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WINE TOURISM: CROATIA'S POTENTIAL

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Abstract

Considering the issue of Croatian tourism, particularly its seasonality, it is estimated that developing specific forms of tourism could mitigate the negative effects of seasonality and enhance Croatia's competitiveness in the tourism market. Croatia, with its diverse and abundant attractions across its entire territory, possesses untapped potential for developing specific forms of tourism in high demand in the market. One such form is wine tourism, which has garnered attention from the scientific and business communities worldwide. However, despite Croatia's potential in this area, it is evident from the analysis of scientific and professional databases and examples of successful practices in Croatia that wine tourism is not receiving adequate attention. Croatian wines have consistently won awards at prestigious wine exhibitions for several years, and the tourism market recognizes the diversity and quality of the wine offerings. Croatia is already established as a popular vacation destination. These factors, combined with the growing interest in exploring the unique aspects of Croatian wine, should be leveraged to create authentic wine tourism experiences based on the rich tradition of wine production and the intangible heritage and cultural elements associated with it. By utilizing the method of meta-analysis of the scientific and professional literature, statistical reports, and strategic documents of successful wine tourism destinations. New Zealand and Australia, the authors wanted to raise awareness for destination management primarily and for other actors involved with the development of a destination's tourism offer that for Croatia to be better positioned as a wine tourism destination, a strategic reassessment is required, not only involving the integral development of this specific form of tourism on a destination level but also applying good practices from successful destinations on a global level. The goal of this paper is not only to give a theoretical overview of the wine tourism phenomenon on the example of New Zealand, which is basing a great deal of its international tourism offer precisely on wine tourism as experience tourism, but also to encourage the scientific, professional, and business community in Croatia to reassess the comparative advantages that Croatia has in the wine sector and to turn those advantages into competitive advantages in this segment of the tourism offer.

Keywords: specific forms of tourism, wine tourism, New Zealand, Croatia

JEL Classification: L83, Z32

1. INTRODUCTION

The impact of tourism, with its multifaceted presence, on various sectors can also be seen in agricultural production. Wine, initially as an agricultural product and later as a motive for tourist activities, has captured diverse groups' interest for many years. The integration of wine culture and tourism into a single product can find its foundation because wine is essential to numerous tourist activities. By enhancing the core product with experiential elements related to oenological heritage and other attractions, the tourism offerings of a destination can gain additional competitive advantages. Wineries and destinations can derive economic and social benefits from wine tourism, which manifests through various effects. Destinations with the necessary conditions for developing this specific form of tourism, either as a primary or supplementary product, must primarily understand its essential elements. Croatia, with its diverse range of resources, holds significant potential for developing specialized forms of tourism. This potential should drive the expansion of the tourism sector, reducing overreliance on the traditional "Sun, Sea, and Sand" model and mitigating the negative impacts of seasonality, which often characterize Croatian tourism. Based on the factors mentioned above, the potential for the growth of wine tourism is evident. This will be further supported and substantiated through detailed analysis.

2. WINE TOURISM TERMINOLOGY

Despite the author's initial belief that wine tourism represents a significant interest in the Croatian scientific and professional community, a review of domestic literature reveals a lack of scientific and professional studies on this subject. To provide a theoretical argument and establish the facts about the exceptional resource base for developing wine tourism in Croatia, wine tourism will be examined terminologically based on the available literature. Interest in wine tourism within the academic community emerged mid-to late-1990s (Mitchell & Hall, 2006). Noteworthy authors who explore this specific form of tourism include Beverland (1998), Bruwer (2003), Hall et al. (2000), Carlsen (2004), Getz & Brown (2006), Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias (2009). The potential of wine tourism as a form of tourism that integrates the entire destination offering is exceptional. This raises the question of who the stakeholders are and who can benefit the most when wine tourism realizes its true potential (Bruwer, 2003).

Unfortunately, wine tourism has received limited attention in the literature thus far (Brewer, 2003, as cited in Hall et al., 2000). To foster the development of wine tourism, it is necessary to establish the theoretical foundation and critical elements required for its growth. In the case of wine tourism, research indicates that attributes such as landscapes, open spaces, the presence of vineyards and wineries involved in wine production and storage, the opportunity to purchase wine, opportunities for social interaction, and the meaningful combination of tangible and intangible cultural heritage are solid incentives for visiting a wine region (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2008, as cited in Getz et al., 1999; Telfer, 2001; Dodd & Bigotte, 1997; Hall et al., 2000; Hall & Mitchell, 2002). Determining a typical wine tourism destination and its spatial concentration poses uncertainties for the authors. While wine tourism is often associated with rural tourist destinations and rural areas, de Oliveira and Filho (2016) suggest that wine tourism can also be successfully developed and compete in urban areas. They support this notion with the example of the "City of Wine Civilizations" in Bordeaux, demonstrating how both environments complement each other successfully. This highlights the potential to create an exceptionally competitive and sought-after tourism product by offering various products and activities and integrating rural and urban wine tourism experiences.

Furthermore, the issue becomes evident in the conceptual determination of wine tourism. A globally accepted and unified definition of wine tourism does

not exist. Tubić (2019) employed a methodology to identify nine fundamental dimensions of wine tourism to define them. (Table 1) Through terminological determination, it becomes apparent that two definitions encompass all the appropriate dimensions in their structure (Sparks 2007; Manila 2012, as cited in Dubrule 2007). However, these definitions do not meet the criteria for integrating offerings in rural and urban areas. Most definitions include a wine region as one of the main elements for conducting wine tourism. A wine region is often associated with its characteristics of rural life and work, enabling direct interaction with tourists within the experience of wine tasting, gastronomy, and nature-related activities, which represents the primary attraction for wine and wine culture enthusiasts. Based on this, it can be concluded that regardless of the earlier fact that spatial concentration is not strictly limited to rural areas but also occurs in urban areas, the connection between wine tourism attractions and the rural environment is crucial for developing this type of tourism offering. Marzo-Navarro and Pedraja-Iglesias (2009) support this idea by stating that wine tourism acts as a complementary channel for generating wealth in rural areas, concentrating outside traditional urban areas, and playing a significant role in the economic development of rural zones where wine is produced. This positively impacts job creation, business growth, and investment. However, there is a challenge in defining the scope of development, particularly regarding one of the elements mentioned.

Table 1. Wine tourism definition overview

	DEFINITIONS	Dimension		
AUTHORS		Rural (wine region)/ Urban area	Purpose of visit/motive	Attractions
Hall et al., 1997	Visiting vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine exhibitions, where wine tasting and experiencing the attributes of a wine region are the main motivating factors for visitors.	-	wine tasting and experiencing the attributes of the wine region	vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, wine exhibitions
Macionis, 1998	Visiting vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine exhibitions, where wine tasting and experiencing the attributes of a wine region are the main motivating factors for visitors.	-	wine tasting and/ or experiencing the attributes of a wine region	vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, wine exhibitions

Hall et al., 2000	Visiting vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine exhibitions, where the primary motive of visitors is wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of wine-growing regions.	-	wine tasting, experiencing the attributes of a wine region	vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, wine exhibitions
Getz et al., 1999	A form of consumer behavior based on the appeal of wine, wine regions, and the implementation of marketing strategies for the wine industry and destinations where wineries and wine-related experiences serve as the primary attractions.	-	The attractiveness of wine, wine regions	Wineries and experience related to wine
Western Australian Tourism Commission/ Wine Industry Association of Western Australia, 2000	Traveling to experience wineries and wine regions and their connection to the (Australian) way of life. Wine tourism encompasses both service provision and destination marketing.	-	The experience of wineries and wine regions	Wineries and wine regions
Getz and Brown, 2006	Wine tourism is a specific form based on the desire to visit wine regions and/or where travelers are encouraged to visit wine regions and wineries, especially during their travels for other reasons.	-	-	Wineries wine regions
Sparks, 2007:1180	Visiting a wine region for recreational purposes	wine region (rural area)	recreation	Wine region
Manila, 2012:55 according to Dubrule, 2007	All activities available to tourists in wine regions include visiting wine cellars, wine tastings, accommodation options, restaurants, and experiences related to the unique characteristics of the wine "terroir" and local traditions.	wine region (rural area)	All activities in wine regions	wine cellars, accommodation, restaurants, wine products

Source: Adapted by authors

The European Enotourism VINTUR project by Deloitte (2005) identifies wine culture, tourism, territory, authenticity, sustainability, and competitiveness as the main elements of wine tourism development (Figure 1). According to Salvado (2016), wine culture represents the thematic core that tourists must experience throughout the entire value chain of the wine product. The concept of territory, as described by Painter (2010), refers to limited space. This raises the question of what exactly is limited: rural or urban areas? Therefore, the author believes the term "wine region" would be more suitable to define the territory precisely.

Furthermore, tourism is an element that needs to reach a certain level of development, and the destination must have an existing tourism infrastructure. The quality of the destination's tourism facilities is a crucial aspect of the success of wine tourism development, as emphasized in the VINTUR project. Salvado (2016) provides insight into the remaining elements, stating that for business success and development, it is necessary to develop innovative and diverse production strategies (to ensure competitiveness), create a unique tourist experience that promotes and explores wine culture (providing authenticity), and align the interests of all stakeholders in the tourism value chain (achieving sustainability).

These considerations highlight the need for a new comprehensive definition. Although not encompassing all elements, the most precise and widely cited definition is by Hall et al. (2000), who define wine tourism as "visiting vine-yards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine shows, where the main motivating factors for visitors are grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region." One criticism of this definition is the exclusion of one of the leading products of wine tourism: wine routes. Bruwer (2003) emphasizes that developing wine routes is integral to the wine tourism industry. Koščak (2018) also provides their perspective on wine routes, linking the development of wine tourism to the planning and establishing such routes. It is important to note that while wine tourism can occur in urban areas, its essence is inherently rural and should be considered as such in further discussions.



Figure 1. The Developmental Elements of Wine Tourism

Source: Deloitte Vintur Project, 2005

3. WINE TOURISM PRODUCTS

According to Smith (2004), the development of integrated products is a prerequisite for meeting the evolving demands of tourists and ensuring the longterm profitability of the tourism industry. While wine itself is a major motivating factor, it is not sufficient to satisfy the needs of today's wine-culture-oriented tourists. By combining various tourist attractions available in wine regions, an integrated product is created that can cater to the diverse preferences of tourists. Mitchell and Hall (2006) identify the wine products: wineries and vineyards, wine festivals, wine routes, and other wine-related attractions (such as wine museums). Manila (2010) provides a detailed analysis of wine products, categorizing them accordingly (Table 2). It is important to note that each destination will focus its wine tourism development on the dominant and competitive types of wine tourism products it possesses. Destinations with a broader range of products will experience a higher level of development. Manila's classification highlights the multiple features associated with each product. Carlsen and Dowling (2001) also argue that the wine tourism experience can encompass various features, including:

- Events, festivals, and wine celebrations
- Restaurants and fine dining experiences
- Education and interpretation
- Hospitality and accommodation
- Wine tours and visits
- · Regional travel incorporating wine trails
- Information centers
- + Provision of wine information through verbal communication and written documentation
- · Wine tasting and direct sales from wineries
- Retail outlets offering local products
- · Architectural and heritage features
- Specialized accommodation near wineries
- Wine routes that showcase wine production and viticulture processes
- Wine villages comprising wineries, events, and themed accommodations.

These considerations highlight the diversity and breadth of offerings within wine tourism. Considering the attractiveness of tourist destinations, the tradition of wine production, wine culture, and the diverse offerings of Croatian wine regions, Croatia is well-positioned to develop and excel in this type of tourism product.

Table 2. Wine tourism products

Wine tourism products	Product Description		
Wine routes	Designated itineraries in wine-producing regions for discovering wine cities, wineries, and cellars.		
Wine tours	Designated itineraries that allow for the discovery of wine cities through tours.		
Organized trips to and accommodation in vineyards	Packages that encompass accommodation, catering, and transportation of varying durations, providing activities for the exploration of vineyards in one or more facets (oenological, gastronomic, cultural, technical, gala dinner).		
Wine courses	Wine courses aimed at improving product marketing knowledge and everything related to production (culture, tradition, production techniques).		
Wine cellars	Cellar tours; visiting winemakers known for their cellars.		
Wine museums	Cultural sites aimed at showcasing the world of wine and transmitting ancestral knowledge and traditions.		
Wine holidays and festivals	Events aimed at preserving local traditions, promoting wine, and animating the territory; Example: at the European level, Wine Tourism Days; at the local level, International Wine and Grape Festival and Bacchus Wine Festival in Focşani.		
Wine fairs, local fairs, wine events	These products serve to stimulate wine sales. Example: International Wine Fair Vinvest.		

Source: Manila, 2012

4. WHAT CAN WE LEARN ABOUT DEVELOPING A SUCCESSFUL WINE TOURISM DESTINATION FROM THE EXAMPLE OF NEW ZEALAND - CAN CROATIA DO THE SAME?

Every receptive country will base the development of wine tourism on the types of products it possesses. However, being a significant wine producer does not guarantee the development of wine tourism. Manilla (2010) highlights an intriguing fact that despite Europe being the most extensive wine producer, accounting for over 70% of the global market, the development of wine tourism lags far behind countries such as California (USA), South Africa, Argentina, Australia, and New Zealand. Notably, New Zealand and Australia stand out in their wine tourism development. This observation is supported by Mitchell

and Hall (2006), who notes that the majority of published scientific and professional literature on wine tourism originates from these two countries. Their research reveals that 38% of publications come from Australia, while 31% come from New Zealand. In contrast, less than one-fourth of publications come from North America. These statistics demonstrate the advanced level of wine industry development and the accompanying tourism infrastructure in New Zealand and Australia.

In contrast, a review of the Croatian literature shows a lack of publications covering wine tourism, indicating a need for further research and documentation in this area. Additionally, there is a lack of statistical data at the national level to assess the current situation on the ground. It is noteworthy that wine tourism is not included as a strategic direction for developing tourism offerings in any of Croatia's strategic documents. Nevertheless, some indicators can be observed through wine production and consumption. According to the Annual Report on Viticulture, Viniculture, and Olive Growing (2019) published by the Croatian Agency for Agriculture and Food, Croatia has 19,022.09 hectares of vineyard areas. The dominant grape varieties cultivated in these vineyards are Welschriesling Malvasia Istriana and Plavac Mali. In the 2018 wine year (August 1, 2018, to July 31, 2019), 3,820 producers reported production of 109,137.88 tons of grapes and 73,257,835 million liters of wine. Quality wine comprises most of the production, followed by fruit, varietal, table, and a more miniature representation of premium wine. In 2019, Croatia exported 5.25 million liters of wine, indicating growing recognition and appreciation of Croatian wines internationally.

To compare these figures with a leading wine tourism country like New Zealand, according to the Annual Report of the New Zealand Winegrowers (NZAR) for 2019, New Zealand produced 301.7 million liters of wine on 38,680 hectares of vineyards, with 255 million liters of wine exported in 2018. Statistical data from NZAR (2019) reveal that New Zealand attracted 776,599 international wine tourists, while comparable data for Croatia is unavailable. The report also indicates that international wine tourists in New Zealand have more extended stays and higher spending than other tourists. Regarding visitor interest, research by the Institute for Tourism, Tomas (2019) indicates that wine tourism products are mentioned primarily in activities during tourists' stays in Croatia. The most interested guests in wine tourism activities come from countries such as Serbia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, and

the United States. Notably, visitors from the United Kingdom show a significant interest in wine regions, including those in New Zealand, suggesting that the proximity of markets and increasing interest in the Croatian wine scene at the European level could present an opportunity for Croatia to establish itself as a new wine tourism destination.

In conclusion, the example of New Zealand's successful wine tourism development highlights the importance of strategic planning, research, and supportive government measures. Croatia can learn from New Zealand's experience and work towards strengthening its wine tourism industry by promoting research, gathering statistical data, and implementing strategic initiatives to enhance its wine tourism offerings.

5. CONCLUSION

When considering the above facts about wine tourism, it is crucial to high-light its complexity and dependence on agricultural production. Wine tourism cannot exist without the production of wine and the overall immersive experience of a wine destination. From the perspective of modern-day tourists, the distinctiveness and uniqueness of local communities have become significant reasons for embarking on tourism journeys. Suppose the development of tourism offerings in destinations is based on key attractions encompassing both tangible and intangible heritage and the consumption of high-quality products produced within the destination and recognized in the market due to their local characteristics enriched with additional elements of the tourism experience. In that case, such destinations can anticipate long-term recognition and competitiveness in the tourism market (Frost et al., 2020). Exemplary models of successful wine tourism development can be found in countries like New Zealand and others that have effectively utilized their wine-based resources.

Croatia, with its proximity to key tourist markets, competitive pricing, quality products, and rich tradition, represents an environment suitable for wine tourism development. For Croatia to fully utilize its comparative advantages, which it has as a country with a rich enological legacy, the key shareholders must utilize the successes of Croatia's winemakers on the international scene and, with it, the increased interest of potential tourists to discover the destinations where the awarded wines are produced. In addition, the core product has to be embellished with experience elements, integrating wine as a critical

resource and an integrative factor of the entire tourism offer. Of course, this is not enough because succeeding in the global competitive market depends, among other factors, on the collaboration among all tourism service providers, internally and with other complementary stakeholders within the destination. In this context, the success of wine tourism as a tourism product will primarily rely on the collaboration of all vineyard owners and other stakeholders within the destination. This collaboration aims to establish standards for the tourism value chain and deliver a unique wine tourism experience based on authenticity, intangible and tangible heritage, and the local community's way of life.

As previously mentioned in the Introduction, this paper aimed to raise awareness for the scientific, professional, and business community of the untapped potential of Croatia as a wine tourism destination. To analyze the actual potential of individual destinations and their comparative advantages, more empirical research is required, not only from the perspective of the tourism offer but also from the perspective of the tourism demand- preferences and motives of potential tourists and, accordingly, the ways on how to create an authentic experience of wine tourism in individual Croatian wine regions so that they might be better positioned on the tourism market.

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