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### FROM WINE PRODUCTION TO WINE TOURISM EXPERIENCE: THE CASE OF ITALY

Vincenzo Asero and Sebastiano Patti

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# **From Wine Production to Wine Tourism Experience: the Case of Italy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Typical products, mainly local food and wine, are considered suitable features to characterise the tourist supply of a destination and in many cases they are a major attraction of a territory. These products contain a strong reference to the territory in which they are produced. They simultaneously represent on the market a geographic area, its traditions and its cultural heritage, they identify a local community and its identity as well. Therefore typical products can be defined as ‘territorial intensive products’ (TIPs). Wine tourism represents the most innovative phenomenon of the more general tourism supply created around a TIP and certainly the most evident. The paper considers the importance of quality wine in Italy in helping to create the tourist supply of different territories through the creation of the Wine and Food Routes (WFRs) that represent a particular kind of tourist thematic itineraries. The paper confirms that quality wines are the ‘driver’ of WFRs creating a model of socioeconomic district.

## **1. Introduction**

While the wine sector has fairly developed in some countries such as Italy, France, Australia, America (California and Chile) and South Africa, in the last decade a market has developed taking wine into consideration, as a resource, characterizing the tourism supply of a destination. Wine, as many other typical products, constitutes an important component of the tourist market and the successful cases of wine tourism bear it ample witness. Wine tourism represents a particular type of tourism, whose principal feature is given by the wine and the wine-production territories. From the tourist point of view, in fact, wine may

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constitute the main attraction of a territory or an asset that contributes, together with the other resources and attractions, as well as with other typical products, to the definition of its offer. Wine involves a target made up of people sensitive not only to the up market brands bottles, of which they are connoisseurs, in some cases experts, but also to the territory, the local traditions and the artistic goods, which represent the new and defensive localism (Winter, 2003). It has been noticed that in many countries wine is simultaneously an expression of the culture of a territory and a reservoir of traditions rooted in antiquity. It identifies a local community and its identity. Thus, as affirmed by Asero and Patti (2009a) wine, like the many typical products, can be defined as a ‘territorial intensive product’(TIP) since it contain a strong reference to the territory in which it is produced. Therefore, paraphrasing the pattern of Becattini (1989), it could be affirmed that ‘typical products and the territory perform reciprocally, in continuum that sees the one tied to the other and vice versa’ (Asero and Patti, 2009a).

The organisational formula of wine tourism is that of itineraries, which mainly involve areas of quality wine production and offer the tourists the opportunity of knowing other cultural and naturalistic resources characterising the territories visited. The same formula has largely been developed in different countries as documented in many researches including Europe (Hall et al., 2000), South Africa (Bruwer, 2003) as well as Australia (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002).

This paper specifically exams the case of Italy, where a National Law has promoted the Wine and Food Routes (WFRs). WFRs identify socio-territorial entities and represent a variant of the industrial district model as defined by the Italian scholars, since each route is characterized by the active presence of both a community of people and an agglomeration of firms in a geographical and historically bounded area. WFRs associate quality wines as well as different typical foodstuff products, producer businesses and tourist operators under a single brand, identifying short, medium and long itineraries that wind through the same geographic territory. Quality wine production is the driver of the majority of Italian WFRs, but quality wines are also part of the ‘cultural capital’ of many Italian regions, since they ‘embody and yield both economic and cultural value’

(Throsby, 2000). Hence, they offer to local stakeholders of a wine production area the occasion to enhance a place through its cultural identity in spite of increasing globalization, as result of a process that Ray has defined a 'cultural economic' approach to the territory development (Ray, 1998).

## **2. The relationship between wine, heritage and tourism**

Wine is today at the heart of local dynamics working towards producing singularity. Wine as well as other TIPs are part of the heritage of a place. Consequently they both represent a cultural value because in turn they become the tourist products presenting the characters of a cultural tourism experience. It is the case of some itineraries that have been built under the programme of the Council of Europe for cultural Routes, like 'The Routes of the Olive Tree' or the "Iter Vitis – Wine Routes in Europe", which encourages thematic tourism as well as the protection of cultural heritage through the exploitation of typical products (Asero and Patti, 2009b). The relationship with the heritage is especially closer when wine and typical products are identified by quality labels and brands that protect their identity and are attributed to those products whose characteristics depend on the territory in which they are produced.

Wine could be used as a resource with which to generate a flow of tourists, whose only motive is to discover the source of the product itself, to get knowledge of the places and ways of production. Nevertheless, as affirmed by Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) wine tourist expectations are likely to vary from region to region. Wine assumes different significances by playing a *predominant*, *complementary*, *marginal*, or *exclusive* role in the tourism supply of a territory, but in all cases it is a factor of competitiveness for a destination (Asero and Patti, 2009b). Furthermore, Getz (1998) affirms that wine tourism has the potential to provide a competitive advantage to regions with a grape and wine industry as well as to generate business for wineries and other related products. Naturally, the more exclusive the products are the greater are the opportunities within the market place, unless a niche is created. On the other hand, the volume of wine tourism has increased notably that competitive positioning of wine tourism regions has become a strategic issue (Williams, 2001).

Wine tourism represents a clear example of a tourism experience created around a typical intensive product. It has been often promoted under the impulse of 'neo-rural' ethos, which means new rural entrepreneurship, new rural style of life, new tourist activities in the farm house, culture of hospitality and sustainability (Asero and Patti, 2009b). Williams (2001) remarks that there has been a shift 'in wine country imagery from an emphasis on wine production processes and related facilities to more of an emphasis on aesthetic and experimental values associated with more leisure recreational and tourist pursuit'. Similarity, it has been noticed that wine provides a motivating factors for tourists to visit a destination as wine regions tend to be attractive places and vineyards aesthetically pleasing (Cambourne et al., 2000).

Wine tourism has been defined in a variety of different ways. According to Hall (1996) it has been characterized as referring to visiting of vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows, while the major motivating factors for visitors are wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a wine region. Another definition describes wine tourism as travel for the purpose of experiencing wineries and wine regions and their links to lifestyle. Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) suggest that the wine tourism experience encompasses many characteristics including a lifestyle experience, education, linkages to art, wine and food, tasting and cellar door sales, winery tours, incorporation with the tourism-destination image and a marketing opportunity which enhances the economic, social and cultural values of a territory. Mitchell (2006) further distinguishes between wine tourism more broadly and winery visitation.

The prevalent organisational formula of wine tourism is that of itineraries, routes touching wineries and areas of production, that offer the tourists the opportunity of knowing other cultural and naturalistic resources characterising the territory visited. Both cultural and natural features are important as they endow distinctive attributes to the wine regions. Hall and Mitchell (2002) use the term of 'touristic terroir' to illustrate the combination of physical, cultural and natural elements that give each region its distinctive appeal. Wine routes realize a model of district. The concept of a bounded territory in defining each wine route is vital

for its wine-producing members since it create an identity that proclaims the distinctive character and the cultural heritage of that district (Hall et al., 2000).

Wine and tourism rely on regional branding (Fuller, 1997). A wine route is identified on the market by a brand that conveys the geographical identity and the regional origin of the wine. In some cases, for example in Italy and France, the different territories in which wine is produced are officially demarcated through quality appellation labels. Quality wine strengthens the image of the territories, contributing to the local economic development and the promotion of the tourist offer. Therefore, quality wine plays both the role of driver of wine routes and of tourist 'medium'.

The wine route local stakeholders must build up a system of relations between wineries, organizations and wine associations to be successful. Therefore, they are the key factors for promoting the image of wine, wineries and wine regions as well as to ensure quality tourism experiences.

### **3. The Italian quality wine production**

Wine as well as typical products are often identified by quality labels and trademarks that protect their identity and are attributed to those products whose peculiar characteristics depend essentially or exclusively on the territory in which they are produced. Labels and brands confirm the value of uniqueness and un-repeatability of TIPs, acknowledging their high territorial content. Hence, labels, such as logos and trademarks, represent new regulatory and legal structures to develop and to protect niche product as well as potential high value traditional products and practices (Marsden and Smith, 2005). Quality labels are also important for developing a new form of 'ecological entrepreneurship', such as it is defined by Marsden (2003) and Marsden and Smith (2005), whereby key actors are committed to preserving cultural, ecological and environmental integrity yet find new pragmatic ways to create economic benefits in the local community.

In the last decade, Italian wine production has been characterized by an increased quality either of the grapes used to make wine or the technical procedures of wine makers. To better define the Italian wine scenario, it is necessary to consider the characteristics of quality wine areas, identified by its'

labels, the amount of quality wine produced, the amount of wineries and the total vine extension.

National distribution of quality wine labels is presented in Table n. 1. It shows that the number (324) of AOC (Appellation of Origin Controlled) is more considerable and represents almost the 66% of the total amount of the denominations; while the number of AOCG (Appellation of Origin Controlled and Guaranteed) is equal to 9%, with 40 denominations, and the number of TGI (Typical Geographic Indications) is of 125, which means the 25%. Italian quality wine production highlights a predominant role played by the Northern regions, which have much more AOC, AOCG and TGI wine denominations. In fact, compared with the 489 quality labels, 198 are those classifying wine produced in the North. In percentage terms, they represent the 40.5% of the total one of the denominations, while the Centre and the South correspond respectively to the 23.7% and the 22.7%, followed by the Islands (Sicily and Sardinia) with the 13%. On the contrary, Southern area and the Islands have more TGI denominations. Clearly, there is a strong concentration of AOC and AOCG labels in the North of Italy and this high number is not related to the surface of the regions. Besides, for what concerns regional distribution of quality wine, Piemonte is on the top, with an amount of 56 denominations, followed by Tuscany (49), Veneto (39), Sardinia (35) and Lombardia (34).



**Table n. 1 – Italian denominations of origin and geographical indication**

REGIONS	AOC	AOCG	TGI	Total amount per region
Valle d'Aosta	1	-	-	1
Piemonte	44	12	-	56
Liguria	8	-	3	11
Lombardia	15	4	15	34
Veneto	25	4	10	39
Friuli VG	9	2	3	14
Trentino A.A.	8	-	4	12
Emilia Romagna	20	1	10	31
<b>NORTH</b>	<b>130</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>198</b>
Toscana	36	7	6	49
Marche	15	2	1	18
Umbria	11	2	6	19
Lazio	26	-	4	30
<b>CENTRE</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>116</b>
Abruzzo	4	1	10	15
Molise	3	-	2	5
Campania	17	3	9	29
Basilicata	3	-	2	5
Puglia	26	-	6	32
Calabria	12	-	13	25
<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>111</b>
Sicilia	22	1	6	29
Sardegna	19	1	15	35
<b>ISLANDS</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>489</b>

Source: ISMEA

The importance of wine industry for the local economic development of Italian regions is also confirmed by the growth of wineries in the last nine years. According to the ISMEA (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare) data, Italian wineries increased from 1,903 to 3,909 units during the period 2000 – 2009 as shown by Table n. 2. Tuscany and Piemonte regions prevailed, with respectively 749 and 605 wineries, representing the 19.16% and the 15.48% of the total amount. Veneto follows with 467 wineries that represent the 11.95% of the Italian wineries.

**Table n. 2 - Wineries in Italy between 2000 and 2009**

REGIONS	Wineries 2000	Wineries 2009
Valle d'Aosta	15	31
Piemonte	304	605
Liguria	56	56
Lombardia	140	279
Veneto	160	467
Friuli VG	159	201
Trentino A.A.	119	151
Emilia Romagna	86	161
<b>NORTH</b>	<b>1039</b>	<b>1951</b>
Toscana	386	749
Marche	61	138
Umbria	41	80
Lazio	45	99
<b>CENTRE</b>	<b>533</b>	<b>1066</b>
Abruzzo	64	102
Molise	4	19
Campania	66	218
Basilicata	17	39
Puglia	61	176
Calabria	34	40
<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>246</b>	<b>594</b>
Sicilia	47	215
Sardegna	38	83
<b>ISLANDS</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>298</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>1903</b>	<b>3909</b>

Source: Our processing on ISMEA data

The last data available concerning the amount of quality wine production in all Italian regions (ISMEA, 2007), which include AOC, AOCG and TGI wines, show that Veneto and Emilia Romagna produce more wine, respectively 6,870 and 3,780 millions of hectolitres, followed by Tuscany and Piemonte, (see Table n. 3).

A further consideration regards the vine extension per region. According to ISTAT (Istituto Italiano di Statistica) and ISMEA sources, the National surface cultivated to grapes of wine amounts to 789,272 hectares. More precisely, the Northern vine extension is the biggest with 252,993 he, follows the Southern one with 221,716 he. In the North area, Veneto region has the biggest vine extension (73,314), while in the Centre area, Tuscany presents a vine extension of 63,633 he. Nevertheless, the biggest vineyard areas are Apulia (107,715 he) and Sicily (133,518 he) situated in the South.

An index of specialization QWRS has been calculated to observe the relationship between the quantity produced of quality wine (QWP) and vine extension (TVE) (see Table n. 3). The index compares the QWP/TVE ratio, calculated for each region, with the value of the National average. The values of the index summarize the level of specialization of Italian regions in producing quality wine (AOC+AOCG+TGI). The index shows that the regions of North (1.80) and Centre (1.04) Italy are more specialized in producing quality wine.

**Table n. 3 – Quality wine production, vine extension and specialization index**

<b>REGIONS</b>	<b>Quality Wine Production-QWP (value in Hectoliter)</b>	<b>Total Vine Extension-TVE (value in Hectar)</b>	<b>INDEX OF QWRS</b>
Valle d'Aosta	11,500	653	0.50
Piemonte	2,276,353	57,487	1.13
Liguria	53,035	4,837	0.31
Lombardia	852,279	26,951	0.91
Veneto	6,870,505	73,314	2.68
Friuli VG	873,331	18,704	1.34
Trentino A.A.	1,199,575	12,810	2.68
Emilia R.	3,780,214	58,237	1.86
<b>NORTH</b>	<b>15,916,792</b>	<b>252,993</b>	<b>1.80</b>
Toscana	2,460,685	63,633	1.11
Marche	635,195	9,694	1.88
Umbria	706,727	16,503	1.23
Lazio	1,212,854	47,884	0.72
<b>CENTRE</b>	<b>5,015,461</b>	<b>137,714</b>	<b>1.04</b>
Abruzzo	899,480	33,252	0.77
Molise	187,595	4,438	1.21
Campania	491,251	41,124	0.34
Basilicata	53,366	10,848	0.14
Puglia	1,886,723	107,715	0.50
Calabria	112,746	24,339	0.13
<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>3,631,161</b>	<b>221,716</b>	<b>0.47</b>
Sicilia	1,300,188	133,518	0.28
Sardegna	417,722	43,331	0.28
<b>ISLANDS</b>	<b>1,717,910</b>	<b>176,849</b>	<b>0.28</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>26,281,324</b>	<b>789,272</b>	

Source: Our processing on ISTAT and ISMEA data

#### **4. The Wine and Food Routes in Italy**

During the last decade in Italy there has been a growing awareness on the importance of valorising and promoting the territory through the creation of thematic itineraries that can be considered as ‘localising tourist packages’ (Valdani and Ancarani, 2000). Clearly, a good case of such tourist package is represented by the Wine Routes whose aim is to promote rural areas as tourist destinations. This model derives from two important productive sectors: the vine cultivation and the tourist sectors. The Wine Routes have been instituted by the National law N. 268 of 1999 that defines them as itineraries created in geographical areas where quality wines are produced. The law aims to exploit the winegrowing areas and wineries, including cultural and natural resources, as well to allow the tourists to benefit from these. Typical identification of a territory devoted to wine has helped create the various Wine Routes, recently also including the typical foods of the district. As a consequence, many of them are now called Wine and Food Routes (WFRs). According to the Italian legislative system each region has a proper law regulating this matter. Nevertheless, some routes are not yet well developed. Even though they are instituted in all the regions of the country, they are not all effectively operative. The first column of Table n. 4 shows the distribution per region of the total number of routes, while the second column considers the only ones that are specialized by quality wine. It has to be noted that some regions, such as Sicily, are instituting new routes. Therefore the total number could change during the time.

**Table n. 4 – Italian Wine and Food Routes**

REGIONS	Wine and Food Routes (WFR)	Whose characterized by wine
Valle d'Aosta	1	1
Piemonte	6	6
Liguria	2	1
Lombardia	12	8
Veneto	19	16
Friuli VG	7	7
Trentino A.A.	8	6
Emilia Romagna	15	12
<b>NORTH</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>57</b>
Toscana	16	16
Marche	3	3
Umbria	5	4
Lazio	5	5
<b>CENTRE</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>28</b>
Abruzzo	6	6
Molise	1	1
Campania	10	10
Basilicata	1	1
Puglia	14	9
Calabria	12	9
<b>SOUTH</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>36</b>
Sicilia	11	11
Sardegna	7	7
<b>ISLANDS</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>ITALY</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>139</b>

Source: Our processing

In Italy, wine tourism is certainly a complex phenomenon, because it doesn't end with the visit to the cellars, to the places of production and with the tasting, nor it is associated only with forms of rural tourism or of agro-tourism, and directly involves a whole territory and its various components. Confirmation of this, thanks to WFRs many places, especially little towns and small villages, have become known in the tourist market through their typical wines and food products. Nevertheless, in some cases the tourist offer based on wine-gastronomic products seems to become 'banal', since it happens that these products are not considered as the central element to characterise a tourist package of a destination but only an 'accessory' of a more general tourist offer (Asero and Patti 2009b).

The behaviour of the wine tourist has also evolved. Cinelli Colombini (2003) and CENSIS studies argue that Italian wine tourists have so greatly changed their consumption habits as to make a real segmentation of the market very difficult. CENSIS official data of the year 2007 estimate that the number of wine tourists in Italy is about 4,5 million with a wine industry turnover of 2,5 thousand millions Euros. CENSIS study (2006) observes that wine tourism in Italy involves above all a target made up mainly of adults, with a medium-high level of income. Besides purchasing the local wines, they also spend on food and handicraft products.

The importance of wine production in Italy has been growing to such a point that a system of relations between local actors, organizations, clubs, institutions and associations of wine experts and lovers, which promote wine and wineries has been created. The associations that deal with wine and tourism are mainly constituted by the Wine Tourism Movement, the National Association the Women of the Wine, the National Association Cities of the Wine and National Association the Routes to Wine and to Food.

As regards the Wine and Food Routes mainly characterized by wine, that is the wine routes in the strict sense, it can be noted that the principal actors are the wineries and the local stakeholders, responsible for the success of a road. But, of course, the principal role is played by the quality wine, since it is characterizing a road and the consumers' demand. Therefore, quality wine is considered the 'driver' of the wine routes (Antonioli Corigliano, 2000). This idea has been examined using a regression analysis. Firstly, it has been observed the relationship among the following variables selected per region by using the data listed in the previews tables: the number of Wine and Food Routes, choosing only the ones characterized by wine (WFRs); the amount of quality wine production (Q of W) that includes AOC, AOCG and TGI wine denominations; the amount of vine extension (Vine Ext) and the number of wineries (Win).

Pearson Correlation					
		<b>WFRs</b>	<b>Q of W</b>	<b>Vine Ext</b>	<b>Win</b>
	<b>WFRs</b>	1.0000	0.7269	0.6840	0.6714
	<b>Q of W</b>	0.7269	1.0000	0.5086	0.5975
	<b>Vine Ext</b>	0.6840	0.5086	1.0000	0.4382
	<b>Win</b>	0.6714	0.5975	0.4382	1.0000

The values indicate there is a positive correlation and a stronger positive covariance (0.7269) between WFRs and quality wine production. Therefore, the strength of the correlation lends weight to the hypothesis that the variables are causally linked. Afterwards, in order to examine the impact of quality wine on WFRs, a multiple regression model has been used, with WFRs as dependent variable and as independent variables the following: quality wine production (Q of W), vine extension (Vine Ext) and wineries (Win).

<b>Multiple R</b> = 0,8450		<b>Adjusted R<sup>2</sup></b> = 0.6604
<b>R<sup>2</sup></b> = 0.7140		<b>Std. Error</b> = 2.6634
<b>Independent</b>		
<b>variables</b>	<b>β</b>	<b>Beta</b>
Q of W	1.0255	0.3640
Vine Ext	4.8022	0.3712
Win	0.0067	0.2911
Constant	2.3830	

The coefficient of determination  $R^2$  indicates that over 70% of the variance in the amount of WFRs characterized by quality wine is explained by the three independent variables. The positive regression coefficients indicate that the independent variables positively affect the dependent one. The beta values show that the most important factors in affecting the number of WFRs are quality wine production and vine extension, while wineries have a smaller effect. This confirms that quality wine is crucial in determining a wine route and that, paradoxically, the number of wineries along a route could not be really so important.

## Conclusions

This paper emphasizes how quality wines can help to valorise and promote the Italian territories throughout the creation of tourist thematic itineraries, such as Wine and Food Routes (WFRs). Actually, they represent a form of alternative tourism and are a powerful instrument for developing a territory–production–tourism pattern. It is evident that WFRs form an integral part of the Italian wine tourism industry; as Bruwer (2003) highlighted, they are the roadways to the core attraction in wine tourism, the wines and the winery. The WFRs other than exploiting the itineraries characterised by grape wine production, concentrate themselves in the promotion of

rural traditions and the typical agriculture and gastronomy of the various Italian localities.

WFRs are able to provide a complex offer based on the wine and on the integration of attractions and resources, as well as on the active participation of public and private subjects and the local communities. Moreover, WFRs enhance new entrepreneurial processes, but also protect and sustain them in the context of significant countervailing forces. In such a context, the WFR's role becomes relevant, because help to run new spatial relationships among local entrepreneurs that become key actors and play a decisive role involving other actors in the WFR system. In addition, it supports new linkages between producers and consumers, in order to attract tourists' flows towards WFR's local communities.

WFRs to be successful have to assure destination management actions. Otherwise, there could be the risk that the wine-gastronomy within WFR system would appear only as a 'corollary', reducing the economic multiplier effects that the creation of a wine-gastronomic tourist product could bring upon a territory.

In the Italian experience, it is widely recognised that WFRs' system represents a theoretical model of district. Each WFR in fact is an agglomerate of wineries, which are concentrated in particular localities and involved in business as well as socio-cultural relationship (Marshall, 1890). They realize a model of district that attributes a remarkable weight to the social and cultural factors in the processes of development. This point confirms the importance of the district theory for the Italian economy as well as proves that opposite to the current market globalisation, there is a 'flowery of little enterprises' (Becattini, 1999). Therefore, WFRs provide a connectedness between the local and the global market. According to the Aydalot (1986) and Maillat and Perrin (1992) definition, it can be affirmed that WFR represents an *innovative milieu*, where wine makers are considered as agents operating in *milieu* acting as incubators of innovation. WFR thus can be viewed either as a driver of the territories as well as an innovator, where innovator means the capacity to use new technologies to update and improve a territory. In that sense, WFRs renew territories and local communities. Hence, WFRs contribute to spread out what is innovated and to diffuse it as a positive externality effect into the local system. This confers to the local community a strong territorial identity and WFR becomes the instrument that could emphasize the local identities by introducing territories and local resources to the tourist market.



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