, firstly, to analyze the VOCs extracted from *A. vulgaris* using two different methods (hydrodistillation and headspace extraction), and secondly, to test the impact of climate of the regions where the plant grows on the composition of VOCs. To our knowledge, this is the first report on the composition of VOCs extracted from *A. vulgaris* by headspace extraction.

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Table 1
Collection information for *Artemisia vulgaris* samples used in this study.

Collection date	Voucher No.	Location	Latitude Longitude	Elevation (m)	Yield ^a	Color of essential oil
18-08-2014	hang2014102	Tongde, Qinghai, P.R. China,	N35°16'25" E100°21'47"	2885	0.23%	Light green

^a v/w vs. dried material.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Plant material

Plant materials were collected from Tongde Province, Qinghai–Tibet Plateau. Details of the collection site are shown in Table 1. The plant materials were collected during the flowering period in August, 2014, and were air-dried before being ground into a fine powder. Voucher specimens have been deposited in the herbarium of the Northwest Institute of Plateau Biology (HNWP), Chinese Academy of Sciences, Xining, P.R. China, and the Baikal Institute of Nature Management, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia.

2.2. Isolation of the essential oil by hydrodistillation

A 30–40 g portion of the powdered plant material was extracted by hydrodistillation for 3 h in a Clevenger-type collector apparatus. The resulting essential oil was isolated using the method described in the Pharmacopoeia of USSR (State pharmacopoeia of the USSR, 1990). The essential oil produced in this study was extracted from the entire aerial parts of the plant.

2.3. Headspace extraction

For each sample, up to 3 g dried material was crushed and added to a 20-ml headspace vial, and then immediately sealed with an aluminum cap with a silicone rubber septa. The vials were then transferred to a headspace tray and analyzed with an Agilent 7890A/5975C gas chromatograph (Agilent, Santa Clara, CA, USA) coupled with an Agilent 7697A automatic headspace sampler. The vial was heated to 120 °C and maintained at that temperature for 20 min with agitation. The temperature of the sampling needle and transmission lines was 150 °C.

2.4. Analysis of the essential oil

The essential oil was analyzed by GC–MS with an Agilent Technologies 7890A/5975C gas chromatograph coupled to an Agilent 7683B quadrupole mass selective detector. The GC system was equipped with an Agilent DB-5MS UI capillary column (30 m × 0.25 mm × 0.25 μm), and the MS system was operated in electron impact mode at 70 eV with the electron multiplier set at 2200 V. Helium (99.999% purity) was used as the carrier gas at a flow rate of 1 ml/min. The oven temperature was programmed to increase from 40 °C to 150 °C at a rate of 4 °C/min, then from 150 °C to 280 °C at a rate of 20 °C/min, and then kept constant at 280 °C for 6 min. The split ratio was adjusted to 1:1. The injector and detector temperatures were set to 280 °C and 250 °C, respectively. The MS data were acquired in scanning mode at a speed of 2.5 s per scan. The chemical constituents in the essential oil were identified by comparison of the GC–MS data with those held by the National Institute of Standards and Technology, and by comparisons of their MS and calculated linear retention indices (RI) with values reported in the literature (Tkachev, 2008). The RIs were determined relative to the retention times of *n*-alkanes (C8–C25) that were injected after the essential oil under the same chromatographic conditions.

The RIs for all components were determined according to the standard method for *n*-alkanes.

2.5. Statistical analyses

The chemical composition data were subjected to multivariate statistical analysis using principal component analysis (PCA). All statistical analyses were conducted using Sirius ver. 6.0 software (Kvalheim and Karstang, 1987). Compounds found in all or the majority of the samples were subjected to statistical analysis and their relative values (i.e., percentage of the sum) were logarithmically transformed. This process allowed us to derive an equation that could be used to define quantitative differences among individual compounds.

3. Results and discussion

Volatile compounds were isolated from *A. vulgaris* samples by hydrodistillation and headspace extraction, and their composition was determined by gas chromatography–mass spectrometry (GC–MS). The VOCs detected after hydrodistillation and headspace extraction are shown in Table 2. In total, 96 components were identified in the samples, accounting for 91–97% of the total in each sample. Monoterpenes were the dominant component (80.33%) detected after headspace extraction. The major components of the essential oil were monoterpenes (44.49%) and sesquiterpenes (29.98%). Using both extraction methods, the main monoterpenes were 1,8 cineole, camphor, and α - and β -thujone. Sabinane (3.79%) was the fourth most abundant VOC detected after headspace extraction. Sesquiterpenes (*cis*-davanone, germacrene D) made up a significant proportion of the essential oil (Table 2).

Several studies have analyzed the constituents of essential oils of *A. vulgaris* from different regions. The VOC composition of oils was similar between *A. vulgaris* plants collected from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau and those collected from other countries. Yomogi alcohol, artemisia ketone, carvone, carvacrol, tricyclene, β -farnesene, and spathulenol were detected in *A. vulgaris* samples collected in other countries but not in those collected from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau. Bornylacetate, *iso*-thujol, *neo*-thujyl acetate, davana ether, and δ -elemene were detected in *A. vulgaris* samples collected from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau but not in those collected from other locations. The VOC composition depends on many factors and may differ from sample to sample, but all of the components can be classified into kinship groups according to their carbon skeleton (Table 1). Bicyclic monoterpenes (α - and β -thujone, camphor, borneol, and α - and β -pinenes) were the main components of *A. vulgaris* essential oil in samples from most countries. Analyses of essential oils extracted from *A. vulgaris* showed that thujones were the main VOC in wild plants from Turkey (Erel et al., 2012), Croatia (Jerkovic et al., 2003), and India (Misra and Singh, 1986); camphor and borneol were the main VOCs in plants from the Krasnoyarsk territory (Russia) (Aljakin et al., 2011), France (Jerkovic et al., 2003), China (Wang et al., 2006), and Buryatia (Russia) (Zhigzhitzhapova et al., 2014c); and β -pinene was the major VOC in *A. vulgaris* plants from Bashkortostan (Russia) (Khalilov et al., 2001). The essential oils from *A. vulgaris* plants cultivated in India contained high contents of camphor and α -thujone (Govindaraj and Ranjitha Kumari,

953	947	Camphene	0.15	1.70	0.45	1.8			0.1	4.06	0.3–6.8	0.21	
		\sum Carane		1.09									
1000	1000	monoterpenes: 2-Carene		1.09									
		\sum Camphene	3.36	7.34									
		monoterpenes:											
1141	1144	Camphor	2.92	7.31	3.01	0.5	0.5–8.7	2.3–12.9	1.4	0.40	29.50	0.3–36.6	2.33
1165	1166	Borneol	0.44	0.03	tr		2.4–4.2	5.6–27.0		0.25	14.71	2.1–5.5	0.56
		iso-Borneol				0.6						0.1–1.6	
		Bornylacetate			tr				tr		2.99	0.5–1.8	
		\sum Pinane	2.87	4.13									
		monoterpenes:											
939	932	α -Pinene	0.34	2.00	0.27	53.7	1.3–15.1	0.3–1.6	5.9		0.63	0.2–0.8	0.96
957	952	Verbenene	0.01	0.16							0.08		0.89
980	975	β -Pinene	0.61	1.61	2.21	7.4			tr		0.41	0.1–0.4	0.89
1124	1126	Chrysanthenone	1.67					1.0				0.8	0.35
1212	1210	Verbenone		0.15							0.32		
1237	1237	trans-Chrysanthenyl acetate	0.17	0.11			16.3–24.6	0.5–1.8					
1263	1263	cis-Chrysanthenyl acetate	0.07	0.10								0.3	
		Pinocarveol						0.8		0.46			0.82
		Pinocarvone								0.42	0.53		1.96
		trans-Chrysanthenol				13.1						0.2–12.4	
		Myrtenol						0.1				0.3	
		\sum Thujane	20.25	22.46									
		monoterpenes:											
929	926	α -Thujene	0.02	0.53	tr	0.8			1.0		0.07	0.1	
1108	1106	α -Thujone	2.52	4.48	56.3		0.1–8.5	0.4	1.2	56.13			1.51
1119	1117	β -Thujone	16.93	17.05	7.49	0.5	5.3–20.8	1.0–1.2	13.5	12.02			0.17
1137	1135	iso-Thujol	0.62	0.37									
1282	1280	neo-Thujyl acetate	0.16	0.03									
		Thujenal							2.2		0.41	0.1–0.2	
		\sum Sabinane	6.22	6.70									
		monoterpenes:											
974	973	Sabinene	0.56	3.79	tr	0.9	1.3–4.1	2.6	13.7		1.65	0.2	2.09
1068	1066	trans-Sabinene hydrate	1.19	1.16			0.2–0.3	0.6–1.1				0.2–1.8	0.12
1099	1098	cis-Sabinene hydrate		0.38								0.3–1.6	0.13
1142	1140	cis-Sabinol	1.33	0.75									
1290	1295	Sabinyl acetate	2.69	0.62			2.4–3.0						
1497	1504	trans-Sabinyl -2-methylbutanoate	0.45										
		\sum Tricyclic									0.14	0.1–0.2	
		monoterpenes:											
		Tricyclene											
		\sum Sesquiterpenes:	29.98	4.14									
		\sum Acyclic	12.05	1.32									
		sesquiterpenes:											
		\sum Furan ring in chain:	11.27	1.24									
1232	1230	nor-Davanone		0.07									
1490	1495	Davana ether	0.25										
1516	1515	Davana ether (isomer 1)	0.40	0.03									
1524	1534	Davana ether (isomer 2)	0.46	0.03									

1417	1422	Caryophyllene	0.73	0.20	1.51	0.4	0.7–6.4	3.0–8.2	2.3	0.94	2.41	0.4–7.8	5.56	24.76
1583	1586	Caryophyllene oxide		0.04			0.6–3.2	2.3–8.7	6.5	10.19	2.24	2.7–14.1	1.79	0.95
		\sum Guaiane sesquiterpenes	1.33	0.05										
1629	1632	Guai-6,10(14)-dien-4-beta-ol	1.33	0.05								0.3–1.9		
		\sum Isodaucane sesquiterpenes:		0.02										
1590	1598	Salvia-4(14)-en-1-one		0.02							0.35	0.3–1.7		
		\sum Isoprenologs:	0.68	0.05										
		<i>trans</i> -7- <i>epi</i> -Sesquisabinene hydrate		0.05										
1433	1436	<i>trans</i> - α -Bergamotene	0.63	0.05										
		\sum tricyclic sesquiterpenes:	1.02	0.33										
		\sum Copane sesquiterpenes:	0.41	0.22										
1374	1378	α -Copaene	0.41	0.22		0.6	0.3–0.7	0.2–1.9	0.6		1.17	0.2–0.8	0.45	2.46
		\sum Longipinanes:	0.10	0.09										
1350	1352	α -Longipinene	0.10	0.09				0.9–1.5				0.5–1.4		
		\sum Aromadendranes:	0.17											
1406	1412	α -Gurjunene	0.05				0.6–0.8	1.4–2.1	tr		0.10			
1460	1464	allo-Aromadendrene	0.12				0.6	0.1–1.7			0.29			
		Spathulenol					1.3–3.6	3.1–4.3		1.39		2.4–10.3	2.40	1.75
		Palustrol					0.2–0.5	0.9–1.0						
		\sum Cubebane-type sesquiterpenoids:	0.34											
1517	1516	Cubebol	0.34											
		\sum Bourbonane sesquiterpenoids:		0.01										
1382	1387	β -Bourbonene		0.01			0.2–1.3	0.2–0.9	tr		0.50	0.3–0.5	0.58	
		\sum Aristolanes:		0.01										
1648	1654	Vulgarone B		0.01										
		Total	75.36	85.38										

^a RI, Retention indices: only for our data; literature—for (5%-phenyl)-methylpolysiloxane phase.

^b Cumene (0.43%).

^c 1-Octen-3-ol (0.6%), pulegone (0.4–0.6%), thujol (0.1–2.4%), α -elemene (0.2%), calarene (0.3–1.2%), 2,2,4-trimethylcyclohexenecarbaldehyde (2.5–16.6%), nerol (0.2%), β -damascenone (0.1%), α -cadinol (0.9–1.2%).

^d Geranylacetate (0.2%), perilla aldehyde (1.2%), filifolide A (2.2–3.0%), *cis*-chrysanthenol (1.0–5.6%), thujol (2.9–6.2%), β -guaiene (0.3%), benzyl alcohol (0.3–0.7%), filifolene (2.2–3.0%), vulgarol B (1.0%), aromadendrene epoxide (0.7–0.9%).

^e *trans*-sabinene hydrate acetate (2.5%), γ -humulene (1.1%), aromadendrene (0.9%), γ -gurjunene (2.8%);

^f *n*-Butyl-2-methylbutanoate (0.09%), geranylacetone (0.34%), β -phellandrene (0.25%), bornylformiate (0.53%), myrtenal (0.51%), *trans*-cadin-1,4-diene (0.33%), α -calacarene (0.56%), β -colocarene (0.78%), isocaryophyllene epoxide (0.17%), chamazulene (0.28%), β -oplonone (0.97%), β -copaene (0.28%), dehydrosabinaketone (0.11%), sabinaketone (0.17%), phellandral (0.67%).

^g Octen-3-ol (0.2–0.3%), nonanal (0.1–0.5%), *cis*-carveol (0.3%), piperitone (0.2–15.1%), *cis*-carveol acetate (0.1%), *cis*-chrysanthenol (0.2–1.8%), thujenol (0.1%), *cis*-threo-davanofuran (1.2%), isogermacrene (0.1–0.2%), germacra-4(15), 5.10(14)-trien-1-ol (2.2–3.1%), elemol (0.2–4.1%), bicycloelemene (0.1%), zonarene (1.5%), α -selinene (0.8%), γ -eudesmol (0.4–2.2%), selin-6-en-4-ol (1.7–15.6%), caryophylla-4(12), 8(13)-diene-5 α -ol (1.0–2.0%), guaia-6,10(14)-dien-4-beta-ol (0.3–2.0%), alismol (2.5–4.1%), mint oxide (0.3–0.7%), copaborneol (0.6–0.9%), *triquinane*: silphiperfol-5-ene (0.1%), 7-*epi*-silphiperfol-5-ene (0.1%), silphiperfol-6-ene (0.7%), petasitene (0.3%), silphiperfol-6-en-5-one (0.2%), modheptene (0.4–0.7%), presilphiperfolan-9 α -ol (0.1–39.7%).

^h Artemisia triene (0.79%), 1-octene-3-ol (2.06%), isogeraniol (0.95%), β -cububene (11.82%).

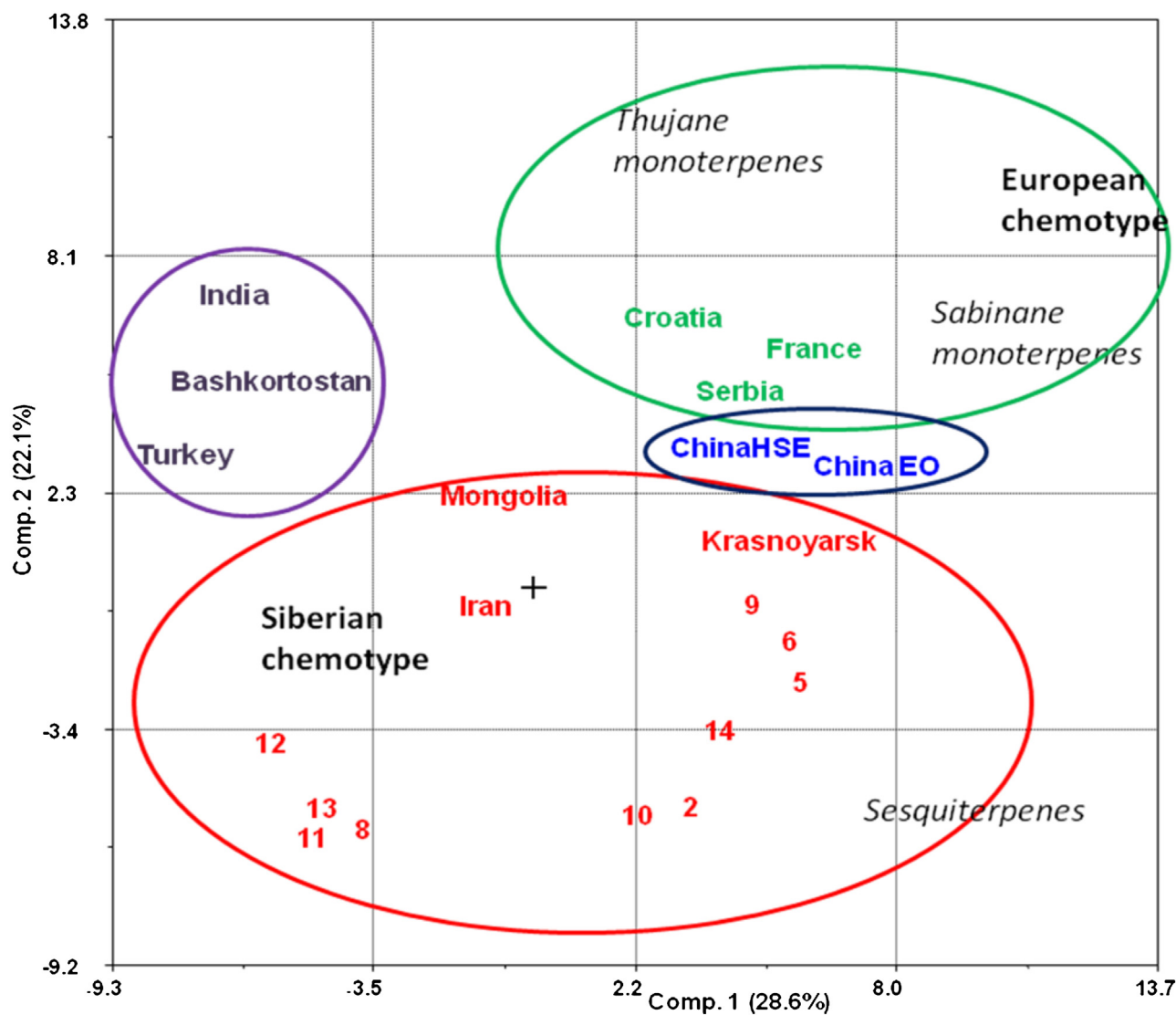


Fig. 1. Principal component analysis biplot of *Artemisia vulgaris* samples collected from different countries. Numerals indicate *A. vulgaris* samples from Buryatia (Russia) according to Zhigzhitzhapova et al., 2014c. China EO—essential oil obtained by hydrodistillation of *Artemisia vulgaris* samples from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau (China); China HSE—volatile organic compounds isolated by headspace extraction from *A. vulgaris* samples from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau (China).

2013). The monocyclic monoterpenoid 1,8-cineole was the main component of essential oil from aerial parts of *A. vulgaris* plants collected in Serbia. Caryophyllane and humulane sesquiterpenes were found in the essential oils of *A. vulgaris* plants from all countries, but the sesquiterpene antibiotic triquinanes was identified only in aerial parts of plants from Buryatia (Russia) and in roots of plants from Serbia (Blagojevic et al., 2006). Sesquiterpene compounds dominated in the essential oil of *A. vulgaris* plants from Mongolia (Shatar et al., 2006) and Iran (Bamoniri et al., 2010).

The exact VOCs composition of essential oils from wild *A. vulgaris* plants differed depending on the collection site, but the types of components were the same. Overall, the biosynthesis of certain structural types of compounds depended on the moisture conditions of the *Artemisia* habitats. Thujones were the major VOCs in samples from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau, Turkey, and Croatia. The main VOC in samples from Siberia and France was camphor, while sesquiterpenes were the dominant VOCs in the Mongolian and Iranian samples (Table 2).

The PCA based on the structural groups (classification of terpenes by Semenov, 2000) of VOCs in essential oils of *A. vulgaris* from different countries showed that the moisture conditions at

the collection site were the main factor contributing to variation in VOCs composition. Three clusters could be distinguished on the biplot (Fig. 1). Samples from European countries with a humid climate (Croatia, Serbia, France) comprised the first cluster, and were characterized by high contents of β -thujone and sabinane monoterpenes in their essential oils. Samples from three semihumid territories—Anatolia (Turkey), Nilgiri (India), and South Ural (Bashkortostan)—formed the second cluster. The third cluster represented samples from semiarid and arid areas—Krasnoyarsk, Buryatia, Mongolia, and Iran. Sesquiterpenes were the predominant component of essential oils extracted from these samples. The samples collected from the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau clustered together in the PCA biplot, confirming that the same main groups of compounds were detected after headspace extraction and hydrodistillation. They located between the “European” and “Siberian” chemotypes (Fig. 1). The climate of the Qinghai–Tibet Plateau is semiarid and arid, but the collected plants were growing in an intrazonal ecotope (fallow land). Therefore, the essential oil profile does not fully reflect zonal climatic features.

4. Conclusions

The main groups of components of essential oils of *A. vulgaris* were similar, regardless of the growth site, the year of collection, and the method of VOC extraction. Plants growing in different climate retain the general direction of the biosynthesis of VOC. The variety of the identified compounds is determined by a multiplicity of oxidation pathways. Plants grown in drier conditions tended to produce higher quantities essential oil and sesquiterpenes with greater structural diversity.

The structural groups of VOCs detected were very similar between samples extracted by hydrodistillation and those extracted by headspace extraction, as evidenced by their close grouping in the PCA biplot. Compared with hydrodistillation, headspace extraction has several advantages; for example, it is faster, and requires less plant material. The predominance of monoterpenes in the sample subjected to headspace extraction suggested that these compounds are important for adaptation to environmental conditions (Dudareva et al., 2006), and may closely reflect the native composition of plant volatiles. Therefore, headspace extraction will be a useful method for studies in which the exact ratio of the components is not so important; for example, in studies on toxicants or substances produced under particular environmental conditions. When essential oils are to be used for medical purposes, it is important to determine their exact composition. Therefore, hydrodistillation would be the best extraction method for that purpose.

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