

WINE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF FAMILY WINERY

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Rural tourism in Spain is following a growing trend and is generating income that is complementary to agriculture. Within rural tourism, some of the main tourist activities are those related to gastronomy and visiting wineries, which are becoming the main reason for visiting a region (López-Gúzma et al., 2010). This means that wine tourism is increasingly more important for the development of certain wine-producing areas.

In order to adequately develop wine tourism, there must be both a wine-growing industry where wineries can be visited and tourism organisations that offer other types of activities. This requisite is reflected in one of the first definitions of wine tourism: «Wine tourism is a trip related to the attraction of wineries and of a wine-growing area, a kind of market niche and way of destination development, and it is an opportunity for direct sales and a marketing opportunity for the wine industry» (Getz, 2000, p. 5).

Purchasing and tasting wine are the main motivations for participating in wine tourism (Alant and Bruwer, 2004; Bruwer, 2002 and 2003; Hall et al., 2000; Marzo and Pedraja, 2009; Telfer, 2001). Wineries and the wine they produce are the fundamental elements of the tourism product, and actions by wineries are the determining factors for achieving tourist satisfaction (Fountain et al., 2008; O'Neill and Charters, 2000; Jago and Issaverdis, 2001). However, not all wineries would like or are willing to develop an orientation towards tourism (Getz and Brown, 2006), which represents a way of diversifying from agricultural production to an added-value offer of services and experiences. In general, wine producers have a strong product orientation, centred on wine production, and they have scarce knowledge of tourism or tourism marketing (Howley and Van Westering, 2008). This fact is accentuated by the type of winery in the sector: small and medium enterprises, which are often family-run businesses. These small producers face financial and business restrictions that hinder their integration in the tourism industry, given that they usually lack both the necessary marketing knowledge to promote tourism and the necessary financial resources for this diversification (Aloysius and Lee, 2001). Nevertheless, these producers should be aware of the fact that, due to the very nature of wine tourism and due to the producers' location in rural areas, the development of wine tourism

provides benefits to both the tourism industry and the wine-growing industry. On the one hand, it provides the tourism industry with additional and complementary destinations that can add value to the regional destination. On the other, it allows the wine industry to create long-term relationships with current and potential consumers who would like experiences related to the world of viniculture (Nowack and Newton, 2006).

Thus, even though wine tourism constitutes a secondary or residual activity for the majority of wineries, direct sales to visitors could contribute significantly to the viability or sustainability of a winery (Beames, 2003), moreover constituting a new distribution channel that allows improved margins (Charters y O'Neill, 2001; McDonnell and Hall, 2008; Sevil and Yüncü, 2009). This makes direct sales an important objective, especially for small wineries (Fraser and Alonso, 2006), as it is clearly shown by existing data (French wineries earn between 19% and 23% from direct sales; South African wineries around 20%; in Australia, it is around 35%; while in North America there are some wineries that sell all their production directly at the wineries). Therefore, for many wineries, wine tourism can constitute an opportunity to initiate sales in the absence of a distribution system, while at the same time creating loyalty towards the destination by offering unique experiences. Thus, the objective sought is to improve the image of the destination and spread the benefits to leisure services and agricultural activities.

In addition, this tourism orientation can help to establish brand loyalty among a brand's consumers (Hall et al., 2000) by developing a stable relationship or an emotional connection with the tourist after a visit (Fountain et al., 2008; Mitchell and Hall, 2004). The producer-consumer relationship is facilitated by providing the opportunity to educate consumers so that they modify their attitudes towards wine and enjoy experiences with the products (Fraser and Alonso, 2006). In brief, the most direct benefits that winery owners can obtain are a low marginal cost in the distribution of their products, the development of brand equity and an opportunity to add value to the company.

Logically, the development of wine tourism also represents additional costs for wineries, given that management must dedicate time to developing it and that the necessary capital has to be available. On many occasions, wine producers don't see themselves as part of the tourism industry, and even though they would like to get direct sales, they see the tourism part of the business as a distraction (Beames, 2003; Mitchell and Van der Liden, 2010). Most visitors are on vacation, and there is a low probability that they would repeat the visit in the future. Therefore, their visits will only benefit the winery in the long term if, when these tourists return home, they employ favourable personal communication within their immediate environment regarding the wineries and the wines, and they consume the wine of the visited wineries. Moreover, integration between the tourism industry and the wine industry is hindered by financial and business restrictions, especially for small producers. The lack of financial support and management experience makes integration difficult for winery owners. In order to be able to develop tourism activities, they must allocate money, for example, to adapting their wineries, their vineyards and their facilities in general so that they can receive visits; and they must dedicate part of their personnel to taking care of tourists and planning the activities they'd like. Thus, networks of cooperation should be established with other agents in the area, which would allow offering a wine tourism product desired by the potential demand. Often, wineries

cannot make this effort, given that their size determines the available investment capital, the available human resources and the willingness to assume risks.

The submitted research centres on analysing the opinions of winery owners who belong to the Protected Designations of Origin of the Autonomous Community of Aragón (Somontano, Cariñena, Borja and Calatayud), a community with high potential for developing wine tourism. It should be highlighted that 80% of the wineries included in Protected Designations of Origin are small, and 33% are family-owned. Therefore, an on-line survey of winery owners or directors was conducted using Google Docs. The information was measured through closed-ended questions, Likert type, from 0 for «Totally Agree» to 10 for «Totally Agree», with the exception of winery identification questions, which were open-ended.

Data were obtained from 43 of the 93 wineries that formed the population under study. It can be observed that, in general, over half of the wineries are less than one hundred years old; they are family-owned businesses (55.8%); they have less than 10 employees (62.8%); and 20.9% affirm that they earn over 50% of their sales from exports. Regarding family ownership, in general these wineries are young, they are micro-enterprises (70.8% have fewer than 10 employees), and they are export-oriented.

72.1% of the wineries affirm that they carry out some type of wine tourism activity. The average number of visitors per year is 5573.7, the majority during summer months. Most of the wineries are open to the public all year, with extensive opening hours. It should be highlighted that nearly half of the wineries do not charge for visits, and of those that do charge, the price is around 6 euros per person. Thus, the profitability from visits seems to be derived from direct sales, given that close to 25% of the wineries affirm that these sales represent more than 10%. It should also be pointed out that family wineries conduct wine tourism activities in greater proportion than non-family wineries, although the majority also charge a visitor fee. Regarding direct sales, for nearly 20% of the family wineries these sales represent over 20% of the total sales; 19% affirm that this percentage is between 10% and 20%, and 28.6% of the wineries place the percentage between 5% and 10%.

The development of wine tourism is favourably perceived by the surveyed wineries. The perceived benefits do not solely concern the wine industry, rather they are also transferred to the area where the wineries are located. Thus, the highest average assessments correspond to the benefits that are generated for the area in general, followed by those generated for the wineries («Improves the image of the wineries as a tourist attraction», «Improves the image of the area», «Attracts tourists», «Improves the image of the wines» and «Improves brand knowledge»). Wine tourism is not yet perceived as a very important element with respect to generating income, which is logical considering that only half of the wineries charge for visits. Moreover, the direct sales that are earned are still minor, although their importance is perceived. These perceptions remain when considering whether or not the wineries are family-owned.

On the other hand, the development of wine tourism is not perceived as a big cost for wineries. This could be due to the fact that they do not think that it is necessary to make improvements to the vineyards or to increase management costs or to technologically improve the production processes. However, the need to increase the use of information technologies is perceived, especially the Internet, in addition to the need to improve the

wineries, the need to train employees on tourism subjects and the need to have the financial capacity be able to take on the challenge. These same perceptions remain when they are analysed with respect to the type of company, regardless of whether they are family-owned or not.

This research constitutes the starting point for more ambitious research, given that it would be necessary to analyse, for example, the horizontal and vertical relationships that should be established between the wine industry and the tourism industry in order to develop a successful offer. When designing this offer, small enterprises and, therefore, family enterprises would play a fundamental role, given the very nature of the complementary leisure services to be developed. This doesn't mean that the results obtained are any less interesting, given that the willingness of wineries to take on the challenge of wine tourism is clearly shown.