

Wine Hotels and Intangible Heritage

Subjects: **Business**

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International legislation related to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage has defined intangible heritage as a non-material cultural resource that can be identified in various forms of personal, spiritual, and non-material creation that can be communicated and carried forward by word of mouth and other different means. It includes

- language, dialects, speeches and toponymy, as well as oral literature of all kinds,
- folklore creativity in the field of music, dance, traditions, games, rituals, customs, as well as other traditional folk values,
- traditional arts and crafts.

intangible heritage

social sustainability

wine hotels

co-creation

competitiveness

innovation

services

storytelling

unique experiences

1. Introduction

The adaptation of hospitality is generated by the changes in tourist demand and the emergence of new trends and innovations. By differentiating and opting for certain market segments, hotels realise competitive advantages in relation to traditional, generic hotel products. Hotel offer specialisation and thematisation enable the fulfilment of the wishes and needs of target market segments, as well as the provision of unique and authentic experiences. The centre of the research is specialised themed hotels. i.e., wine hotels and the impact of thematisation on competitiveness. Thematised hotels develop specific products which, in order to be further developed and innovated in a quality way, need to be classified and diversified. The data obtained by the original desktop research was processed using qualitative and quantitative scientific methodology and statistical processing, which contributed to the understanding of the problem area of thematised hotel competitiveness and efficient promotion.

2. Linkage of Intangible Heritage with Tourism Attractiveness of Themed Wine Hotels

According to the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, intangible heritage is defined as and includes “expressions, skills, knowledge, representations—as well as instruments, objects and cultural spaces—which societies, groups, and sometimes individuals, recognise as part of their own cultural heritage. It represents skills, customs, dance, rituals, music, knowledge, crafts” ^[1]. According to ^[2] “intangible heritage, by its definition, includes customs, beliefs, knowledge, skills and phenomena of spiritual and cultural

creativity which are passed down through tradition, and societies, groups or individuals recognise them as their heritage". Furthermore, [3] consider local gastronomy, including oenology, in the context of intangible heritage and point out that the same, although included in the UNESCO list, has not been valorised or sufficiently explored in the scientific literature. On the other hand, Ref. [4] consider the agricultural environment and vineyards as a material aspect of intangible heritage that affirms the territorial identity of the destination and locality.

In light of the aforesaid, Ref. [5] presents the 'soft power' concept and explores its relationship with the concept of intangible cultural heritage. Numerous authors consider cultural aspects of the affirmation of various selective types of tourism, including wine tourism, through valorising tangible and intangible characteristics. The latter often remains neglected compared to the material features of the resources, as [6] pointed out. Considering the heritage of viticulture and oenology, separated from the agronomic context, the emphasis is on valorising the authentic culture, traditional way of life, and work while nurturing traditional agricultural production, preserving authentic stories, recipes, and ways of storing final products. In recent paper [7] explore wine as a tourist resource and implicate new manifestations and consequences of a quality product from the perspective of sustainability. Valuation of oenology and wine tourism promotes sustainable growth and development, both in the ecological and sociocultural contexts. Authors [8][9] consider viticulture and winemaking a national heritage and highlight the evaluation through cultural institutions and national cultural and tourism development policy. The valuation of intangible heritage in tangible cultural institutions and commercial buildings presents a platform for the development and valorisation of wine hotels as a stakeholder of culturally sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, Ref. [10] investigate consumer motivation for wine tourism from an anthropological aspect and emphasise the perception of mysticism and peculiarities in the experience of terror products that valorise tangible and intangible values. In continuance [11] point out that wine tourists desire quality culinary offerings; attractions, including cultural, recreational, and retail choices; human interactions; and a wine region landscape to enjoy. Finally, Ref. [12] highlight that innovation and technology exploitation have become not only a way to differentiate but also a survival necessity for wine tourism operators and wine destinations alike.

However, in the experience economy melting pot, where experience is characterised by accelerated transience, the importance of affirmation of the local, unique and authentic experience within intangible cultural heritage is stressed.

Numerous authors deal with the topic of special experience in tourism. Authors [13][14][15][16] study the experience economy and present it as a factor of recognisability in the achievement of competitiveness in tourism, as do [17][18], who adds that emotions and special ambience affect the formation of unforgettable memories and experiences. In ref. [19] identifies different types of tourists and consumers of tourist products developed within the context of the experience economy, while [20] evaluates the power of animation and proposes differentiated animation programmes in tourism and hospitality aimed at education, entertainment and activity, as well as the complete guest experience and satisfaction. Tourist experience can be considered as everything that tourists will forever keep in their memory, and this can be realised through a story, which is imbued by a large number of historical facts, secrets, outcomes and legends. In some situations, "a large quantity of visual information, sounds, colours,

data, tastes and smells, can cause saturation in tourists, but a well-conceived story, which contains all important information, will be much more easily remembered" analysed by [21][22].

In continuance, Refs. [23][24] emphasise the importance of storytelling and present the potential for implementing and forming various tourism products and storytelling for different markets and age segments. When exploring wine tourism, Ref. [25] emphasise its influence on competitive advantages in wine tourism. The same is reflected in the competitiveness of wine hotels and the influence of authentic stories on the integral experience of wine tourism. Storytelling affirms the environment, events and life circumstances and arouses emotions, empathy and understanding through which unforgettable special experiences are evoked. Furthermore, the affirmation of intangible cultural heritage through storytelling targets cultural sustainability and influences rural regeneration [1].

2.1. New Tendencies and Innovations in Modern Hospitality—Specialisation and Thematisation

Modern development trends and changes in tourist demand affect the adaptation of hospitality. Primary offers in hotel facilities are no longer sufficient to satisfy the tourist demand. Instead, personalised and differentiated services are becoming the primary motive for travel as a consequence of the changes in the way tourists spend their free time while travelling. Namely, modern tourists actively involve themselves in tourism activities as opposed to one-time passive observation [26]. Furthermore, the same authors consider tourist motivation and how modern tourists spend their holidays and highlight the importance of diversification of special interests, which affect the development of specialised hospitality. As a consequence of specialisation, the concept of themed hotels is presented [26][27][28], where particular attention is paid to wine hotels regarding the resource base and authentic products with the surroundings.

Thematised hospitality emerged as a result of offer specialisation by which attempts are made to satisfy the needs and to provide unique experiences for a market niche [29]. Fostering innovative practices is important for the hospitality sector, as a competitive advantage is achieved by differentiation, i.e., specialisation and application of modern technological solutions, stress [30]. In ref. [31] analyses modern hospitality trends and defines the importance of ensuring safety and hygiene (especially important due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a threat), contactless technologies, multicultural employment, development of sustainable and smart hotels with technology development. Furthermore, the importance of virtual and augmented reality, robot staff in the hotel product architecture and design, and affirmation of a new concept of luxury based on well-being, the aesthetic of the hotel product material elements, and intangible values are highlighted [28].

Tourism niches represent market segments oriented toward specific tourism consumer groups [32]. Tourism niches are characterised by the intention to achieve informality, sustainable development and environmental preservation. It is precisely by tourism niches that hotels realise competitive advantages the moment when they first opt for tourism niches [33]. With this, they intensify the niche market and create critical mass, selective tourism forms and specialised hotels. As opposed to the features of typical holiday tourism, niche tourism represents an active, i.e., inclusive form of tourism with a tendency towards new experiences.

With hotel offer specialisation, hoteliers target a specific market niche which is looking for new experiences. Apart from the fact that a destination attracts guests through natural and social attractions, specialised, i.e., themed hotels in the role of resources can be defined by a tourist attraction in the sense of developed tourism superstructures [26]. By specialising hospitality and thematising accommodation facilities (hotels, campsites and resorts), new competitiveness is achieved, market niches are affirmed, business methods are reshaped, and the problem of seasonality and the degree of capacity occupancy is levelled [31].

The hotel management's mission is to organise such a hotel that will ensure competitiveness and innovativeness, and one of how to achieve this is hotel transformation into a tourist attraction based on the valorisation of comparative advantages and authentic products. Rural regeneration is being achieved; Ref. [7] explore and elaborate on this topic rea in the example of Malaga, a Mediterranean wine region. On the other hand, a more recent study of themed tourism and rural regeneration through tourism contents and accommodation examines apitourism as a specific valorisation subsegment [29]. It is important that the hotel theme is in the spirit of the destination in which it is located and that, through its specific offers and thematisation, it affirms the autochthonous culture and intangible values of the surrounding areas [26]. In recent paper [34] analyzed wine destination management and marketing issues from the perspectives of the various stakeholders of wine destinations, namely tourists, cellar doors, wine tourism firms, destination managers, wine associations and networks. Accommodation providers should be considered fundamental stakeholders of the tourism system.

2.2. Thematised Hotels as a Tourist Attraction—Wine Hotels

With their specialised offers, hoteliers strive to satisfy wishes and offer unique experiences to specific consumer groups, which they combine according to their mentalities and wishes. The market potential of hoteliers and destinations, as well as fulfilment of the expected satisfaction, are conditioned by the hotel staff's potential to provide unique choices to each guest. In order to improve the process of service provision in hospitality, it is important to, for example, recognise the advantages and disadvantages of own business operations, facilitate an individual approach to guests, simplify services, and use technologies for more efficient work.

A recent paper of [35] explore how the heritage aspects of traditional winemaking can transform into a successful innovative business model (BMI). They are studying the role of values in the strategic trajectories of winemakers and exploring a true portfolio of connected business models where wine tourism is based on a local ecosystem delivering the firm's historical, cultural, social and economic values. Valorization of intangible heritage through the competitiveness of wine hotels results from the affirmation of innovative business models.

In modern business conditions, hoteliers have developed specialised offers of different themes such as health, gastronomy, oenology, recreation, etc., enabling the development of specialised and themed hotels. In continuance, Ref. [36] elaborate on the synergy of business potentials of co-branding, namely how luxury vinous-concept hotels meets premium wine brands and what are the benefits of joined competitiveness. The themed hotel concept is directed toward creating unique themed experiences with the assistance of themed products, services and designs [18]. The themed hotel attractiveness lies in the affirmation of authenticity of the surroundings and the

resource base, as well as in the fact that, as uniquely designed, they appear in the market as an alternative to generic, unified hotels and are offered to guests who do not wish to distance themselves from standardised hotel products [27][37]. The special experience affirmation through the experience economy points to new values, which find their starting point also in both the co-creation and personal participation in the creation of experience.

There is no unique definition of a themed hotel, as it concerns a wide concept; however, Prinz [27] defines a themed hotel as any other accommodation facility which provides its guests with the creation of special experiences and feelings. More precisely, the whole concept of the hotel is focused on a single specific theme and, with the optimal combination of themed services, design, and offer; it contributes to fulfilling guests' needs for new experiences [27]. According to [28], themed hotels are characterised by a new business concept. Namely, themed hotels are becoming a tourist attraction, including storytelling in the entire business model and design; they develop a feeling of hospitality and welcome through an emotional relationship with guests, where guests are not merely passive observers but get actively included in the hotel story by co-creation [31]. The same author proceeds with how positive impacts of the development of thematised accommodation facilities relate to an increase in the number of overnights in the pre- and post-seasons, urban and rural regeneration and improvement of the entire quality of the tourism destination.

Wine hotels are detached from standard, uniform, mass hotel complexes developed from the specific wine tourism niche. Wine tourism includes tourist travel which includes visits to vineyards, wine cellars, wine festivals and wine exhibitions, where wine tasting and/or the experience of attractions of the wine-growing regions represent the primary motivation for travel [38]. They also define the wine tourism product typology, where they highlight: wine routes, vineyard hiking, organised tours and stays in vineyards, oenology studying, visits to wine cellars, wine museums, wine celebrations and festivals and professional presentations and sales fairs. Considering the aforementioned, organised wine hotels have a special place; they enhance the destination's attractiveness, competitiveness and diversification; they contribute to the innovativeness and refreshment of a tourist offer [30]. Cable Wine System [39] and Garibaldi [40] present the wine hotels' concepts and fundamental features.

The concept of "vinotel" and "wine hotel" denotes wine hotels, i.e., accommodation facilities with the theme of wine, which base their offer of products and services on the presentation of the local wine culture such as wine tasting, different wine-based treatments, and others. They are characterised by offering high-quality experiences, multisensory experiences [41] and decoration resembling wine heritage [40].

Wine hotels can be situated in restored rural buildings formerly used for other purposes, and natural materials such as stone and wood are used in restoration to create a powerful bond to the territory. On the other hand, wine hotels can be of a modern, minimalist design, often in combination with high-tech solutions. In addition, there are also unusual wine hotels, such as wine barrels and luxury tents situated in vineyards [40][41][42][43]. Furthermore, numerous hotels are located in the close vicinity of wine regions, given that wine tourists take part in wine tours and visit wine cellars [39].

Wine hotels are frequently independent boutique, heritage or lifestyle hotels that operate independently or under the umbrella of a consortia brand. At the international level, wine hotels are affiliated with themed associations through which they affirm strategic marketing. For example, the Wine Hotels Collection is a distinguished marketing association that gathers 68 pronouncedly thematised/trendsetter “wine” hotels throughout the world (Argentina, Portugal, Spain, France, Chile, Italy, South Africa, Croatia, Uruguay and Hungary). This association was primarily created to satisfy an increasingly globally growing demand for gastronomic and oenological tourism. In that sense, the association members consist of the best wine hotels, hotels in areas surrounded by vineyards, and hotels in wine regions [44].

The offer in wine hotels does not only refer to wine tasting but also to a wide range of products and services. It can include only overnights or wine-themed offers, such as wine tasting in vineyards or wine cellars, cycling and hiking tours, horse riding, trekking, yoga, dinners in vineyards, wine-based wellness treatments, various cultural activities which combine art and music with taste, and other [40]. In addition, the offer may include different courses, access to wine collections, spas, nearby local wineries, themed rooms, modern art galleries, and other content providing luxurious experiences [39].

Wine hotels offer their wine cellars and collections created by the world’s best sommeliers and famous chefs who prepare luxury dishes pairing the best with the right choice of wine. When hotels are not situated close to wineries, wine-related events are usually organised at the hotel itself [39].

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