

# **Wine Tourism Development of the Territory: A Comparative Analysis of Destinations of Excellence.**

*Paola Scorrano, paola.scorrano@unisalento.it  
University of Salento*

## **Abstract**

The tourism sector is characterized by the growing development of new market niches and new segments of offer to meet the pressing needs of the international tourist movement. The world of wine-related tourism represents by far one of these most popular new niches although it does not exist as a segment of the market, but is just characterized by the presence of high quality products able to build the image of a geographical location and therefore become the main motivation of the trip. Therefore the mix of culture, landscape, wine, cooking, art, food products, quality craftsmanship do contribute significantly to the economic value of an area, especially if supported by appropriate territorial marketing policies. This paper focuses on identifying and comparing the wine tourist destinations of excellence and their main features in order to determine the elements that establish a wine touristic area in an international context.

## **1. Wine Tourism and Regional Development**

Recent years have witnessed a transformation in the ways and forms of the use of tourism due to the joint action of different elements that characterize the phenomenon of tourism. In particular, there seems to be an "explosion" of the tourist experience in a variety of forms of so called "authentic" touristic experience, where the main elements are represented by the link with the territory, culture, traditions, the lifestyles that characterize it. These changes in the demands of touristic experience have a significant impact on tourism supply system. The touristic products are infact more and more evidently turning into an emotional type of experience goods (Pencarelli and Forlani, 2002).

In this context, wine is conceived less and less as a food component (nutritional function), instead more increasingly as an opportunity to improve the style and quality of life, therefore becoming the reason to discover territories, visit wineries, taste local delicacies, and socializing with food. More than any other food products, wine attracts the attention of the consumer to the territory of its origination and, therefore, is directly involved in the virtuous cycle aimed at promoting the area through the dissemination / promotion of their own products (Bilkey and Nes, 1982), environmental compliance, research and quality of health *latu sensu* (Mastroberardino, 2002).

The contribution of wine tourism<sup>i</sup> to the economic exploitation of the territory is also facilitated by policies aimed at a regional marketing of destination management<sup>ii</sup> able to translate in a touristic package the elements of wine territory, the geography and business of the product, establish an appropriate touristic offer balance potential and actual demand to supply (Maizza and Rosato, 2008; Vrontis and Thrassou and Czinkota, 2011).

In this perspective, it is easy to see that the large and diverse presence of "territories" can represent at the same time, an opportunity and also a constraint on the development and diversification of the wine of a nation. On the one hand, the search for the peculiarities in grapes and wines that distinguish one wine area from another is an attractive that on the other can have a negative impact if it is not communicated and promoted effectively. It is well known that communication policies of niche products (Mattiacci, 2000) are not effective due to modest financial resources available. Therefore the intervention of a comprehensive regional policy can facilitate the enhancement of the touristic value, ensuring the achievement of critical mass necessary to obtain useful synergistic action taken jointly by a number of territories within the area. In this perspective, the wine tourism represents an opportunity as well as being an element of diversification that allows the implementation of joint actions carried out by the various players together with the other players in the area and its governance. Ultimately the success of a wine touristic location is based on the ability to communicate effectively the diversity in a given geographic area, not only through appropriate promotional campaigns, but also through the

establishment of actions with a single common denominator (such as, for example, wine and the set of elements related to its territory of origin, and history, traditions, art, culture, gastronomy, landscape) through the presence of a general action of protection and monitoring (Antonioli Corigliano, 1996). For this purpose it might be useful to create a public-private metamanagement as a tool to enhance the potential role of food and wine resources and establish the typologies of tourism based on the choice of a destination (Rosato and Scorrano, 2010).

For these reasons, the wine and the food in general can represent a significant component in the overall value proposition when choosing a touristic destination (Howley and van Westering, 2007; Weston, 2003)<sup>iii</sup>. In this perspective, the precise definition of the target audience is a central and defining element of the overall process of developing wine tourism in an area.

## 2. Features of the Wine Tourist

As previously stated, a region that aspires to rise as a wine tourism destination should direct the offer primarily to the tourist "gourmet" and, secondarily, to a tourist who does not take food and wine as a primary reason for the trip but who also recognizes the trip as a significant additional component to enrich his/her whole experience.

Wine tourist and, more generally, the food and wine tourist is characterized by the search for a "real" interaction with the territory, with the traditions, customs, habits of the local community through the typical food and wine tradition (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002)<sup>iv</sup>. The significant element in this type of touristic demand is, therefore, represented by the combination of "wine / food - land / place of production", in a process of interaction where the tourist gets to discover, experiences, tastes and appreciates the food and wine products, the place of production, the traditions and peculiarities of the land, through an enriching touristic experience.<sup>v</sup> The moment of wine and food tasting triggers access to a larger system of relationships that the tourists should be able to start with a process of discovery and enjoyment of the visiting country: (visit - tasting - participation in the production process) to finally come into direct contact with the wine and food producers of the visited area. Over time, the demand for wine tourism has experienced an evolution that can be summarized in the following three stages<sup>vi</sup>:

- *Introductory*: the consumer looks for good quality and affordable wine; enjoys the friendly welcome in the cellars;
- *Evaluative*: The consumer is able to recognize and choose (thanks to the presence of guides and articles in the trade press) the names and most famous wineries;
- *Tertiary*: the tourist is also seeking for services such as wine tastings, wine shops, restaurants;
- *Experiential*: the tourist wants to participate to specific, unique events
- *Authentic*: the tourists refuse predictable, and crowded tourist attractions sites.

Over time, the wine and food tourist, therefore, has become the one who always had a desire to "taste in a conscious way" because of the opportunity to learn everything about wine and food resources (ingredients, special flavors, production techniques and / or preparation, associated with local traditions, recipes, etc.). Thus, it assumes the two characteristics of an experienced and demanding consumer, or a curious and eager to learn consumer.

A possible classification of the types of wine tourist can result from the combination of variables (table 1):

- "wine culture", understood as knowledge of the product and its history;
- "relevance assigned to the resources of the territory", understood as natural, cultural and historical sightseeing, touristic facilities (hotels, leisure etc.).

TABLE 1: WINE TOURISTS

|  |      |                         |                           |
|--|------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| <i>Relevance of the land resources</i> | high | <i>Wine fans</i>        | <i>Wine-taster</i>        |
|  | low  | <i>Wine-discoverers</i> | <i>Wine-professionals</i> |
|  |      | low/medium              | high                      |
|  |      | <i>Wine culture</i>     |                           |

Source: our elaboration

The rectangle characterized by low wine culture and a low importance given to the resources of the area represents the *wine-discoverers*, i.e. those who have an initial approach to the field (induction phase), have limited knowledge but a high interest in making short trips to events that relate to the wine. This category consists mainly of young people, couples and families.

The category of *wine tourists* qualified by a modest wine culture, but a high importance assigned to the area's resources can be called wine fans (evaluation phase). They have a keen interest in the sector, have a good basic understanding of products and places (usually resulting from reading magazines and guides) and are keen on trips and courses. These individuals aged 35-40 years, are quite wealthy, and excellent wine cellars visitors. For these individuals wine is a central element of the trip, but they are also interested in other local resources (natural, historical and cultural elements, etc.) which are a main factor in the choice of destination.

The food and *wine professionals* are characterized by wide and diverse product knowledge, a developed travel culture of places and routes in the sector (tertiary stage). They know labels, vintages, prices, auctions, wine combinations and are very good buyers. Wine is the exclusive reason for the visit. In this category are the managers of wineries, restaurants, etc.

The rectangle characterized by high culture of wine and high importance of land resources represents the *wine tasters* (experiential stage and phase of authenticity), that in addition to those who possess a wealth of knowledge similar to wine professionals, are also characterized by the search for identity in products and places, really keen to make wine culture a chance to live the authentic experience<sup>vii</sup>. This is the highest form of experience and awareness of use of resources, food and wine, an expression which we refer to a variety of activities including, for example: (a) the tasting of traditional local food, (b) the purchase of these products on site, (c) learning the techniques of production, (d) the observation of the areas and places of production and processing, (e) participation in some of the processes of production. This type of wine tourist is therefore satisfied if he/she can combine the pleasures of learning and exploring the territories with the acquisition of the cultural identity of a community through its local products.

### 3. The Main Wine Tourist Destinations in the World: Success Factors

#### 3.1. Research Methodology

The objective of this analysis is, as mentioned above, to provide a listing and analysis of the major wine tourist destinations of excellence. The most critical step of this survey was the identification of a source of information to identify a list of those destinations. This is due to the difficulty to infer with certainty what may be regarded a wine tourist destination of excellence: the absence of an identification element for wine-tourism and the lack of data concerning the flows of specific wine tourist destinations. An alternative approach was to use the Web as an information source on the assumption that the players in the tourism industry (both as demand as supply) are

frequent internet users<sup>viii</sup>. The research therefore used the information from the various sites/blogs<sup>ix</sup> specialized in tourism and/or wine tourism, collecting the opinions of experts and wine fans.

Given the large number of Internet sources devoted to wine tourism it was necessary to establish some selection criteria to limit the scope of the survey only to some websites/blogs<sup>x</sup>. Their identification was made following the instructions shown below<sup>xi</sup>:

- identification of the most widely known search engines worldwide, namely: www.google.com and www.yahoo.com;
- choice of key words to be included in the search engines, namely: "best wine tourism", "excellent wine tourism", "best wine destination", "excellent wine destination";
- Selection of sites/blogs to draw upon the information: after entering the chosen keywords in the search engines we made a comparison between the first two pages of those engines<sup>xii</sup> to identify the main sites/blogs about wine tourist destinations worldwide. Ultimately the sites were: www.travelblog.it, viaggi.virgilio.it, www.winenews.it, www.simonseeks.com, vino24.tv, opentravel.com, www.helium.com, www.ehow.com, www.squidoo.com, www.chicagotribune.com;
- determination of wine tourist destinations of excellence: an analysis of the content of these sites has resulted in identification of targets that have a higher recurrence and therefore are considered excellent by industry experts or perceived as such by wine fans.

### 3.2 Results

Below are the results of what are considered the wine destinations of excellence in the world (table 2):

TABLE 2: WINE DESTINATIONS OF EXCELLENCE

| Nation           | Number of presence of the<br>touristic site  |
|------------------|--|
| France           | Bordeaux 7/10<br>Champagne 4/10              |
| California (USA) | Napa Valley 8/10<br>Sonoma Valley 6/10       |
| Italy            | Tuscany 9/10<br>Piedmont 2/10<br>Umbria 1/10 |
| South Africa     | Stellenbosch 9/10                            |
| Australia        | Barossa Valley 6/10                          |
| New Zealand      | Marlborough 6/10                             |
| Spain            | La Rioja 5/10                                |
| Chile            | Valle Central 4/10                           |

Source: our elaboration

The characteristics of each wine destination described on at least three websites are the following<sup>xiii</sup>:

- *Bordeaux (France)*: Known for its charming old town, in the 2007 Bordeaux was classified World Heritage by UNESCO. This recognition is a tangible sign of the asset value and unit of the city that has evolved over the centuries without ever betraying its harmony and its architectural wealth. The city is worldly renowned for its production of wine in the wine lands along the rivers Garonne and Dordogne. Bordeaux wines can be red, dry white or liqueur, or rosé. The grapes from which it derives are: Cabernet Franc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot for red wines, Sauvignon, Sémillon and Muscadelle for white wines.
- *Champagne-Ardenne (France)*: The term takes a champagne appellation of origin that refers to a territorial area in northern France, the region of Champagne-Ardenne. This area is unique in France, to have a single appellation, specific terroir and cru classified, for a total of 34,000 hectares of vineyards. Champagne-Ardenne has 5 sites classified as World Heritage by UNESCO. With over 5,000 miles of trails and walking routes, this region offers a wide range of opportunities for hiking, horseback riding and mountain biking

(there are 450 km of greenways to explore by bike or on rollerblades). Champagne-Ardenne is also equipped with a large number of amusement parks and offers opportunities for events throughout the year.

- *Napa Valley* (California): Known for its wine production began in the sixties, the County of Napa Valley is now one of the best wine regions, like France and Italy, with nearly 400 wineries in surplus. The Mediterranean climate makes this Napa Valley considered the birthplace of American Cabernet Sauvignon and Zinfandel, the American version of Italian Primitivo. The Napa Valley Wine Train offers an unusual way to enjoy the scenery and vineyards. A significant amount of thermal spas and mud baths and the Old Faithful geyser are the attractions in Calistoga, famous tourist destination in Napa Valley.
- *Sonoma Valley* (California) home to some of the first vineyards and wineries of the state, offers a wide range of festivals and events throughout the year including the prestigious Sonoma International Film Festival and wineries with good touristic facilities. Today, the wines of this small valley are protected by the federal government of the United States of Sonoma Valley and Carneros AVAS (or American Viticultural Areas). The most common varieties are Zinfandel, Carignan, Petit Syrah, Pinot Noir and Merlot from those black grapes, Chardonnay, Sauvignon and Colombard among the white grapes.
- *Tuscany* (Italy): Tuscany has a basket of world-class wines: 6 DOCG - Carmignano (Prato Province), Brunello di Montalcino Chianti (with its sub-8), Morellino di Scansano (since 2007), Vernaccia San Gimignano and Vino Nobile di Montepulciano - and 34 DOC. The region also, with its ancient and defined identity, is one of the most celebrated places for Italian history, art, economics, culture, landscapes and beauty. Tuscany is among the Italian regions with the largest number of sites classified by UNESCO World Heritage Site: Historic Centre of Florence, Piazza del Duomo in Pisa, the historical center of San Gimignano, Siena's historic center, historical center of the town of Pienza , Val d'Orcia. Tourism (art, beach, rural, mountain and spa) is a major economic resource of Tuscany.
- *Stellenbosch* (South Africa): The valleys of Stellenbosch, Paarl and Franschoek are the central part of the Cape Winelands region, the larger of the two wine regions of South Africa. The wine industry in South Africa produces about one million liters of wine annually. Stellenbosch is also the primary location for research in wine (prof. Perold was the first professor of wineculture in the Stellenbosch University). Very famous is the "Stellenbosch wine route", born in 1971. The Stellenbosch Cabernet Sauvignon is emerging as a high quality wine. Stellenbosch is renowned for its Cape Dutch-style architecture, the main street, Dorp Street, contains many historic buildings and this is a national monument. A tour of Stellenbosch also typically includes some visits (with tasting) to wineries. Among the most features one can mention the Meerlust which is located in a prestigious house in 1693.
- *Barossa Valley* (Australia) is the largest wine-producing region and the first tourist destination of South Australia (60 km from Adelaide). Renowned for the Shiraz (red wine), this is used to produce the most famous Australian wine, the Penfold Grange. Other types of grapes grown are Riesling, Semillon, Grenache and Cabernet Sauvignon. Every two years to celebrate the success of the wine industry they organize the "Barossa Valley Vintage Festival", a week of street parades, concerts and gourmet dining offered to visitors from around the world.
- *Marlborough* (New Zealand) can boast of having the most modern wine industry of New Zealand. At the end of 1970, Marlborough has produced, among other varieties, the first Sauvignon Blanc that has generated confidence in the potential of foreign wine in New Zealand, now considered the world's best by many critics. The wine region of Marlborough is 62% of the total land area planted, the vines are: Sauvignon Blanc, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay. Equally important is the production of sparkling wine using the *Method Traditionelle* with, in particular near Renwick, derived vines of Riesling, Pinot Noir and Chardonnay.
- *La Rioja* (Spain) La Rioja is the most famous wine region in Spain. Divided into three sub-regions (Rioja Alta, Rioja Baja and Rioja Alava), giving their name to the wine produced there: Rioja, a wine to "calificada Denomination de Origen"(DOC). There are numerous attractions in the area: highly renowned are, in particular, the Camino de la Lengua, the Camino de Santiago, the many monasteries, the opportunity to retrace the footsteps of the dinosaurs that inhabited the area and even castles, archaeological sites and museums.
- *Valle Central* (Chile) is the main area of Chile in terms of both wine production and reputation. It matches with the historic site of the Chilean Central Valley, an area lying between the Andes and the Pacific. Within the valley there are four wine-producing sub regions: the Maipo Valley (most cultivated and best known for

Cabernet Sauvignon), the Rapel Valley (in Colchagua Province and famous for the Cabernet), the Curicó Valley (characterized by the variety of red wine and planted white, best known for Chardonnay), and the Maule Valley (which still has large plantations of Pais local, but it is undergoing a change in favor of agricultural varieties of high quality, with better varieties of red wine).

#### 4. Conclusions

the wine tourism system can be broken down into four different categories of macro elements (Franch, 2002):

1. the set of specific resources (natural, cultural, architectural, artificial food and wine, etc.) that characterize the destination;
2. the set of resources so called "generic" (physical infrastructure and / or technological, environmental protection, quality of life and hospitality of the resident population, etc);
3. the variety of touristic services "qualified" to meet customer expectations;
4. the set of "intangible" resources (the image and reputation of the destination, the skills and expertise of different business and institutional actors who insist on the destination, the relational capital) (Iazzi and Rosato, 2009).

Each of the above four categories of resources plays a crucial role for the competitiveness of a tourist destination and this induces them to work in coordination and integration (Getz and Brown, 2006). In the case of wine tourist destinations, it seems clear that the inclination of the territory to the production of wine is not in itself a determining factor for success in wine tourism. The wine tourist, while selecting a destination, prefers the combination of "wine-land" because the joint research of the traditional presence of attractors and wineries are able to guarantee an adequate level of service.

The success of wine tourism destination must therefore be able to build a value proposition of the specific supply system based on the following characters:

1. Integration of local resources. The need is to build a supply system that integrates the use of the resources of traditional gastronomic destination with the exploitation of natural resources, cultural landscape of the territory to strengthen the perceived link between territory and resources by the tourist food and wine.
2. Authenticity. It is necessary to build an integrated supply system in which different components can be an expression of traditions, customs, and culture of the area.
3. Experiential. A wine tourism destination that aims to ensure the success patterns with the different components of the supply system based on interaction with the host community, with the system of tourist attractions and, more generally, with the various components of 'tourism.

The analysis of the characteristics of the wine tourist destinations can be summarized as follows:

- Relevant and valued resources of enogastronomy typical throughout the area (which also include extra forms of accommodation - hotel "authentic" and strongly typical gourmet<sup>xiv</sup>);
- Significant brand awareness in international territorial markets;
- Appropriate skills training on the themes of food and wine tourism;
- Good attitude of a growing number of enterprises engaged in different food chains in the definition of tourist accommodation and hospitality services (tastings, visits, etc..)
- Presence of significant land resources (environmental, cultural, scenic, architectural) complementary to the gastronomic motivation.

Opportunities for future growth of wine tourism destinations are:

- Growing attention of international markets to the wine tourist destinations;
- Growing importance of experiential forms of tourism related to the authenticity of local resources;
- Possibility to build a system of a target product able to diversify the supply and the seasonal variations in tourist flows.

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For a full list of referneces please contact authors.

## End Notes

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<sup>I</sup> Defined as the demand expressed by tourists / travelers / hikers who choose the destination based on a primary reason to experience to wine tasting and gastronomic resources capable of expressing the identity of that territory.

<sup>II</sup> The destination management is defined as "the set of strategic decisions, organizational and operational through which to manage the process of defining, promoting and marketing tourism products expressed from a territory, in order to generate incoming tourists." Martini, U. (2005). *Management dei sistemi territoriali. Gestione e marketing delle destinazioni turistiche*, Giappichelli, Torino. On the issue of destination management will identify, among others, the contributions of Caroli, M.G. (2006). *Il marketing territoriale. Strategie per la competitività sostenibile del territorio*, Franco Angeli, Milano; Ejarque, J. (2003). *La destinazione turistica di successo. Marketing e management*, Hoepli, Milano; Franch, M. (a cura di) (2002). *Destination Management. Governare il turismo tra locale e globale*, Giappichelli, Torino; Pechlaner, H., & Weiermair, K. (2000). *Destination Management. Fondamenti di marketing e gestione delle destinazioni turistiche*, Touring University Press, Milano; Sainaghi, R. (2006). *La gestione strategica dei distretti turistici*, CUSL, Milano; Pike, S. (2004). *Destination Marketing Organisations*, Elsevier, Oxford. For a comprehensive review on the destination management, see: Bellagamba, A., Brunetti, F., Pencarelli, T., & Vigolo, V. (2007). "La letteratura italiana ed internazionale sul *Destination management*", in Sciarelli, S., *Il management dei sistemi turistici locali. Strategie e strumenti per la governance*, Giappichelli, Torino, p. 31 et seq.

<sup>III</sup> It is estimated that wine tourism is able to generate annual sales of over EUR 14 billion, the first three markets are Europe, America and Italy.

[http://www.taccuinodiviaggio.it/home/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=25](http://www.taccuinodiviaggio.it/home/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=25).

<sup>IV</sup> The demand for wine tourism can therefore be defined as the expressed demand from tourists / travelers / hikers who choose the destination based on a primary reason attributed to the will of experiences related to food and wine tasting of resources capable of expressing the identity of that territory. On the topic see Croce, E. & Perri, G. (2010), *Il turismo enogastronomico. Progettare, gestire, vivere l'integrazione tra cibo, viaggio e territorio*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

<sup>V</sup> For the relationship between food product and tourism resources, see Paolini, D. (2000). *I luoghi del gusto. Cibo e territorio come risorsa di marketing*, Baldini & Castoldi, Milano.

<sup>VI</sup> <http://www.scribd.com/doc/2283881/Le-nuove-frontiere-di-vendita-del-turismo-enogastronomico>

<sup>VII</sup> On the importance of authenticity of land resources to make a competitive tourist destination see Ferrari, S., & Adamo, E.G. (2005). Autenticità e risorse locali come attrattive turistiche: il caso della Calabria. *Sinergie*, n.66.

<sup>VIII</sup> In the last five years wine blogs/sites have increased up to 700 worldwide.

<sup>IX</sup> A blog is a website, managed by an individual or a company, where the blogger publishes online his/her own comments, opinions, judgments, recommendations accompanied by video clips, pictures.

<sup>X</sup> This study does not give sample results that can be applied to a whole corpus of reference since this is unknown, it rather focuses on the specific area of this study

<sup>XI</sup> Considering the modern techniques utilized to improve internet positioning and the related web search sites ranking, this approach was carried out only in one day (15 February 2011).

<sup>XII</sup> Websurfers rarely visit the second page of a search engine.

<sup>XIII</sup> Source of information comes from above mentioned internet websites and from the official web site of the Tourism Board of each of these wine destinations.

<sup>XIV</sup> For the sake of brevity we omitted to report the type and quantity of accommodation and food present (indeed in large numbers) in each of the destinations considered.