

Some perceptions of local actors towards the development of wine tourism in Vrancea County (Romania)

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Objectives | This study aims to comprehensively investigate the impact of wine tourism development in Vrancea county, focusing on the perceptions of local actors. Specifically, it delves into how wine tourism influences various facets of the tourism sector, including visitor experiences, attraction development, and marketing strategies. Moreover, it explores how these tourism developments intersect with and contribute to broader socio-economic dimensions of sustainable development, such as community well-being, economic growth, and environmental stewardship. The research objectives entail an in-depth analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of local communities and their intricate connections with the evolution of wine tourism. Additionally, the study seeks to assess the level of involvement of local residents in tourism activities and to discern the correlation between their engagement and the overall progress of wine tourism in the region. It's crucial to note that this research adopts a dual focus, examining both positive perceptions that support the benefits of wine tourism and negative perspectives that may signal concerns or risks associated with its development. By clarifying these objectives, the study aims to shed light on the reciprocal relationship between wine tourism development and socio-economic dynamics within local communities. This approach ensures coherence and precision in the research focus, avoiding redundancy and potential confusion about its scope and purpose.

Methodology | The core innovation of this study resides in its empirical methodology, which predominantly relies on quantitative techniques, notably the administration of questionnaires to local residents. This approach is pivotal in acquiring primary data crucial for understanding the intricate dynamics between sustainability and wine tourism. By directly engaging with individuals actively involved in community affairs and regional progress, the research endeavors to elucidate the nuanced interrelationship between these variables, with due consideration to the substantial wine-producing region of Vrancea county. The survey, structured via Google Forms, aims to reach a sample size of 153 respondents. This methodological choice facilitates the comprehensive collection of data pertaining to local perceptions and attitudes towards wine tourism. The questionnaire design encompasses diverse aspects, including residents' awareness of wine tourism,

their level of participation in associated activities, their perceptions of its socio-economic and environmental impact, and their attitudes towards its future development. Subsequent to data collection, the analysis phase will employ statistical methodologies to discern patterns, correlations, and trends within the dataset. Techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis will be utilized to extract meaningful insights from the amassed data. This meticulous analytical approach ensures a thorough examination of the nexus between sustainability and wine tourism, underpinned by empirical evidence garnered directly from the local community.

Main results and contributions | The study on wine tourism in Vrancea County has yielded significant insights into the perceptions of local stakeholders regarding its development, encompassing both tourism perspectives and socio-economic sustainable development frameworks. The key results and contributions of this research are outlined as follows: I. Identification of Local Perceptions: The research successfully identified both positive and negative local perceptions regarding the impact of wine tourism in Vrancea County. This nuanced understanding offers a comprehensive view of the factors shaping the development of this sector. II. Investigation of Main Assets: The study explored the main assets of Vrancea County pertinent to wine tourism. By highlighting the region's rich history in viticulture and winemaking, the research contributes to showcasing unique selling points, such as its diverse terroir and grape varieties. III. Empirical Aspect and Quantitative Methods: The empirical aspect of the research, particularly the utilization of quantitative methods such as questionnaires administered to local residents, represents a significant contribution. The use of primary data enables a detailed analysis of the relationship between sustainability and wine tourism, offering valuable insights directly from community members. Notably, the implementation of this methodology enriches the existing literature by providing specific insights into local perceptions within the context of wine tourism, thereby enhancing the depth and breadth of scholarly understanding in this field. IV. Guidance for Future Strategies: The study provides practical guidance for future strategies in promoting and managing wine tourism in Vrancea County. By underscoring the pivotal role of local residents in ensuring the sustainable success of this tourism form, the research furnishes a basis for informed decision-making and policy development, thus contributing to the advancement of sustainable tourism practices in the Vrancea County.

Limitations | The research primarily focuses on the perceptions of local stakeholders and the socio-economic aspects of wine tourism. However, there may exist additional factors, such as environmental considerations or global trends, that could impact the sector and are not extensively explored in this study. Despite efforts to gather diverse opinions, there may be inherent biases in the collected data, particularly considering the use of quantitative methods. Certain perspectives or

nuances may not be fully captured, thus potentially affecting the overall representation of local perceptions. Moreover, the study acknowledges the somewhat nascent nature of wine tourism in the Vrancea County. Consequently, the findings might not fully reflect the potential developments and changes that could occur in the future. These limitations present opportunities for future research endeavors. For instance, conducting surveys targeting other categories of stakeholders, such as winery owners and public authorities, could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of wine tourism in Vrancea County. Additionally, conducting in-depth interviews with key stakeholders could offer deeper insights into their perspectives and experiences. Furthermore, analyzing micro-data at the winery level could offer a more understanding of the economic impact of wine tourism. These avenues for future research underscore the importance of striving for a holistic understanding of the complex dynamics surrounding wine tourism in the region.

Conclusions | This study makes significant contributions to the understanding of the relationship between the development of wine tourism and local perceptions in Vrancea County. The results obtained can guide future strategies in the promotion and management of this form of tourism, the involvement of local residents being crucial for the sustainable success of wine tourism in the region and showing that they see this activity as a significant development opportunity. All this against the background of a somewhat incipient activity at the level of wine tourism.

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