



Research Article

# Enotourism: Analysis and Case Study

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## Abstract

Enotourism, also known as wine tourism, is a growing niche tourism sector that is, at present, a rapidly developing industry and an important and sought out tourism sector world-wide. Because of its impact, importance and future development, this paper wishes to present a general analysis regarding wine tourism and a relevant case study that highlights and exemplifies the most important practices that this tourism sector offers to the consumer. We first describe this type of tourism activity and what it entails and we present the global present-day situation regarding this form of tourism, including its temporary setback caused by the ongoing global pandemic that has affected the tourism industry as a whole. We then analyze the current development status and visiting opportunities present in the country of Romania. This region of the world is very rich in viticulture potential, because of its wine making history and traditions. Through research from secondary sources, we present the most important wine tourism destinations (wineries and vineyards), we describe the numerous activities that can be undertaken in these establishments and we catalogue the different types of tourists that engage in these tourism activities. Besides the direct activities related to the wine-making process, we show how this tourism form generates important economic growth for those regions and stimulates further development. The experiences of visiting a winery, witnessing the wine-making process and engaging in tasting events, are on the rise, particularly in tradition-rich wine regions like the ones described in this paper. More and more tourists from all around the world are now willing to pay for such experiences, and Romania is a perfect example of how this type of activity can be conducted and capitalized from.

**Keywords:** Enotourism, tourism, wine, winery, analysis, case study

## Introduction

Wine tourism, also known as enotourism, which is growing and developing on a global scale, is widely considered a driver of economic and social development in rural areas. Limited job opportunities and unemployment are prevalent in most rural areas. The development of wine tourism is also responsible for the transformation of rural landscapes and especially in the regions that have the most developed wine routes. These regions need higher-level protection (especially the cultural and natural resource bases) in the form of an 'agricultural reserve' or the declaration of a 'national heritage site' (Ferreira & Hunter, 2017). Wine and vinification have a long history, deeply connected both with the tradition of the places where the vines are grown and with the people involved in the production process. Enotourism consists of visiting a wine-growing area, a vineyard and a wine cellar, culminating with a tasting event that also features the presentation of the wine route, from the cultivation and harvesting of grapes to the bottling and aging processes.

The growing interest shown by wine tourists has nurtured the proliferation of wine events and the growth of the wine tourism business; as a consequence, academicians' interest in this issue has also increased. At the same time, research on tourism and events is an evolving field and it has moved from a main economic focus to a broader perspective: some scholars have highlighted how the growing interest towards green and sustainable practices has stimulated academic research and a lot has been done on the management of environmental issues (Montella, 2017).

To know and understand wine, a drink that is deeply embedded in human history, is, in these conditions, more than a temporary trend - especially as people are more and more interested in the origin of the foods and drinks they consume with pleasure. Wine tourism is an experience through which the tourist knows areas where the cultivation of the vine is a tradition and visits wineries where you can find an impressive number of bottles, barrels, fragrances and aromas. Also, the

tourist gets in touch with the immensity of a vineyard, in which the rows of vines are lined up one after the other, stretching almost to infinity.

With the rapid economic growth that has occurred in recent decades, engaging in wine tourism has emerged as a new phenomenon. Subjective norm influences visit intentions through the mediating role of travel motivation and so do attitudes toward domestic wine when mediated by the wine-specific travel motivation. Past experiences positively affect visit intentions. A lack of wine knowledge and low confidence in domestic wine inhibits visit intentions (Ye et al., 2017). Wine has become an extremely serious business, and since 2016 there is even a United Nations body dedicated to the development of wine tourism: The United Nations Organization for Wine Tourism.

## Wine Tourism

In Europe, wine tourism has often been associated with the official wine routes and roads (Kruzmetra et al., 2018). The majority of the European wine routes are tourist objectives that have evolved from individual attractions, becoming authentic and diversified destinations themselves, capitalizing their cultural elements and landscapes, enriched by the reputation of the wines and the specific territory (Coroş, 2015). The particularities of these cultural elements and specific landscapes underline the contribution of wine routes to the improvement of marketing strategies for wine products, the economic performance and the efficiency of wine manufacturers' performance (Soare & Costachie, 2015).

All those who work in this type of niche tourism sector customize the holidays according to consumer requirements. A wine tourist is not just an ordinary traveler. He is passionate about wine and likes to engage in wine tourism activities. Being a wine connoisseur does not mean just liking wine like everyone else. Depending on their degree of passion, we can say that there are several types of wine tourists. There are those who would like to participate in the grape harvest itself, others would limit themselves to a simple wine tasting and some want a tour of the entire wine region, thus

enriching their lives with incredible memories and experiences.

There are many knowledgeable wine tourists who practice enotourism because they are passionate about wines; they are real specialists in this field. There are also those tourists who seek to accumulate both wine knowledge and real experiences regarding this liqueur. Their destination is chosen considering the vineyards, wineries, varieties and everything related to this drink. Everything in this journey practically revolves around wine. This type of traveler is interested in private tours, which will provide them with time to engage in deep conversations with the owner of the winery, the oenologist or the wine engineer. The wines chosen for tasting are of a premium selection, having a bold and special taste and being part of their list of special wines. This type of tourist has studied the way of cultivating the vineyard and is knowledgeable about the process through which the wine is obtained. For them, a one-day tour, even if accompanied by a tasting with specialized commentary, would never be enough.

There are wine tourists for whom everything revolves around food: delicious dishes plus wine. For this type of tourist, the perfect holidays are when the combination of wine and food happens at the same time, in the same place, regardless of the geographical area in which it is located. The gastro-tourist chooses their next trip according to the taste buds. Cheese, wine and fresh bread are, by tradition, an important part of their meals throughout the year. This type of tourist is passionate about restaurants that have their own vegetable garden for the ingredients in the daily menu and that offer a special wine menu, with recommendations for each dish.

The occasional wine tourists visit wineries or vineyards, participate in wine festivals, look for places famous for both their food and wine, but only as part of their journey. In other words, they have a medium level interest: they are passionate insofar as the field of winemaking intersects with their vacation plans. If they happen to visit a region with a viticulture tradition, they will certainly like to visit a famous winery and, on departure, they might even buy some wine for home.

Previous research has shown that the most important destination characteristic is the regional

landscape's scenic beauty. The strong impact of the landscape confirms the fact that an experiential research approach can yield valuable insights and that a memorable wine tourism experience does not only reside inside a winery's cellar door. The wine tourism engagement decision is generally impulsive, and motivations guiding visitors' behavior are predominantly hedonistic in nature. Wine tourists are a highly attractive group of consumers who are well-educated, affluent, and eager to buy when they experience "pleasure" (Bruwer & Rueger-Muck, 2018).

Wineries that engage in wine tourism activities and events provide tourists, whether they are amateur or knowledgeable wine tourists, with experienced guides and also cycling routes on the hills, among the rows of vines. In addition to bicycles, they provide car assistance and also water, different fruit and energy drinks on their route. After the bike ride, the tourists return to the winery, where they are given a tour of it, finding out the story of the wine from the grapes to the bottle, and tasting different types of wine. They visit the cellars where the wine matures in oak barrels, so that it can be bottled and aged. Depending on their preferences, in general, they can taste several varieties of wine: newer or older, collectible, all accompanied by trays with a vast assortment of cheeses, nuts and apples. Considering the adaptability of the organizers to the type of tourist that is present, introductory tastings or specialized tastings are organized. Also, at some wineries, the tourists can create their own wine according to their taste and personality. They can be transformed into winemakers, mixing different varieties, obtaining a wine with a new type of aroma, which those in the winery can bottle, label and send home.

The nature of the cellar-door experience varies between wineries and regions. While the literature has identified heritage, storytelling and authenticity as important concepts regarding interaction with tourists at the cellar-door, there is a need to understand how they are operationalized by winery staff, including their strategic objectives. Findings suggest that the cellar-door represents an important opportunity to reinforce heritage branding and differentiate the winery from its competitors. Different forms of heritage can be emphasized, including family and ethnic heritage. Storytelling is seen as a useful strategy to engage with tourists and the importance of authenticity, both intrinsic and existential, can be emphasized as

a means of competitive advantage (Frost et al., 2020).

Technological advancement has led to a significant transformation in tourism organizations, particularly in those who focus their activities on particular themes or segments, such as the wine tourism sector. For a tourism experience to become memorable, it must be emotional and immersive in such a way that the tourist becomes fully involved with the existing surroundings (Martins et al., 2017). Also, attempts are being made to fill the gap on holistic customer experiences in the offline and online retail environments, helping understand the developing Omni channel business environment through the lens of smart tourism. Smart wine-tourism consists in using digital technologies such as Wi-Fi and IoT to target nearby wine tourists and invite them to enjoy a wine experience while they visit rural areas. Providing Internet access, thanks to Wi-Fi terminals and IoT along the roads in tourism areas is of the utmost importance and can facilitate winery visits and/or other tourism activities. Wi-Fi can provide the digital infrastructure necessary for businesses to target tourists through location-based systems (LBS) and push notifications (Pelet et al., 2018). Also, while the majority of winery owners recognize the social, economic and emotional benefits of social media, they are far from exploiting their full potential, partially due to barriers such as their agricultural mentality and the time-consuming nature of social media (Canovi & Pucciarelli, 2019). The link between wine and tourism is increasingly important for the competitive advantage of the territory and its productions, and it must be adequately communicated online (Scorrano et al., 2019).

Loire Valley in France, Rhine Valley in Germany, Tuscany in Italy, Andalucía in Spain and Alentejo in Portugal are some of the most famous wine regions in Europe, not only for the unique quality of wine produced in these places, but also for tourism developed around the wineries and famous vineyards situated here.

### **Wine tourism in Romania**

The Romanian wine industry has strong roots in the past. The vast majority of Romania's population was not too long ago predominantly situated in a rural environment, but now the proportions have

been reversed, the urban population being now the majority with a percentage of approximately 60% (Vacarciuc, 2016). The demand for bottled wine is influenced by this demographic aspect because, even today, in rural areas where vines are grown, the phenomenon of self-consumption is often encountered.

Although vines have been cultivated in this country since ancient times, even before the formation of the Romanian people, and the pedoclimatic conditions favor the cultivation of various vineyards and implicitly the production of a very wide range of wines, this potential is not fully used.

A gratifying thing is the fact that the wine market is 80% dominated by Romanian companies with a vast experience, given primarily by their seniority on the domestic market of goods and services (Vacarciuc, 2016). Due to the fact that all wine companies belonged to the state during the communist regime in Romania, promotion and marketing strategies in this sector started relatively late. Romania is the sixth largest producer in the world and in the European Union it is on the fifth position in size of viticulture area and production capability, situated after Spain, Italy, France and Portugal.

Although it is an intensive branch of agricultural production in Romania, viticulture occupies only 3.6% of the total agricultural area in the country. Romania's viticulture heritage has oscillated in the last 80 years between a minimum area of 211,000 hectares, registered in 1935 and a maximum of 300,366 hectares, in 1972 (Manole, 2005).

In Romania, a wine region is a large habitat that usually coincides with a historic province. It has some common characteristics in terms of ecological conditions, assortment of varieties and range of wines that can be obtained. Romania has approximately 182,300 hectares occupied with vines (Vacarciuc, 2016).

There are 7 main wine regions in Romania, Moldova leading with 38%, followed by Muntenia with 28%. Due to the climate, soil and assortment conditions, Romania produces a very wide range of wines and drinks based on wine and grape must (Vacarciuc, 2016).

Thus, the Romanian assortment features dry white wines (with sugar of no more than 4 g/l), semi-dry

(with sugar between 4 and 12 g/l), semi-sweet (with sugar between 12 and 50 g/l) and sweet (with sugar over 50 g/l), red wines (generally dry), aromatic wines, usually made as semi-sweet and sweet wines. Depending on the variety, vineyard and year of harvest, the wines fall into two categories: those intended for current consumption (with an alcoholic strength of 8-10.9°) and those of superior quality (alcoholic strength over 10.9°). The range of wines and beverages based on grape must and wine produced in Romania is completed with sparkling wines (produced by the traditional fermentation process in bottles or by impregnating them with carbon dioxide), aromatized wines (especially vermouths), and Brandy-type alcoholic beverages (called "Vinars") obtained by aging wine distillates in oak barrels (Macici, 1996).

The main producers on the local wine market are Murfatlar (30%), Cotnari (18.7%), Jidvei (17%), Vincon Vrancea (10%) and Domeniile Tohani (8%), holding approximately 85% of the total market (Vacarciuc, 2016). Understanding the wine tourism experience is indispensable to the development of a wine tourism destination. Winery fame, interpersonal facilitators, and local attractions are three facilitating factors, while personal language, transportation barriers and time/information barriers are the perceived constraining factors (Gu et al., 2019).

In Romania, there are about 250 wineries that produce bottled wine, of which over 100 wineries have opened their doors for wine tourism. Also referred to in terms of enotourism or oenotourism, wine tourism involves organized visits in wineries where specialists show tourists the technological process by which wine is produced. These demonstrations are followed by tastings: usually 3-7 wines are tasted, in specially arranged places. The tourists can also visit the vineyards when the weather allows. In some situations, a demonstration of the vinification process can be made, starting from the wine harvest to fermentation and maturation in special barrels. The wineries can be visited in any season, but the recommended period is between April and November.

This type of tourism has started to be extremely appreciated both in Romania and internationally. Many travel agencies offer packages built for wine tourism that show how exploring wine areas and

engaging in wine tastings and cultural, recreational and gastronomic activities can be an ideal vacation and an authentic, unique experience. Tourists who are nowadays planning such vacations are increasingly aware of information related to this field of activity.

Visiting a winery for a tasting event takes, on average, 90 minutes. Because of this, it is recommended to make a reservation in advance, sometimes even a month in advance, especially during the high season. A complete experience in wine tourism consists of a variety of activities, such as: presenting information about the technological process - the story of wine, from grape picking to the maceration period and the bottling process; participating in a tasting event - the wineries offer different tourist packages that may include tasting several varieties of wines, along with local cheeses; walks through the vineyard - there is the possibility for tourists to walk through the vineyard, accompanied or not by local guides, and some wineries have tennis courts, bicycles for rent and tracks arranged through the vineyards; annual events - some wineries organize concerts, contests and parties during the grape harvest; having dinner nearby - tourists can choose to dine at the winery, if it offers such a service, or at a restaurant in the area; exploring the surroundings - tourists can stay in a town or village near the wineries to explore other tourist attractions in the area.

One of the most spectacular wineries in Romania is the Avincis Winery. Its history begins in 1927 when an officer in the Romanian army bought a neo-Romanian style mansion here, surrounded by vineyards. In 2011, the winery opened its doors, and Vila Dobrușa offers the necessary accommodation for a delightful viticulture experience. Forty hectares of vines can be visited by anyone. Among the Romanian varieties found at Avincis are: Crâmpoșia, Feteasca regală, Tămâioasa românească, Feteasca albă, Negru de Drăgășani, Novac and Feteasca neagră.

The Știrbey Winery is located on an estate located in the Drăgășani vineyard and belongs to the Știrbey princely family. The owners cultivate the local tradition of noble wines with varieties such as: Novac, Crâmpoșie or Negru de Drăgășani. The enclosure of the winery was designed by Barbu Știrbey at the beginning of the 20th century and was recently restored, but the air of the era was maintained by restoring the original menus, the

family tree and the impressive family history exhibited in vintage photographs.

The Villa Vinea Winery is located in the heart of Transylvania. Its owner, Heiner Oberrauch, transformed this area into one with rich tourist potential in 2001. Here you can taste wines such as: Fetească alba, Fetească regală and Fetească neagră, along with classic varieties, Sauvignon Blanc, Riesling de Rhin, Gewurztraminer, Muscat Ottonel, Pinot Noir and Merlot.

The continuous flow of the Danube River can be admired from the terraces of the Rasova Winery, which is located in Cernavoda, near Carol Bridge. Here tourists can enjoy the beautiful landscapes and spectacular sunsets. In this area, there are 50 hectares of land cultivated with quality varieties such as Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Gris, Cabernet, Syrah and Pinot Noir.

The Dealu Mare Vinyard, spread over 82 hectares, is located near Bucharest. The winery is unique in its architecture, made by Tyrolean architects V. Miklautz and M. Gaertner. The wines obtained here are renowned for their rich, complex and velvety taste, receiving awards in national and international competitions.

Wine tourism is important for its impact on rural destination development. The positive attitude of the local population is an essential link for development. Such understanding of residents' perceptions optimizes destination management and, more importantly, promotes local sustainable development. This has high policy implications on a national level (Vukovic, et al., 2019). Romanian vineyards symbolize the perfect host, being both beautiful and picturesque. Lately they have developed and become more open to tourism, offering accommodation and investing in ambiance and comfort.

The global pandemic has affected the wine tourism sector as well, which is an important source of income for the wineries. The COVID-19 pandemic considerably affected the Romanian wine industry, especially wine tourism, which until the crisis broke out was on an ascending slope, given that Romanians were becoming increasingly interested in this type of tourism. The effects of the crisis reduced the number of tourists who chose the experience of visiting a winery. Also, developing better infrastructure through roads,

accommodation and restaurants, is needed to make this kind of tourism more attractive and accessible.

In recent years, additional accommodation facilities have appeared. At the moment, accommodation will no longer be a problem. But, on the other hand, the pandemic also brought some restrictions. Certain wineries have ceased their activity during this period but will certainly reopen in the near future. In the ones that are still open, all visits are currently made by reservation and there are certain restrictions on tasting and serving food.

The wineries have started to pay more attention to wine tourism and to generally be more open because tourists, in addition to tasting packages, come to the winery to buy wine, and in the current situation, with restaurants mostly closed, these sales are more than welcomed. On the other hand, there are wineries that are occasionally forced to refuse groups due to measures taken locally. The current situation reduced the number of gastronomic and relaxation experiences that can be undertaken at a winery. However, regardless of the situation, wine tourism is growing, and this aspect is very important for Romania, which is seen as a tourism destination in itself by many domestic and foreign tourists.

Unlike other countries, Romania has a fairly good presentation from a viticulture point of view, quite complex. There are countries where tourists attend a tasting event for 30-40 minutes, without the actual presentation of the winery. They just imagine what is happening. In Romania, the presentation is quite complex, and tourists are also impressed by the local wine varieties. In addition to promoting Romanian wine varieties, different assortments of cheeses are also being promoted. Thus, tourists who arrive in a winery will also discover Romanian cheeses and sausages, in addition to the wines there.

Wine tourism is growing in importance in many European wine regions, reflecting broader trends of rural change. Regional wine tourism occurs at the nexus between the global and the place-specific, meaning substantial spatial, historical, and cultural influences may preclude easy generalizations about wine tourism experiences around the world (Fountain et.al., 2020).

The economic and sociocultural benefits of wine tourism are: increased number of domestic and foreign tourists, growth in demand for wine tourism as a specific tourism product (Barber et al., 2010); extended visits and consumption by tourists; enlarging a destination; increased demand for complementary forms of tourism (rural, gastronomic, event, hunting, and other forms of tourism); keeping existing visitors and attracting new ones; the extension of the tourist season; initiating new service and entertainment programs (Trišić et al., 2020).

Wine tourism is a key opportunity for diversification strategies in the wine business and wine routes can provide a great contribution to wine tourism expansion. Interaction and cooperation among wine routes' stakeholders are essential (Festa et al., 2020). Wine tourism shares many similar features with cultural tourism. Once upon a time, cultural tourism meant visiting historic centres, admiring art treasures and sight-seeing famous monuments. Over the last few years, it has come to mean more than just an interest in art and history and now includes an enthusiasm for folk heritage, for gastronomic production, for learning more about different communities, traditions and ways of life (Croce & Perri, 2017). The process of shaping cultural (gastronomic or wine) routes as tourist products is considered by some authors a new principle to protect, revive, use and present as a cultural heritage (Terzić & Bjeljac, 2016). Therefore, we have to underline that wine is at present considered an important part of the cultural and social history of a particular region, and an element of the local population's identity (Trišić et al., 2020).

## Conclusions

Wine tourism is a way for tourists to discover a lot of interesting information about the story of wine. In addition, they enjoy the experience of visiting special, unique places.

Wine tourism is gaining notoriety in Romania and more and more tourists choose to go to winery visits for tastings, but also for relaxation. Romania is very rich in wine regions and many people have come into contact in one form or another with these areas, but for a long time wine tourism has been a misunderstood activity, being a relatively unpromoted and misunderstood sector.

Consumers are at present willing to pay for the specific experience of visiting a winery, and also to purchase additional complementary services. For tourists, it is a personal experience because they want to know the story of the winery and the people behind the winery. Wine tourism is not limited to wine and includes the story of the vine, of the grapes and the winemaking process. Most customers make an effort to come to the winery because they are not satisfied with the amount of information offered on the bottle label. The visiting experience is enhanced by the fact that most wineries are situated in very beautiful rural areas and offer a quiet experience for consumers.

Wineries benefit from organizing such trips because, in addition to making their wine known, they can promote their products to many people that participate in tasting events. These pleased customers will continue buying in the future and will also tell other people about the wines they have tasted, and these people could become future customers.

There is also a current tendency for companies to offer their employees trips to wineries for teambuilding activities: tasting wines directly from the barrels, actively participating in the grape picking process in autumn, making their own wine and drawing their own label.

Wine tourism is a high potential tourism enterprise, especially in areas that have a rich history in wine making activities. There is currently an influx of affluent tourists that are willing to spend a lot of money in order to experience the wine making process, with all its intricacies and secrets. This niche tourism sector is on the rise and will continue to be an important part of many rural communities, both economically and culturally, integrating elements of tradition and history with the ease of access facilitated by our highly interconnected global society. By bringing these two elements together, the niche sector of wine tourism will be a major contender on the tourism market in the years to come, expanding its target market to include not only the connoisseur type tourists but also a more mainstream tourism audience as well.

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