

# Wine Tourism

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Contributor: Puiu Nistoreanu, Razvan Dina, Mihail Tanase, Sergiu Rusu, Cosmin Nicolae Mirea

Nowadays, wine has become an important beverage that is increasingly being consumed more frequently all over the world, and its production and marketing has received increasing attention from consumers, specialists, and producers. As a result, the growing importance of wine tourism for many destinations and the role of this type of tourism in supporting local economies is now beginning to be understood. It has also been highlighted that wine tourism can play a significant role in the development of tourism by contributing to the economic and social support of local regions and communities. Wine is one of the ingredients of people's journeys, and journeys dedicated to wine-producing areas have led to the tourism product known as wine tourism.

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## 1. Wine Tourism—A Conceptual Approach

Wine tourism has long existed in parts of Europe and North America and has developed in Australia as a distinct tourist product since the early 1980s, and the opportunity to host visitors is an important source of additional income for wine producers <sup>[1][2][3]</sup>. Formal links between tourism and wine, especially through the creation of wine routes, have existed since the first half of the century, and have expanded considerably in recent times <sup>[4]</sup>.

Tourism can play an important role in the economic development of wine-producing regions, while consolidating them as tourist destinations <sup>[5]</sup>. There are experts <sup>[6]</sup> who believe that what food tourism means actually started with wine tourism and later evolved into gastronomy. Wine producers in Australia, Canada, France, South Africa, and the USA have been considered the innovators of wine tourism. They have realized the potential and have evolved from simple vineyards to establishing connections with restaurants and entertainment in rural areas.

Depending on the motifs, wine tourism can be described as “visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of the grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors” <sup>[7]</sup>.

Moreover, wine tourism is defined as “a tour or visit to wineries, wine festivals and events correlated where the most important motivation for the tourist is to directly experience the characteristic, the quality of a wine through a tasting session” <sup>[8]</sup>. According to previous definitions, wine tourism can be concise as a trip to the vineyards, including what wine-loving tourists experience in these destinations <sup>[9]</sup>.

To create a connection between wine tourism and local area, other elements have to be considered. Specific food with local ingredients, prepared and served by locals <sup>[8]</sup>, information about the production system and local culture <sup>[10]</sup> help the tourist to fully enjoy and understand the particulars of the area. Seen as a holistic experience, it is clear that, for this type of tourism, the researchers have a fixation in space (geographically) <sup>[11]</sup>.

For wine tourism to be a real success, it must to be organized both at the vineyard level and at the regional level <sup>[12]</sup>. However, it should be understood that winery visits may be made by those whose main reasons for travel are not necessarily related to wine, but rather to the entertainment options that the area where wineries are located can offer <sup>[13]</sup>.

Viticulture can transform the local landscape into a combination of agriculture, industry, and tourism <sup>[10]</sup>. These wine regions are called “winescapes”. Wine tourism also facilitates producer–consumer interaction and involves education on specific products, representing an opportunity to promote the (positive) image of the region <sup>[4][13][14]</sup>.

Today, wine tourism is perceived as more than a superficial visit to wineries or vineyards to buy or drink wine <sup>[9]</sup>. It is also appreciated that the existence of a wide range of experiences, which can be combined with wine tourism such as: wine

tasting, the pleasure of visiting the surroundings, excursions in the area, and many other complementary cultural activities, are possible in the wine regions <sup>[15][16]</sup>.

The vineyard owners have made the wine tour an important holiday destination. This has been achieved by understanding the consumer's needs, by tasting wines <sup>[6]</sup>.

In a globalized economy, wine is traded internationally, and this is associated with the marketing of regional brands and images, which is a particularly important feature of wine promotion <sup>[4]</sup>.

It is assumed that a potential consumer will have a set of beliefs about what attributes make up the likely tourist experience in a wine region <sup>[16]</sup>. Some studies <sup>[9][17]</sup> have concluded that many wine-loving tourists want a comprehensive tourist experience that includes opportunities to experience scenic areas, visit wine festivals, and understand and support the local hospitality and culture. Thus, a visit to a vineyard is a complex of experiences that could include elements such as: an aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment, being the vineyard itself; the cultural and historical context of the wine-growing region and its production methods; an exploration of education and diversity; a sense of connection with the winery and a certain sense of authenticity <sup>[18]</sup>. Furthermore, it has been identified that all these elements of the experience are part of, or are framed by, the landscape (winescape) of the region, which can present an attractive integration of the rural landscape, the industrial process, and tourist activity <sup>[18]</sup>.

These quality experiences can have continuous benefits in the wine regions, emphasizing consumer loyalty to the destination and the product, helping to promote the local brand <sup>[19]</sup>.

Wine is considered a consumer product associated with people's lifestyle. Those interested in wine often explore wines by tasting and by associating them with food <sup>[20]</sup>. For established wineries, visitors are a way to test new products <sup>[4]</sup>.

Given that tourists are looking for fun and entertainment regardless of the location visited, the researchers can consider that wine may not be the most important factor that attracts someone in the area, so the wine regions and wineries compete with other tourist destinations <sup>[10]</sup>. The oenotourists are not necessarily the same people who engage in other non-oenological gastronomic activities—which are not related to wine <sup>[21]</sup>.

The wine consumer needs information on the origins of wine and there is a need for strong geographical differentiation between countries and even within countries, and between different producing regions <sup>[22]</sup>. Wine is becoming more attractive to consumers through its geographical origin, individual stories, and lineage <sup>[23]</sup>. Wine enthusiasts fall into various categories of sophistication and will therefore be willing to seek additional services <sup>[2]</sup>. Moreover, for a winery to be successful, the wines produced must find a sustainable and fair market. While larger wineries need to attract customers through the special experiences they can offer, smaller wineries need to demonstrate hospitality and local affiliation <sup>[24]</sup>.

Wine festivals offer a great opportunity to raise awareness and recognize local and regional brands and build customer loyalty <sup>[20]</sup>.

In essence, wine tourism combines elements of a wine region, such as grapes, wine production, wine as a finished product, vineyards and wineries, gastronomic and wine festivals, the region's customs, and its geographical characteristics, so that all these elements are able to meet the expectations of the wine tourist.

## **2. The Wine Tourist**

Wine is a unique product and different from other foods. Wine consumption has specific characteristics such as association with food, symbolic value, and popularity for gift giving <sup>[25]</sup>. In addition, more than with other types of food, the tradition and socio-cultural characteristics influence the consumption of wine. Those who practice wine tourism seek to gain a global tourism experience, which offers a variety of regional benefits <sup>[17]</sup>.

Regarding the relationship between consumer behavior and wine tourism, no pre-1995 study has been identified to explore this topic. Many of the studies published subsequently focused on two areas of research: 1. understanding the socio-demographic characteristics of the wine tourist; and 2. understanding the psychography of the wine tourist <sup>[26]</sup>. It is important to note that "Wine tourism is, simultaneously, a form of consumer behavior, a strategy by which destinations develop and market wine-related attractions and imagery, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to educate and sell their products directly to consumers" <sup>[17]</sup> (p. 147). Many studies of wine tourists have only referred to vineyard visitors and not to wine consumers in general. There is a limited understanding of the potential of wine tourism among wine consumers <sup>[17]</sup>.

Thus, as wine tourism develops, there is a growing need to understand wine consumers and the factors that contribute to their overall experience when practicing this type of tourism. Wine tourists can be either local hikers or overnight visitors from outside the area. They demonstrate a mix of demographic characteristics but are often a mix of domestic and out-of-state travelers representing a relatively high socioeconomic level in terms of education, income, and profession.

What is the profile of a tourist who practices wine tourism? A comprehensive study <sup>[27]</sup> conducted in 2011 presents interesting conclusions. There are gender differences between wine tourists. Thus, women are more attracted to the labels on the bottles, sharing the wines from the winery with others, and making post-purchase visits. Many studies support the hypothesis that wine tourists are young and have a high level of education and income. Other studies <sup>[28][29]</sup> have found that women are more inclined to use more sources of information than men when making the decision to buy wine. A study conducted in British Columbia <sup>[30]</sup>, Canada, showed that wine tourists in general (those who visit vineyards) were more active and engaged than other tourists. Thus, a group called “cultural wine tourists” was identified, more interested in luxury <sup>[30]</sup>.

A study of wine tourism in South Africa found that wine tourists did not travel with the group of tourists <sup>[31]</sup>, and a study in Australia found that wine tourists were not homogeneous in terms of generation and developed diverse expectations regarding the “cellar door” experience <sup>[32]</sup>. Experience and service were important to young visitors, while viticulture was important to the elderly.

It is also appreciated that the motivations of the wine tourist refer to having the opportunity to taste the wine, experience the attributes of a wine region, to tour the vineyard, to have the opportunity to meet the producer, buy quality wines, dine in the local restaurant, socialize with family or friends, and attend wine festivals or events <sup>[33]</sup>.

The reasons for travel are one of the most important criteria for segmenting the tourist demand. The importance derives from the complexity of the reasons, in the sense that they can be very numerous and diverse. Furthermore, the basis of practicing one form or another of tourism may be common reasons for all forms of tourism or there may be specific reasons. Moreover, the reasons for travel are subjective, which means that they can characterize individuals, groups of individuals, or even an entire nation.

A study conducted in Greece <sup>[34]</sup> showed that “visiting the winery” was the most important motivating factor for wine tourists, followed by “learning about wines and how they are produced”, and then “buying wine”. However, the rural setting, gastronomy, or visits were not considered reasons to visit the wine region.

The existence of wineries in a wine region is in itself a reason to visit that region. The attributes of the winery, which determine the visit to the region and, implicitly, to the winery, are the quality of the services offered to the tourists, the knowledge of the wine that the winery workers have, and the diversity of wine assortment <sup>[9]</sup>. As a result, in order to attract as many tourists as possible, wineries need to continuously improve their characteristics, as previous studies <sup>[35][36][37]</sup> have shown that visits by tourists to wine-growing regions generate revenue for the latter.

It should be noted that the reasons do not differ much from one category of tourists to another. Moreover, the reason found in all categories of tourists is the wine tasting. This indicates that visiting a winery and implicitly tasting wine represent the essence of wine tourism.

Depending on the influence of the wine landscape (region) on tourists, namely, the organization/arrangement of the wine region, wine quality, value/notoriety of the wine region, winery workers, and depending on experience motivation and bonding motivation, tourists practicing wine tourism can be classified as <sup>[38]</sup>:

- Inspired tourists—the attraction towards wine tourism is influenced both by your own motivation to experiment and by the offerings of wineries;
- Self-motivated tourists—the attraction towards wine tourism is influenced both by one's own motivation to experiment and by the wineries' offers;
- Market-motivated tourists—the attraction to wine tourism is influenced more by the wineries' offers and less by their own motivation to experiment;
- Inert tourists—neither their own motivation to experiment nor the winery's offerings make them feel attracted to wine tourism.

In other words, this classification highlights the way in which wine tourists respond to intrinsic factors (internal motivations and their own experience) and extrinsic factors (winery offers). Naturally, due to the fact that the influence of factors is felt subjectively, the situations described above appear in which tourists can be influenced by one of the categories of factors, by both categories, or by none.

Wine tourists can also be characterized by comparison with non-wine tourists. Two of the variables that differentiate between wine tourists and non-wine tourists are income and consumption habits <sup>[39]</sup>. As a result, wine tourists have a much higher income than non-wine tourists, wine tourists consume much more wine, and much more often than non-wine tourists <sup>[39]</sup>. Given the variable income, it can be deduced that the tariffs charged by wineries do not have a very large impact on wine tourists.

Additionally, wine tourists can be divided into active wine tourists and potential wine tourists <sup>[40]</sup>. Thus, active wine tourists are characterized by the fact that they are wine consumers and have visited a winery at least once, and potential wine tourists are characterized by the fact that they are wine consumers, but have never visited a winery. Furthermore, two other differences between these categories of wine tourists refer to: the fact that active wine tourists are much more likely to visit a vineyard where they can find their favorite wines and where they can carry out other activities specific to wine tourism, compared to potential wine tourists, and the fact that for active wine tourists, the time to and distance to where the vineyard is located are insignificant elements, while for potential wine tourists, they are significant elements <sup>[40]</sup>.

Another typology of tourists who practice wine tourism is the typology based on the origin of the tourists, more precisely, the tourists can be from the country where the visit occurs, but they can also be international tourists. Thus, it was found that there are some differences between the profiles and expectations of domestic and international tourists, and as a result, wineries have the responsibility to know these profiles and expectations, to increase the return rate, which in the case of international tourists, is lower than that of national tourists <sup>[41]</sup>.

The four profiles were studied in another paper <sup>[42]</sup>, finding that an emotional experience was more important for wine lovers, interested tourists, and curious tourists, than for uninterested tourists. If the wine-growing experience was rated as the most important attribute of all four profiles, the environment of the wine-growing region was the next most important attribute for the interested and curious tourists, more so than for wine lovers and disinterested tourists.

### **3. The Profile of Wine Tourists from the “Old World” of Wine**

The profile of tourists who practice wine tourism and the reasons why they practice this form of tourism, could also be influenced by the “world of wine” from which they come. Following an analysis of the largest wine production and exports, among the countries with an older or more recent wine tradition, it was discovered that there is the “Old World” and the “New World” of wine <sup>[43]</sup>. The “Old World” of wine includes countries such as Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, and the “New World” of wine includes countries such as Argentina, Chile, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States <sup>[43]</sup>. Given that all the countries of the Old World of wine are from Europe, it can be admitted that Europe has the supremacy of the world wine market, which is why studying the profiles of wine tourists from European countries with a tradition in viticulture has proved imperative.

Thus, the Greek vineyard visitor is characterized by the fact that he is a man, is between 26 and 36 years old, is employed, has higher education, has a monthly income of between EUR 1501 and 2000, and comes from a rural area <sup>[34]</sup>. He has as reason for travel, obtaining information about wines and wine production <sup>[34]</sup>. As a result, it can be inferred that visitors to Greek wineries may fall into the category of wine connoisseurs.

The German vineyard visitor is characterized by being a woman, is between 50 and 59 years old, and can also be over 60 years old, has a university degree, a high income, and is employed, and among the main reasons for travel are the consumption of traditional food and drink, the acquisition of wine information, and wine tastings <sup>[5]</sup>.

The Spanish vineyard visitor is characterized by the fact that she is a woman, is between 40 and 49 years old, has a university degree, a high income and is employed, and among the main reasons for travel are the acquisition of information about wines, entertainment/relaxation, and the consumption of traditional food and drink <sup>[5]</sup>.

The visitor to the Italian vineyard falls into the category of tourists who love wine, treats the vineyard as a pilgrimage site, being characterized by the fact that he is a man, he is between 26 and 45 years old, has a medium to high income, uses the car as a means of transportation, and has information on wines <sup>[44]</sup>. Given that he falls into the category of wine-loving tourists, it can be deduced that the reasons why he visits a winery are due to tastings and the desire to learn about wines.

The Bulgarian vineyard visitor is characterized by the fact that she is a woman, is between 41 and 60 years old, visits wineries 2–3 times a year, and the reasons behind the visit are tastings, vineyard tours, general experience, food, and association with wine from wineries, and the history and production of wine <sup>[45]</sup>.

The Portuguese vineyard visitor is characterized by being a man, being employed, between 18 and 45 years old, having a high school or undergraduate degree and an average income of between EUR 1251 and 3500, and among the reasons behind the practice of wine tourism and, implicitly, the visit to the wineries, are the attractiveness of the wine-growing area's physical and historical characteristics, the desire to find information about wines <sup>[46]</sup>.

The French tourist who practices wine tourism is characterized by the fact that he does not prefer trips, but stays for an average of five nights, spends more than other categories of tourists, makes the visits together with his partner, prefers to practice wine tourism in the spring and summer seasons, prefers to use the car as a means of transport, and the main reason for practicing wine tourism is the discovery of vineyards and wines <sup>[47]</sup>.

It is noted that all tourists who prefer to practice wine tourism and, implicitly, to visit wineries, have a common reason, namely, to find information about wines, especially information about the history and mode of production. As a result, they can be included in the category of tourists who love wine or in the category of tourists who are interested in wine.

It was also concluded that tourists who practice wine tourism and come from the Old World of wine are predominantly male, and tourists who come from the New World of wine are predominantly female <sup>[27]</sup>. In other words, European tourists who practice wine tourism are mostly men.

## **4. Wine Tourism Experience and Sustainable Local Development**

Some studies <sup>[47][48]</sup> highlight the fact that wine tourism is widely recognized as having a strong connection with the rural element, and the idea that the wine country, where both natural and cultural characteristics are important, is a rural paradise, was passed on to wine consumers. Wine tourism is an important factor in sustainable rural development, especially through the creation of jobs and the sale of local products <sup>[4]</sup>.

In addition, it has been recognized as part of agricultural tourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism, industrial tourism, and tourism of special interest <sup>[1]</sup>. Wine tourism can also be seen as a means to combat the effects of rural restructuring <sup>[4]</sup>.

Mainly, wine tourism is a type of rural tourism. The connection between WT and rural communities has been explored in many studies. Being connected to rural space for most of the business activities of wine producers, wine tourism is also connected with traditions, folklore, customs, and architecture <sup>[48]</sup>.

It can create opportunities to diversify and stimulate rural development <sup>[49]</sup>. It is noted that “tourist professionals could support their offer's competitive differentiation with a greater variety of visiting packages, including activities such as concerts, grape harvesting time, exhibitions, festivals, cooking workshops, typical accommodation, hiking or cycling in vineyards, ballooning over vineyards, horseback riding, and carriage tours in vineyards” <sup>[50]</sup>.

The development of diverse activities has several advantages for the local community: local employment, reduced seasonality, and favorable perception.

Vineyards can be involved in the community by employing local residents and participating in local events <sup>[51]</sup>. Other benefits involved by the development of WT are related to seasonality and tourist flows <sup>[52]</sup>. It has been shown that residents also have a favorable perception about wine tourism especially related to economic impact, socio-cultural impact, and environmental impact <sup>[53]</sup>. Wine, identity, and tourism create values and are fundamental for rural development <sup>[54]</sup>. A visit to the vineyard can generate a competitive advantage for both the tourist destination and local wines, creating profit for producers, but also opportunities for the development of the regional wine sector <sup>[27]</sup>.

For some areas, the development of wine tourism can lead to negative transformations of rural landscapes that requires a higher level of protection—a national heritage site <sup>[55]</sup>. Other negative impacts of overdevelopment of wine tourism in a rural area are: increase in land cost, overcrowding, lack of workforce in the vineyards due to changes in local economy, etc.

Wine tourism can be approached as a system oriented towards specific experiences and activities that occur in a specific framework called “winescape”. Thus, “experiences are enjoyable, engaging and memorable encounters for those

consuming these events from a consumer's perspective" [56]. Increasingly, wine tourism is creating unique and authentic experiences that need to be more personalized and differentiated [57].

Consumption experiences need to be analyzed over time and can be divided into four stages: 1. pre-consumption experiences (search and planning); 2. shopping experiences (choice and contact with the environment); 3. essential consumer experiences (sensation); and 4. nostalgic experience [58].

The "total wine experience" is characterized by ten features: 1. wine tasting and purchase; 2. socializing with friends; 3. the joy of the day spent outdoors; 4. the joy given by the rural and living environment; 5. becoming familiar with wine production; 6. learning about wine; 7. wine tasting in restaurants; 8. the vineyard tour; 9. the visitor's experience with other attractions and activities; and 10. relaxation [59].

In a study of wine tourism in the United States, it was found that American tourists had travel experience and relatively high socioeconomic status. During the trip, they tend to participate in various activities, especially visits to wineries, wine festivals and events, and associated tours, thus manifesting the need for variety and the search for new sensations [60].

A study conducted in Greece showed that the key motivating factors of wine tourism are associated with the vineyard experience, rather than the social context of the visit or the general regional characteristics. The authors placed first the "winery aesthetics", and then in order "the basic viticultural product" and the "educational experience", identifying two new motivational dimensions, "familiarity", and, respectively, "reputation and novelty". A less explored research area can also be considered, namely the attitudes and perceptions of tourists in the vineyard [26]. Therefore, it was studied whether wine tourists feel the desire to buy wine in the tasting rooms due to a feeling of offering something in return for the services received [14]. In this regard, it was found that the more grateful the consumer was to the winery for the time he/she spent, the higher the expenses incurred. This feeling of gratitude was stronger if tourists were traveling in small groups [14].

As have been seen, tourists are no longer interested in wine tasting and purchasing. Several activities can be developed starting from a higher sophistication of tourist demand. In conclusion, it can be appreciated that wine tourism can create truly authentic experiences based on the local environment. By its assets, it can contribute to local development (employment, economic diversification). By having a fixation in space (geographically), wine tourism is strongly linked to the environment depending on it (food, drink, history and traditions, architecture, landscape, and atmosphere). Several negative effects can occur but only in areas with higher demand. Usually, wine tourism is not a form of mass tourism and negative effects over the environment are scarce and present a low intensity. In the majority of cases, the advantages are spread over the entire area: vineyards, other local businesses, local community, environment, and cultural heritage. In doing this, wine tourism has a great contribution to overall sustainable development.

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