

WINE TOURISM – AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WINE INDUSTRY

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Abstract

Romania is a major European wine producing country with its great historical past and rich cultural traditions, many of them directly related to this beverage rightly considered a divine liqueur. It has favorable climatic conditions, natural landscapes and beautiful vineyards.

The wine tourism is a collateral activity to wine industry which lead to regional development. This paper highlights the success factors to attract and to motivate the wine tourist. Romania has a considerable potential regarding the wine tourism development. But the lack of the promotion, of a defining brand and of the infrastructure hinder the capitalization of these factors.

Key words: wine tourism; wine routes; tourist motivation; wine industry

JEL classification: L66, L83, O13, Q13, Q19

1. INTRODUCTION

In Australia, New Zealand, but also in Europe, there are lots of articles and studies with theoretical and practical views in terms of wine tourism and factors of success that contribute to attract and motivate wine tourists, in comparison with Romania, where the research in this field is still at an early stage. Hall and Getz are well-known authors in this field who made the first studies in this area.

This paper is to cover a field few developed in specialized Romanian literature - that one of wine tourism. In the present days we think it will be very interesting and useful to do some research in this area because Romania is an important European wine producer country. The analysis of the current situation in Romanian wine tourism and the identification of the factors that may contribute to attract and motivate wine tourists is a step forward in the viticulture research and also of the possibilities to increase eco-efficiency of investments in this area.

In this paper, in order to present the factors of success in attracting and motivating wine tourists, we strongly considered being appropriate to express some on the concepts regarding wine tourism and the ones of the road of wine. Also, we presented the facilities and the motivations of the wine tourists in order to visit the promotional activities; we mentioned the main classifications regarding wine tourist's profile and we briefly described the situation of the Romanian wine tourism.

2. WINE TOURISM

* ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was co-financed from the European Social Fund through Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resources Development 2007-2013; project number POSDRU/107/1.5/77213 „Ph.D. for a career in interdisciplinary economic research at the European standards”.

The specific activities of tourism must be applied in the wine industry. Wine tourism is an opportunity for the development of the wine industry. Wine is often associated with relaxation, communication with friends, hospitality. On vacation, tourists want hospitality, looking to relax with friends, learn new things, to explore, to discover (Dodd, 1995). Wine tourism is a form of tourism. Visit to wineries, attending a wine route is a product of wine tourism (Weiler & Hall, 1992). Wine tourism, development and marketing of wine tourism represents a relatively recent phenomenon. In Europe, wine tourism was often associated with the official wine routes and wine roads (Hall et al, 2000).

Studies and research on wine tourism were performed for the first time in 1990; the first conference, which focused on the wine tourism was held in Australia in 1998. The works done in that period were comparative studies with descriptive character that were highlighting the need to study this new activity. This area has been studied by researchers around the world, such as: Dodd 1995; Peters 1997, Skinner 2000 in USA; Thevenin 1996, Frochot 2000 in France; Beverland 1998, Johnson 1998, Mitchell & Hall 2003 in New Zealand; Macionis 1997, Dowling & Carlsen 1999 in Australia; Preston-Whyte 2000, Bruwer 2000, Demhardt, 2003 in South Africa; Sharples 2002 in Chile; Gilbert 1992 in Spain; Hackett 1998, Williams & Kelly 2001, Telfer 2001, Williams & Dossa 2003 in Canada; Pavan 1994 in Italy and others.

Because there are many wine regions with wine tourism activities, they perform aggressive marketing to attract more clients and getting competitive positions against competitors; this has become a strategic issue nationwide. (Williams, 2001). Australia, which is a pioneer in this field, has developed a national strategy for wine tourism (King, 1998) and is currently implementing it to develop this area.

There is no uniform approach for defining wine tourism. From a marketing perspective, wine tourism means identifying the needs of current and potential wine tourists. Most definitions of wine tourism are considering motivations to go on a vacation, to make a journey, to have new experiences, learn new things.

The number of definitions given to wine tourism grows once with the industry. Hall and Macionis (1998) define wine tourism as follows: "...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". Other authors say that wine tourism involves also developing a marketing and planning strategy (Getz et al, 1999). In the Western Australian Wine Tourism Strategy (2000), Wine tourism is defined: "...travel for the purpose of experiencing wineries and wine regions and their links to lifestyle. Wine tourism encompasses both service provision and destination marketing".

Getz defined the wine tourism from three perspectives: a strategy for development of visitor attractions, a form of consumer behavior visiting favorite destinations, an opportunity for wineries to educate their clients and directly sell their wine.

Wine tourism, in our opinion, includes three main components:

- Visits of wine connoisseurs and buyers to specific vineyards for buying or scientific purposes – business tourism;
- Visits to vineyards in general, with the aim of understanding process of producing wine and/or wine tasting. This is considered an advertising activity by self-financing performed by vineyards to encourage the sale on the spot and long-term customer loyalty;
- Wine Routes - scenic routes through areas of vineyards linking different plantations.

3. WINE ROUTE

Wine route concept relates to a defined space that is vital to its existence and reflects for wine producers who are part of this space, their identity consisting of unique features specific to their wines and their cultural heritage. Wine producers whose vineyards are part of a wine route, in order to differentiate from competitors, emphasize characteristics that make them unique; these characteristics refer to the type of grape and wine they produce, the soils and climate that give wine distinctive attributes, and cultural heritage.

Wine route is a tourist route that includes several vineyards and wineries in an area. This route may include: natural attractions such as mountains, sea, landscapes and more, industrial objectives such as wineries of the vineyards, roads and signs to help tourists reach the winery. Most wine routes take the form of a wine region that is most often officially delimited by an appellation of controlled origin or an area with geographical indication (GI), such as for example Rioja (Spain), Napa Valley (California), Champagne (France). In short, the wine route is a route to the main tourist attractions of wine: wine and winery. Other authors define the route of wine as: "...usually a wine route consists of a designated itinerary (or several) through the wine region which is thematically signposted as well as being interpreted via a free leaflet and map, which notes the different vineyards and winemakers and provides information on sites of historical and other interest..." (Hall et al., 2000).

Tourism and wine industry are based on a branding of the area (Fuller, 1997; Hall & Macionis, 1998). Identity geographic or regional origin of the wine was formalized through denomination of controlled origin (Hall et al., 2000). In Romania, there are wines with designation of controlled origin and wines with geographical indication. Each wine route tries to highlight a set of regional features, which gives a brand identity and a distinctive note (Moran, 1993) or something that makes it unique. This combination of natural, cultural and social features is perceived by tourists as being distinctive. Tourists make the difference of scenery, cultural framework when visiting vineyards that are included on a wine route in a region. (Hall et al., 2000).

Wine route concept is the possibility of introducing the notions of exploration and discovery. Wine route involves a journey that can bring a range of new unexpected experiences. Wine route allows tourists to explore the many natural and cultural features of the landscape. In the current global context, it is important to understand that the basis for a brand, a successful winery image is the promotion of wine region or of the country where the wine originates; this will contribute to further development of the wine industry. Wine is one of those goods that builds its brand on its geographical origin (Merret & Whitwell, 1994).

Wine regions where wine tourism is practiced and where there is a wine route established, are the framework where the government, private companies and associations, the tourism industry, wineries and local governments can successfully collaborate. Their synergy contributes to cultural, regional and economic development by creating jobs (Europäische Weinstraßen, 1999).

4. WHY TO VISIT A WINERY?

The main reasons for visiting a vineyard, a winery, a wine region can be diverse, including: visiting wine factories (wineries), participation in festivals devoted to wine and traditional food, shows, sightseeing and other attractions, recreation, visiting relatives and friends. Ancillary activities, promotional activities and facilities offered to tourists have a big role in the conquest of new segments of tourists.

Table 1 shows some support activities that wineries are practicing to attract many tourists.

Table 1. Tourist and visitor facilities available at winery/wine estate

Wine tasting	Wine/other festivals	Fireplace
Cellar-door sales	Historic building/Museum	4x4 Race track
Winery organized tours	Educational tours	Petrol/filling station
Meet the winemaker	Cooking classes	Amphitheatre
Wheelchair facilities	Vineyard walking	Animal feeding and/or watching
Social function facilities	Craft/Gallery/Souvenir shop	Hiking/biker trails
Picnic facilities	Restaurant—arrangement only	Horse/pony rides
Conference facilities	Overnight accommodation	Swimming
Restaurant—all week	Children's playground facilities	Golf
Cellar lunches	Restaurant—all weekend	Beauty classes
Barbeque facilities	Fruit picking by visitors	Spa
Visitor centre	Fresh produce sold	Spectacular views

Source: adapted from Bruwer (2002) p. 429

In understanding the phenomenon of wine tourism, an important role is played by understanding the real reasons behind the decision of a tourist to visit a winery. These are presented in Table 2. Identification of these reasons should underpin the achievement of promotion strategy in order to attract and retain more tourists.

Table 2. Specific visitor motivations to visit wine route estate

Wine purchasing	Meeting the winemaker
Wine tasting/sampling	Socializing with family/friends
Country setting/vineyards	Festivals or events
Winery tour	Eating at winery (restaurant/cafe)
Learning about wine and winemaking	Entertainment

Source: adapted from Bruwer (2002), p. 430

After identifying the needs and wishes of consumers, a winery may develop its marketing plan. In Table 3 are some promotion activities that can be applied by a winery in order to achieve the proposed sales.

Table 3. Promotional activities used by wineries to increase/maintain cellar-door sales

Wine tastings	Newsletters	Wine club	Jazz festival
Wine festivals	Internet (E-Commerce)	membership	Valentine's Day
Wine shows	Newspapers adverts	Regional adverts	radio
Wine magazine adverts	Special offers/discounts	Television adverts	Hot air balloons / airplane banners
Direct mail order list	Other magazine adverts	Agents advertise	Airways
Hotels and Wine sales	Sport promotions	Word-of-mouth only	Wine route promotional activities
			Synergy deals

restaurants	representatives	- no promotions	Wine tasting rooms
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Source: adapted from Bruwer (2002), p. 430

5. THE PROFILE OF THE WINE TOURIST

To get a clear idea about wine tourism activity, we must first build a profile of wine tourists (Hall et al., 2000). Conducting professional studies in this field is necessary because there is little research and information at this time on wine tourism profile. There are researchers who are concerned about this issue and have developed some general views on wine tourism profile. So, the South Australian Tourism Commission characterizes the tourist as being “Couples with no children and those with higher education and incomes in professional occupations”, (South Australian Tourism Commission, 1997). Other authors, Dodd and Bigotte (1997), argue that income is the factor that determines the consumption of wine, and therefore the tourist will not choose wine special offers. These are tourists who have a higher level of financial and educational terms.

Hall said that demographic data represent a simple segmentation tool for wine tourist profile, while psychographic data that refers to values, lifestyles, attitudes, interests, include more important information for researchers, wine having an important role in the life style of consumers (Hall et al., 2000). Analysis, evaluation, lifestyle, consuming style are often used in marketing to achieve advertising strategy, segmentation, product development. For the wine industry, we have developed a research tool called wine related lifestyle (the role of wine in lifestyle and wine related lifestyle) which refers to the monitoring of wine products market. The reason this tool was developed concerns that customer segmentation according to how they see the value of the wine can improve consumer understanding of any market.

Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) are classifying the wine tourists in five segments:: “Wine Lovers”, “Connoisseurs” which are a sub-segment of “Wine Lover”, “Wine Interested”, “Wine Novices”, and “Hangers-on” which are visiting a winery as part of a group that decided to go there, having no interest in wine. Each of these five categories has specific reasons to visit attractions wineries. A “Wine Lover” is visiting a vineyard, a winery primarily to taste wine, buy wine, learn about wine, how to pick grapes, how wine is produced. Reasons for a visit by a “Wine Novice” wineries are less defined: the attractions of ancillary activities offered by winery such as excursions in the grapery or to eat in the wine cellar restaurant. Hall and Macionis (1998) are setting three segments of wine tourists: "wine lovers", "wine interested" and "curious tourist". In Table 4 are presented the main features of these segments.

Table 4. Wine tourism market segment descriptions

Wine lovers	Extremely interested in wines and winemaking Wineries may be sole purpose of visit to destination May be employed in wine and food industry Likely to be mature with high income and high education levels Likely to be regular purchaser of wine and food magazines Will have visited other wine regions Highly likely to purchase at winery and add name to any mailing list
Wine interested	High interest in wine but not sole purpose of visit to destination Moderate to high income bracket, tend to be university educated Occasional purchaser of wine and food magazines, regular purchaser of “lifestyle” magazines

	"Word-of-mouth" and wine columns in newspapers may be important for arousing interest in region Likely to have visited other wine regions Familiar with winemaking procedures Likely to purchase at winery and add name to any mailing list Potential for repeat purchase of wine through having visited winery
Curious tourists	Moderately interested in wine but not familiar with winemaking Wineries seen as "just another attraction" Moderate income and education Winery tour a by-product of visit to region as visiting was for unrelated purposes May have visited other wine regions Curiosity aroused by drinking or seeing winery product or general tourism promotion Opportunity for social interaction with friends and/or family May purchase at winery but will not join mailing list

Source: adapted from Hall & Macionis (1998), p. 217

6. THE ROMANIAN WINE TOURISM

If in countries like France, Italy, Spain or Germany the wine tourism is a concept that works very well, Romania is at the beginning, despite of the existent potential. Our country has failed to attract tourists from the West as effective as its neighbors, so our efforts to develop a wine route is low at present. Wine tourism has no success because few tourists hear talk about such offers. They are too invisible in the catalogs of travel agencies, they are not advertised elsewhere. The lack of a **defining brand** in the vineyards and winery tourism leads to lack of **promotion** in the domain. One solution would be a wine festival like National Holiday, as it exists in the Republic of Moldova or the inclusion of wine in Romania's tourism promotion programs. Extremely important for any touristic area is the existence of **the infrastructure**. The accommodations are very few, related activities are lacking, so the tourist is attracted no less to stay or to stay longer. But, first, to get to the accommodation units is necessary a adequate transport infrastructure. To attract tourists in the wine origin countries, it must be involved the wines with agro-tourism, with nice pensions and restaurants, where they can drink and eat, and also, it must have a transport infrastructure that will bring tourists to vineyards and wineries.

According to NATA (National Association of Travel Agencies), the first who showed interest in a vacation in the vineyards were foreign tourists. Thus, wine tourism is primarily intended for connoisseurs and for foreigners (the Romanians usually visit those areas only in conditions which they are still in vacation or nearly). There is presented to them a program that offers the opportunity to visit the cellars and vineyards, to taste wine, to participate in vintage and to take part in production of the wine. Some wine producers offer to guests accommodation in hostels. The number of tourists visiting Romanian vineyards and cellars is very small. Even if the number of tourists increases every year, they come mainly for curiosity and not for passion for the art of the wine. The key to this type of tourism is the promotion, which is lacking in the case of Romania. It is necessary that government together with private wine enterprises develop a national promotional strategy as it exist in Australia. Another important aspect is investment in the infrastructure.

In 2011, in the city Buzau Fințești (Dealul Mare) has inaugurated Lacerta Winery cellar, an Austrian investment of 8 million in wine tourism and wine industry. It is

highlighted ancient Romanian architect Ion Mincu mansion, built 110 years ago and restored by Austrian specialists, and the unique beauty of the area or potential vineyard. The Lacerta Group management estimates that by the end of the investment will generate over one million euro (Wall Street, 2011). Also in 2011, there were invested 61 million lei for the rehabilitation of the wine route from Arad (it is the rehabilitation of 20 km) (Ghinda, 2011). This investment involves beneficent economic effects at the national economy level such as creating work places. Both investments were made by accessing European funds. Reconversion of Romanian vineyards and wineries' modernization were financed by European funds.

The wine tourism can be a very profitable industry in Romania if there is a long-term national strategy for development of this sector. Romania has a great potential regarding the wine tourism development because it has favorable climatic conditions and winemaking tradition, history, culture, natural landscapes and beautiful vineyards. There are seven wine regions in the country: Podisul Transilvaniei, Dealurile Moldovei, Dealurile Munteniei si Olteniei, Dealurile Banatului, Dealurile Crisanei si Maramuresului, Dealurile Dobrogei, Terasale Dunării (ONVPV).

Romania has nine famous vineyards offering wine tasting itineraries and consistently for visitors in general: Murfatlar, Urateanu Cellar, Seciu, Stefanesti, Minis, Jidvei, Panciu, Bucium, Recas. There are also museums of wine: Murfatlar, Dragasani Stefanesti (Golesti Arges), Husi, Odobesti, Minis, Hârlău (Master Planul pentru turismul national al României 2007 – 2026). A number of tour operators offer specialized wine itineraries.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The wine purchasing, the wine tasting, the beauty of the Romanian winescapes, landscapes present a high potential of attractiveness for wine tourists. These attributes are factors of success in attracting the tourists. But Romania still needs at least another ten years to reach a comparable wine tourism from countries with tradition in this domain. The wine tourism is an important collateral activity to wine industry that can contribute to the development of this industry.

Analyzing in this paper the nowadays situation of the Romanian wine making tourism, we identified three major obstacles in developing this area namely: the lack of a defining brand, lack of the transport infrastructure, accommodation and the lack of promotion. Even if the number of tourists increases every year, they come mainly for curiosity and not for passion for the art of the wine.

This paper may become the inception of achievement of a certain research with an applicative character regarding the wine tourism, for example the elaboration of a national strategy of development in this area.

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