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DEVELOPMENT TRENDS, PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES OF WINE TOURISM

Abstract. The purpose of the article is to study wine tourism: wine and its accompanying products as the main means of attracting wine tourists. The importance of wine tourism in all tourism is highlighted by the trend of their increasing presence. The study is based on the experience of countries distinguished by wine tourism, data from international and local organizations, and a discussion of the current situation in Georgia. As a result of the analysis, it was determined that in countries known for wine tourism, wine and its accompanying products are one of the important means of attracting tourists and development of business. It is recognized that the wine tourism industry is one of the leading and most modern industries in the world, which is successfully used for economic development by countries that are prominent in this field. Wine is strongly linked to cultural and culinary heritage, the environment and the economy. An important factor contributing to the development of wine tourism is the organization of wine tours and wine festivals. International events, conferences, festivals organized by the United Nations World Tourism Organization contribute to the popularization of wine tourism and Georgian wine. In Georgia, more attention has recently been paid to the quality of wine, which strengthens the country's image as a quality wine producer in the world. Georgian qvevri wine has been included in the list of cultural heritage by UNESCO. The International Organization of Vine and Wine has included 8 Georgian wines in the list of special wines of the world. Attention is drawn to the opinion of specialists about Georgian wine. They note the special taste qualities of Georgian wine, its ancient history and culture. This fact contributes to attracting tourists and developing wine tourism. It has been proved that state support and various marketing events play a major role in achieving success. In the process of research, quantitative and qualitative research methods are used, appropriate analysis is made. As a result of the research, the research hypothesis was confirmed, a conclusion was formed and recommendations were developed. The expressed opinions and recommendations are important for field specialists, scientists and all interested persons.

Keywords: *Wine Tourism, Wine Industry, Business, State, Marketing.*

JEL Classification: M31; L19; G22; L12.

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Introduction. Georgia is considered to be the “cradle of wine”, the world’s oldest traces of viticulture and wine-making have been discovered there. In particular, during the excavation of the hills of Shulaveri and

Imiri, archeologist found several grape pips of the millennium B.C. (Neolithic period). In the territory of Georgia, an ancient wine cellar with the complex equipment, a huge clay pitcher used for wine storage, gold, silver,

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bronze vessels were discovered. As a result of excavation, a different ceramic vessel was found near Mtskheta, in Bagineti, which dates back to B.C. IV-III millennium. In addition, 11 pitchers were discovered in Borjomi, and 100 in Vardzia (Kuparadze, 2021, pp. 42-46).

Wine tourism is one of the most important and modern destinations in the world today. Georgia has the opportunity to interest tourists in Georgian wine and to increase the awareness and income of Georgia through the development of wine tourism. There is very little literature and research on wine tourism in Georgia. Hence the relevance of the research. Research hypothesis: 1. Wine and wine products play a decisive role in the development of wine tourism and, therefore, the economy in countries known for wine; 2. State support is important in promoting and developing wine tourism. The purpose of the article is to study the experience of countries distinguished by wine tourism, the current situation and opportunities in Georgia. Therefore, we set the following tasks: 1. Research of wine and wine-related products; 2. The state of wine tourism in countries known in this direction; The subject of research is international and local research, the object is wine cellars and wine tourists. The Georgian people have been creating a culture of winemaking for thousands of years, the vine has always been considered a sacred, divine plant, and wine had a sacred purpose. Based on the materials of archaeological excavations that was carried out in Georgia, Georgia is recognized as the historical homeland of wine-growing.¹

The wine industry is developed in many countries: Italy, France, Chile, Argentina, etc. All of them try to emphasize the uniqueness and rich taste of their wine. In some countries, they pride themselves on special micro-zones. For example, the French Bordeaux, Burgundy and even Champagne are known to everyone in the world, and the greatness of their wine is emphasized through them. At a time when so many countries are trying to gain a place in the world market with something special, unique and exclusive, Georgia has all this naturally - this small country of the Caucasus is the birthplace of wine and produces wine using the most unique pitcher technology. As a result of long-term search and research of archaeological materials, in 2017, Georgia was officially awarded the title

of the homeland of wine, and now, the whole world knows that wine in Georgia, BC. They were planted in 6000-5800, i.e. 8000 years ago.

The aim of the article is to study Georgian wine tourism as the main means of attracting tourists. The following tasks were performed in the preparation of this article:

- existing literature and statistical data on wine tourism, international and local research materials were studied;
- Georgian and foreign studies on wine were studied, works of famous scientists were analyzed;
- the authors conducted a questionnaire of wine cellar owners;
- relevant recommendations were developed.

The object of the research is the study of important factors contributing to the development of wine tourism, both in Georgia and abroad. The subject of the research is the prospects for the development of wine tourism in Georgia.

Literature Review. Wine tourism is defined as visiting vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine exhibitions. which consists of attributes of grape wine tasting and/or grape wine region. are the main motivating factors for visitors (Hall, 1998, pp. 9–10). Getz et al Interests and experiences of the wine tourist. Wine tourism is assumed to be consumer behavior based on the attractiveness of wine and wine regions, development and marketing strategy for the wine industry and destinations where wine cellars and wine are linked to tradition and culture (Getz et al., 2007).

In the works of Georgian scientists, experts, researchers, a large place is devoted to studies related to the importance of winemaking. e. According to Kharashvili: viticulture and winemaking is a branch of traditional and strategic importance of agriculture. A significant part of the population living in rural areas is involved in it. Diversification of viticulture and winemaking plays an important role in terms of economic growth and at the same time ensures the improvement of the living standards of the most vulnerable population. This challenge requires complex and complex measures. For maximum efficiency, it is important that all interested and competent parties are involved in the process - ministries, experts, scientific workers and directly representatives of the field of viticulture and winemaking. (Kharashvili, 2017).

¹ Winemaking in Georgia. URL: https://barbarabarliani.blogspot.com/p/blog-page_9513.html (дата звернення: 23.09.2024).

According to the facts that was mentioned in the writings of Ivane Javakhishvili, Georgia is distinguished by a special attitude and respect for wine. It is worth noting the culture of “Churi” wine and wine maintenance in general, which is carried out in different ways in different parts of the country. (Javakhishvili, 1986, pp. 668-671).

Recently, views have changed and the driving factor of tourism has become the “experience economy”; People are buying fewer things, preferring to invest in moments that can be immortalized on social media and that create lasting memories. (Brochado & Stoleriu, 2023). Experimental tourism, a subgroup of which is wine tourism. In order to attract tourists, research-based strategies need to be developed and implemented. For example, in order to attract tourists, wineries should take into account customer requests, consider adding a reservation system similar to their website ¹. This means that wineries can create small events, tastings and tours. Another issue to consider is how a winery presents itself digitally, whether on its website or social media.

An important contributing factor to the development of wine tourism is the organization of wine tours and wine festivals, both in Georgia and abroad. On the initiative and organization of the “Georgian Wine” association, with the support of the National Wine Agency, in 2021, the Sixth International Symposium of Kvevri Wine was held in Merano, Italy. The event lasted for 3 days within the framework of the Merano International Wine Festival, which is one of the most unique exhibitions in the wine and culinary sector.

Held on World Tourism Day 2021 on 27 September, the conference brought together public and private sector stakeholders to identify ways to maximize the sector’s potential contribution to inclusive growth. Advancing digital transformation, marketing and promoting and protecting nature through a thriving wine tourism sector were also on the agenda.

Wine tourism has gained traction both in the wine and tourism value chain, as well as in government and society. In 2016, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) organized the first UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism in Georgia and published the Declaration of Georgia on Wine Tourism.

The Declaration establishes a framework for wine tourism within the UNWTO institutional environment, recognizing wine tourism as a part of gastronomy and cultural tourism and “as a key element for both developing and mature tourism destinations where tourists can experience the destination’s culture and lifestyle.” While promoting the development of sustainable tourism”. The next two annual conferences continued to work on the sustainable development of wine tourism, resulting in the 3rd edition focusing on “Wine Tourism as a Tool for Rural Development”, and highlighting the contribution of tourism to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDG). Conclusions of the 3rd Global Conference emphasize the need for innovative models of partnership and cooperation, as well as the involvement and empowerment of local communities (Buhalis et al., 2023, pp. 293-313).

Wine is strongly linked to the cultural and culinary heritage, environment, economy and society of wine regions and countries, the viticulture sector can have a strong impact on the 3 P’s of sustainability: people, planet and profit (triple bottom line). Discussions about wine and the SDGs must consider the role of grapes and wine in our societies and responsible consumption. Broader partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society are needed for sustainable development agendas and action (Filopoulos & Frittella, 2019).

Research Methodology. Quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the research. The study is based on desk research materials and a questionnaire survey conducted by us. Georgian and foreign studies on wine have been studied. Analyzed by Georgian scientists: E. Kharashvili and I. Javakhishvili’s works (Kharashvili, 2017; Javakhishvili, 1986), as well as data of the National Wine Agency, statistical materials and opinions of foreign experts. There is little information about Georgian wine tourism. There are no exact statistics of wine tourists. Our research is based on the data of the National Wine Agency, the research and experience of researchers from international countries, and our questionnaire survey of winery owners and hotel owners through an online questionnaire.

Main Results. Wine: As we mentioned above, wine, its quality and wine-related activities play a great role in the development of wine tourism. This is confirmed by both international and local studies. Festivals,

¹ Rezdy. The online booking system for tour and activity businesses. URL: <https://rezdy.com> (дата звернення: 23.09.2024).

exhibitions, tastings and various events contribute to the promotion and awareness of wine and the attraction of wine tourists. According to the data of the National Wine Agency, mandatory certification of wine began in January 2023. In 9 months of 2023, Georgian wine was presented in 11 countries of the world (USA, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Latvia, China, Poland, Great Britain, South Korea, Denmark) at 12 exhibitions, 17 festivals and 44 tastings. Among them, it is worth noting: “VinExpo Paris 2023” with the support of the National Wine Agency, 13 Georgian wine companies, together with more than 3 thousand producers from 52 countries of the world, participated in the large-scale exhibition “VinExpo Paris” on February 12-13. “Foodex Japan 2023” - in Japan; at the international exhibition of wine and alcoholic beverages “Vinexpo New York”, “ProWein-2023” on March 19-21, with the financial support of the National Wine Agency and the organization of the “Georgian Wine” association, in the German city of Dusseldorf; “The 108th China Food & Drinks Fair” in April, People’s Republic of China - International Wine and Food Exhibition ¹.

On May 6, 2023, the annual natural wine festival “ZERO COMPROMISE” took place in Tbilisi, organized by the “Natural Wine” association and with the support of the National Wine Agency. 100 local wineries, members of the association, and representatives of wineries from different countries participated in the festival.

On May 12-13, 2023, with the support of the National Wine Agency and the organization of the “Saferika” organization, the two-day Saferavi festival “Saferika” was held in the Finger Lakes region of the state of New York ², on the territory of the local “Dr. Konstantin Frank Winery” in the United States of America. Saferavi wines produced by 30 companies, both from Georgia and the Finger Lakes region, were presented at the festival. On May 13, the “New Wine Festival” was held with the support of the National Wine Agency, Tbilisi City Hall, the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the Association “Women in the Wine Industry” (WIWI). Traditionally, it was distinguished by the crowd of participants and visitors. 100

wine companies and 128 family wineries, as well as companies related to the wine sector participated in the festival, including both already known and new wineries with new wines and concepts.

Jungbauer’s article in *Vogue* on October 1, 2024 - about Georgian wine and Georgia, focuses on the unique features of the Kakheti region, which he calls “Little Tuscany” due to its landscapes and rich wine culture: “70% of Georgian wine is produced in Kakheti and is known for its ancient winemaking traditions, especially with the use of kvevri, in which the wine is aged in a large clay vessel. This practice is included in the list of intangible cultural heritage of UNESCO – writes Jessica ³.

On September 27, 2024, under the auspices of the United Nations Tourism Organization, Georgia will host the World Tourism Day event for the first time, this year’s theme is “Tourism and Peace”. Holding the World Tourism Day event in Georgia will significantly contribute to strengthening the country’s tourism awareness in the international arena.

World trends in wine consumption are changing, special attention is paid to wine quality. According to Wine Intelligence, wine consumers drink less but quality wine. Also, as healthy lifestyles become a priority around the world, consumers are increasingly interested in low-alcohol and organic beverages. In addition, more attention is being paid to wine packaging, design and labeling, particularly in the US, UK, Canada, Australia and Japan, according to Wine Intelligence. Recently, in Georgia, more attention is paid to the quality of wine, which strengthens the image of the country as a producer of quality wine in the world. In recent years, Georgian wine has won many awards in international wine competitions, and in 2020, the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV) included 8 Georgian wines in the list of special wines of the world for 2021.

Attention is drawn to the opinion of specialists about Georgian wine: “Even when we think that a culture like France or Italy is focused on wine, Georgians take it on a completely different level - much deeper than we realize,” says Taylor Parsons, a Los Angeles sommelier. Simon J. Wolfe, author of the recent book *Amber Revolution: How the World Learned to Love Orange Wine*, discusses Georgian wine at length, noting: “One of the most important

1 Report 2023 / National Wine Agency. URL: <https://wine.gov.ge/Ge/Files/Download/15405> (дата звернення: 23.09.2024).

2 Saferika Festival was held with support of Georgian Wine Agency in USA. URL: https://georgiaonline.ge/saferika-festival-was-held-with-support-of-georgian-wine-agency-in-usa/#google_vignette (дата звернення: 23.09.2024).

3 Why Georgia’s “Little Tuscany” Should Be on Every Wine Lover’s Bucket List. October 1, 2024. URL: <https://www.vogue.com/article/kakheti-georgia-wine-region-guide> (дата звернення: 23.09.2024).

things about Georgian wine is that it is a window into the culture that we, As Westerners, we just don't have it." (Woolf, 2018).

The information that was found about wine proves that Georgian wine is distinguished by its taste qualities and is quite popular, which confirms the opinion that wine, as the main product (along with accompanying products), can be a means of attracting wine tourists.

Wine tourism: The first conference on wine tourism was held in Australia in 1998, and after that, studies on wine tourism began. (Getz & Page, 2015, pp. 593-613).

Wine tourism is especially important for rural development. Innovation, partnerships and enhanced coordination are essential for making wine tourism a driver of rural development. That was a takeaway message from the 5th UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism, held in Alentejo, Portugal, around the theme "Wine Tourism – a driver for rural development."

Wine tourism has gained traction both in the wine and tourism value chain, as well as in government and society. (Hall et al., 2009). In 2016, the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) organized the first UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism in Georgia and published the Declaration of Georgia on Wine Tourism. The Declaration establishes a framework for wine tourism within the institutional setting of the UNWTO, recognizing wine tourism as part of gastronomy and cultural tourism, where tourists can experience the culture and lifestyle of a destination. (Meladze, 2016, pp. 372-376).

The next two annual conferences continued to work on the sustainable development of wine tourism. The conclusions of the 3rd Global Conference highlight the need for innovative models of partnership and cooperation, as well as the involvement and empowerment of local communities. Wine is strongly linked to the cultural and culinary heritage, environment, economy and society of wine-growing regions and countries. The viticulture sector can have a strong impact on the 3 Ps of sustainability: people, planet and profit (triple bottom line). Discussions about wine and the SDGs must consider the role of grapes and wine in our societies and responsible consumption. Broader partnerships between governments, the private sector and civil society are needed for sustainable development agendas and action. (Filipoulos & Frittell, 2019).

Wine tourism in Georgia is in the initial

stage of development. State policy is important for the development of wine tourism. In September 2021, the Government of Georgia approved the "State Program for Promotion of Georgian Wine". The goal of the program is to increase the export potential, competitiveness and awareness of Georgian wine on international markets, diversify strategic and priority export markets. The program will be implemented by the National Wine Agency of the State of Georgia, in coordination with the Ministry of Environment Protection and Agriculture of Georgia. The National Wine Agency, within the allocations allocated to it, will co-finance marketing expenses only for those companies that export to priority markets and to different countries of the world, except CIS countries. The initial stage of the program was launched at the end of 2021 and will be fully implemented in 2022 "On the conditions and promotion of the State Program Astrid Vardanao, Deborah Che, in Wine tourism development and marketing strategies in the Southwest discuss the problems of wine tourism in Southwest Michigan. They conducted in-depth interviews with people responsible for wine tourism marketing (marketing directors, department members, winery owners) and tourism representatives. Research has shown that wine festivals, specialized wine tours, and wine education activities increase sales and income from wine tourism (Wargenau & Che, 2021, pp. 57-61).

To achieve sustainable tourism growth, small villages with unique and authentic characteristics can play a crucial role. Architecture, cuisine and traditional lifestyle, important elements to market to potential tourists, are kept intact in these villages. In this context, wine tourism should be considered an important and unexplored niche for development (Var et al., 2006, pp. 10-17).

Wine tourism is a promising sub-sector of tourism today and has the potential to grow at a much faster rate than most tourism industries (Beames, 2003, pp. 205-212). Wine tourism can play an important role in national and regional sustainable tourism development plans, as it contributes to maintaining the economic and social base of regions. Environmental measures should also be considered. In addition to sales support, local production and the creation of new jobs, wine tourism facilities such as specialized restaurants and hotels contribute to the formation of new ones. Looking at it as a whole, it can create a huge market (Song et al., 2017, pp. 29-37).

Today, several countries and regions are experiencing tremendous growth and benefit from wine marketing and tourism. California and Pennsylvania in the United States, Bordeaux, Champagne and Burgundy in France, Tuscany in Italy and several areas of Australia and New Zealand are considered important centers of wine tourism. It is worth noting the economic contribution of wine tourism in the mentioned regions. (Gomez-Carmon, 2023).

Online survey of wine cellar owners: We conducted an online questionnaire survey to the owners of wine cellars in Kartli and Kakheti. 34 wine cellar owners participated. As a result of the analysis of their answers, it was revealed that the majority of the guests of the winery owners are wine tourists. The main reason for their visit is wine and its accompanying products. As a result of the survey, it was determined that 30% of the guests prefer the taste qualities of wine, 14% – the view (visiting the vineyard, beautiful nature, etc.), 16% – the cuisine, 15% – the master classes (participation in the harvest and other ceremonies), the rest (25%), believes that everyone is important together. When asked whether the cellar owners use marketing to attract guests, the majority (60%) answered that they do not know, and the rest (40%) use it in a small dose. The answers to the question asked to the winery owners – about the role of the state, were divided as follows: 80% say that the state support is not enough, 15% believe that the state has been providing active support recently, 5% believe that the state support is sufficient.

The online survey confirmed that wine and wine products are important for attracting tourists, and that appropriate marketing

activities are needed to increase awareness of wine products. Also, the role of the state in the development of wine tourism business was confirmed.

Conclusions. Wine tourism is a part of the wine business and can be considered one of the most important tourism segments nowadays. Georgia, as a country of ancient culture and wine, has the opportunity to more actively use the opportunity and develop wine tourism. The necessary activities for this have been started, but more measures and government support are needed. The research proved that festivals, exhibitions, and various events have a positive impact on the development of wine tourism. According to the data of the National Wine Agency, in May 2024, wine professionals from China and Singapore visited Georgia and visited wine factories in Kartli and Kakheti¹. It is necessary for the state to take care and to promote the development of wine tourism: to increase the level of professionalism; use foreign experience; Increase incentives for small entrepreneurs, hoteliers and cellar owners. Effective measures are needed for this:

- invite field specialists from abroad;
- conduct trainings and other educational events;
- increase awareness of the place and products through marketing;
- close cooperation of the state, private companies (meaning wineries and hotels) and tourist organizations is necessary;
- developing a strategic plan - with the involvement of all parties, and taking care of its implementation.

It should be noted that the development process has started, but more concreteness is necessary, and proper use of opportunities.

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ТЕНДЕНЦІЇ РОЗВИТКУ, ПРОБЛЕМИ ТА ВИКЛИКИ ВИННОГО ТУРИЗМУ

Метою статті є дослідження винного туризму: вина та його супутньої продукції як основного засобу залучення винного туриста. Дослідження базується на досвіді країн, що вирізняються винним туризмом, даних міжнародних і місцевих організацій та обговоренні поточної ситуації в Грузії. У цьому напрямку опрацьовано наявні літературні та статистичні дані, матеріали міжнародних та вітчизняних досліджень. Автори провели анкетне опитування власників погребів. У результаті аналізу встановлено, що в країнах, відомих винним туризмом, вино та супутні продукти є одним із важливих засобів залучення туристів та розвитку бізнесу. Доведено, що державна підтримка, фестивалі, виставки та різноманітні маркетингові заходи відіграють велику роль у досягненні успіху. У процесі дослідження використовуються кількісні та якісні методи дослідження, проводиться відповідний аналіз. Визнано, що індустрія винного туризму є однією з провідних і найсучасніших галузей у світі, яка успішно використовується для економічного розвитку країнами, які є провідними в цій галузі. Вино тісно пов'язане з культурною та кулінарною спадщиною, навколишнім середовищем та економікою. Важливим фактором, що сприяє розвитку винного туризму, є організація винних турів і винних фестивалів. Популяризації винного туризму та грузинського вина сприяють міжнародні заходи, конференції, фестивалі, організовані Всесвітньою туристичною організацією ООН. У Грузії останнім часом більше уваги приділяють якості вина, що зміцнює імідж країни як виробника якісного вина у світі. Грузинське вино квеври включено ЮНЕСКО до списку культурної спадщини. Міжнародна організація винограду і вина включила 8 грузинських вин до списку особливих вин світу. Звертаємо увагу на думку фахівців про грузинське вино. Вони відзначають особливі смакові якості грузинського вина, його давню історію та культуру. Це сприяє залученню туристів і розвитку винного туризму. У результаті дослідження підтверджено гіпотезу дослідження, сформувано висновок та розроблено рекомендації. Висловлені думки та рекомендації важливі для фахівців галузі, науковців та всіх зацікавлених осіб.

Ключові слова: *винний туризм, виноробство, бізнес, держава, маркетинг.*

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