Wine, Tourism and Collective Action

Abstract

This paper tries to clarify the relevance of interlinking tourism activity with wine producing as a means to create reciprocal value-added. Wine routes are one of the most important and visible sides of this interlink, and what we stress in the current study are the collective action phenomena impelling the collaboration between various partners to attain all-encompassing tourism products, which enhance the effects of the wine route.

Keywords: Collective Action, Wine Routes, Tourism.

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This paper tries to clarify the relevance of interlinking tourism activity with wine producing as a means to create reciprocal value-added. Wine routes are one of the most important and visible sides of this interlink, and what we stress in the current study are the collective action phenomena impelling the collaboration between various partners to attain all-encompassing tourism products, which enhance the effects of the wine route.

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1. Introduction

It is obvious the link between wine and tourism. Essentially, "the very nature of the wine industry lends itself to a marriage with tourism", (Bruwer 2003, p.423). Notwithstanding the close relationship between these two domains, scientific research is still scarce on the interlink between wine tourism and other areas (Hall et al. 2000). Indeed, the major push for scientific research on tourism and wine industries, only surfaced at the end of the 90's with the first Australian Wine Tourism Conference in 1998 which gave a push to scientific publications in this area.
Generally, Wine Tourism is defined as "visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of the grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors" (Hall & Macionis 1998, p.267). It is not surprising to admit that the definition of wine tourism is still maturing and needs to be coupled with the management of the destination associated with that territory.

In fact, Getz (2000) defines Wine Tourism under three different perspectives. The first from the wine producer's point of view who may find there an opportunity to show they are different, to "educate" consumers and make direct sales. Another, from the point of view of tourism agencies or tourism regions, who can develop a destination around the value-added surroundings and wine-producing traditions. Lastly, from a consumer's point of view, who may find a diversified product and benefit from new experiences.

Getz (2000) refers to the development process of a wine tourism destination as one that should be based upon the attention required by a certain number of elements such as attractions, service, hospitality, infrastructures organisational development and a marketing plan. This suggestion implies a connection between the demand and agents, in order to provide a full set of integrated tourism motivations around a wine destination; because "Wine ... is more than a beverage, it has become a lifestyle product with a high degree of complementarity with food,

hospitality, entertainment, the arts and tourism" (Australian Wine Foundation 1996, p.1).

Thus, Wine Tourism may be defined as the development of the tourism and productive value of a territory around its traditions, culture, activities and landscape associated with wine producing. Such development calls for an activity of relationship and coordination between the main components of the tourism product under a marketing-oriented perspective.

Wine Tourism has the capacity to play a significant role in sustainable regional development through its sustenance of the economic and social regional bases and through the care for environmental dimensions (Hall & Mitchell, 2000). Thus, and since it is through these dimensions (environmental, social and economic) that the attractiveness potential of Wine Tourism asserts itself, it must be responsible for its undertaking. This becomes a stimulus to keep locally produced arts and crafts. They are, often, the mainstay of the local population and enable the survival of traditions normally associated with those. The population will then regard wine tourism as an income-producing activity that justifies their preservation.

Indeed, wine producing and tourism associated with it, normally are a strong geographical or territorial phenomena, being described by Dickenson and Salt (1982, p.184) as the "territory's experience". Bell and Valentine (1997), expand on the how the territory's experience and their culture are intrinsically linked with wine knowledge. Thus, the wine "appellations mix the natural environment of the region with the raw materials (grapes) used and the skill involved in production and processing, thus ensuring a tie to place. Mutual publicity thus occurs - wines are famous for coming from a particular region, the region is renowned for its wines" (Bell & Valentine 1997, p.147).

However, one of the major problems associated with Wine Tourism comes from the difficulty the wine-producing industry has to conceive tourism as a product it can also offer and which can generate additional value-added. For many a producer, "their product is their wine rather than the bundle of experiences that a customer may attach to wine consumption" (Hall & Mitchell 2000, p.455). This fact poses an obstacle to create an interlinked network between wine and tourism, and consequently to the Wine Tourism assertion.

The experience of the major attributes of a wine-producing region may be attained through multiple ways interlinking many partners between them. Under this perspective, wine tourism may be seen as a vast array of attractions made available for a region. Such attractions shall have to be coordinated and jointly organised. So, "with the wine tourism product bridging a complex set of industries from grap growers to wineries to restaurants and tour operators the potential exists for building even greater strategic alliances" (Telfer 2001, p.21). This happens when one compares with the ones that generally have been made in

tourism, moving from a very competitive managerial situation to a more collaborative one, (Jamal & Getz 1995, Selin & Chavez 1995; Palmer & Bejou 1995).

Therefore wine tourism development may affect the whole regional economy where it happens. One of the major stimuli to develop the wine tourism may come from the understanding of the latitude of its effects in the entire region where it occurs. It may create, articulate and increase the potential various associated elements such as: accommodation, gastronomy, hunting sports and fishing, among others. A typical example of such articulation is the number of Wine Festivals, which, as Houghton (2001) established in his study, become extremely important since they can muster new tourism segments that go to wine-producing regions and, among others, allow for the association of cultural, historical, gastronomic traditions.

Indeed, the experiences and attributes of a wine-producing region can be so varied and of so diverse interest, that many of the so-called wine-producing tourists cannot be lumped into such a label or denomination (Charters & Ali-Knight 2002).

Wine routes have been one of the major solutions adopted by the wine tourism to assert itself, and a major part of its structure and dissemination is based upon wine routes. These, stimulate cooperation between groups of wine producers around common objectives and are able to offer a coherent product and create a value-added to the original activity, which is wine producing. In this article, we will demonstrate aspects of interlinked regional dynamism and will be able to identify simultaneously the importance of collective action, which governs most routes. It results from presenting twenty in-depth interviews conducted at Port Wine Route. We shall also present implications to regional management organisations and wineries of their need to cooperate in order to have regional dynamics and more value-added.

2. Wine Routes

Wine routes are an essential vehicle for linking tourism and wine-producing activities and traditions, acting mainly as a privileged tool to divulge and promote one's regional tourism (Getz 2000, Hashimoto & Telfer 2003). Generally, routes are organised by a series of associates, with characteristics and tourism potential, who have their own organisation, but subject to an institutional support from the wine industry, articulated between them in order to provide a dynamic tourism supply in the territory where they are based through a series of activities linked to wine-producing culture. Thus, a "wine route allows the tourist to engage with the diversity of the natural and cultural features of the landscape" (Bruwer 2003, p.424).

The presence of a wine route is suggested by road signs, information kiosks, brochures, leaflets and events, which become the visible side of their activity, reinforcing their presence, legitimising their social value (Brunori & Rosi 2000), and therefore attaining a higher dynamic profile in the network they belong to.

The notion of a circumscribed or designated territory (vineyard quality wine or appellation contrôlée) is an essential notion, intrinsic to the operation of a wine route. This is the essential criteria to admit potential members for such a route. Through it emanates also the concept of identity and cultural heritage, which is their trademark (Bruwer 2003).

Thus, when a wine route is linked to a territory, it will potentially work as a connecting link between the interesting elements associated with the wine landscape. Indeed, for any route to operate there is an objective of articulating the whole region to create a value-added to the original wine activity around its main tourism attraction: the wine. Each farm, vineyard or route associate can be considered as a link between the tourist and its associated tourist network since none of them separately can offer all services and goods that the tourist requires during his/her stay in the region (Brunori & Rosi 2000).

A wine route is capable of articulating multiple attributes, creating in this manner a portrait of the territory, as the tourist will see it, without fragmentation or administrative divisions. Even if the route in itself is subject to multiple divisions and administrative patching with the corresponding defragmentation, irresponsibleness and non-attractiveness for a global tourism product; establishing a wine route gives a unifying character. This eventuates around the tourism interests linked to wine, and as we have seen, they can be multiple but will become undistinguished and will offer an articulated network favourable to the supply of a whole tourism package.

2.1. Collective Action in the Wine Routes

One route can never affirm itself by any number of its elements; its reputation and global image as well as the value of its trademark is part and parcel of all its components who are responsible for it.

However, this network will have a critical mass responsible for its structuring and maintenance. It is only normal that every member contributes in an unequal manner to the network created around such route. It is essential that various regional elements not directly linked to the route, but with an interest in the product developed by this route (infrastructures, hospitality, safety, cultural entities, etc.), take part and belong to such critical mass since that will warrant the participation of all elements required for its success.

Establishing routes is obviously one of the best ways for a congregated work between government instrumentalities, local associations and private enterprise, enabling the local population to identify easily. It propels and creates dynamics in the wine-producing industry always identified as a major employer in the regions where such routes can be created.

As far as the relationship between tourists and the route operators is concerned "the Route product can be considered as the result of collective action of both a material and immaterial nature, and this result is capitalised in a collective immaterial resource, that of the reputation, linked to the name of the Route, the territory or the product." (Arfini et al. 2002, p.7).

The quality and global appreciation of this tourism product being developed around a route is not subject to or capable of being dominated by any specific intervenient. The "creation of a tourist experience around a wine route is not simply the sum of the outputs from individual farms" (Brunori & Rosi 2000, p.411), but a global vision of a reality naturally indivisible. The integration of associates, the sharing of values, the demands for a certain level of quality, will create coherence at all product levels but will be hostage to the establishment of a collective action.

This cohesion can be postponed because wine producers must adhere to a common set of rules or norms that may enable levels of demand, dynamism, communication and dissemination compatible with the values demanded by the market. Obviously, matters not postponed by norms such as sensitivity towards quality, recognition of the importance of landscape preservation, tradition maintenance, capacity of interaction and collaboration between wine producers cannot be disregarded or taken lightly since they can make or break the route's success (Brunori & Rosi 2000).

Indeed, according to (Arfini et al. 2002) the support or existence of legislation, a proper territory, quality wine, or even the presence of infrastructures and quality producers are not by themselves the key to success. What may become essential for achieving a successful route are the capacity and the will of all intervening parties to interact between them in order to create a true network capable of bettering and enriching all the productive system where the route takes place.

This cooperation and territory's articulation around a structured wine-producing culture network may be decisive to become differentiated in relation to other territories. It may be capable of creating a sustainable value for itself since in this manner "places compete on the basis of what makes them unique rather than simply competing on the basis of price for the mass tourist" Hall and Mitchell (2000, p.461), what may be volatile and counterproductive.

2.2. The routes' impact on territory's development

The product resulting from the route must have a sustained growth based upon a vast array of local products and the presence of historical elements, cultural and natural attractions, coupled by a high degree of services. These factors once articulated must give a unique character to the route making it unparalleled (Arfini et al. 2002).

According to those authors once there is a route, one can use available information in an articulate manner regarding territory's value in all its dimensions, including legislative, organisational and human aspects that are jointly integrated, thus appreciating the territorial system and products offered or produced there.

As a matter of fact "once wine routes are successfully established, they create new markets, defined by new products and customers patterns. These extend the product definition to all local goods and services related to wine and its territory rather than confining it to wine alone. In doing so, routes focus on actual and potential tourists as customers rather than merely as wine consumers" (Brunori & Rosi 2000, p.410).

Tourists who visit a wine route have at their disposal a vast array of experiences. They may visit farms and vineyards, wine tasting, visiting enotecs and museums, sleep in a farm, enjoy regional gastronomy, admiring the landscape and the cultural heritage, buying regional quality products (Brunori & Rosi 2000). This may enable a great micro-business fabric, which will help uphold the cultural legacy, and the socioeconomic fabric of local inhabitants so characteristic and differentiate.

We can thus observe that the potential for economic development associate to a route can be enormous, since "from the moment it is created and starts to work as an "engine" for development, the wine route is recognized by its members, non-members, tourists and other interested actors as acting and "speaking for" the territory. The wine route fixes a development repertory into a strategic hegemony", (Brunori & Rosi 2000, p.421). This strategy is conditioned to an understanding of its articulations and the promotion of interacting between their members in order to provide a dynamic tourist offer in the territory.

7. Conclusion

This study has focused on wine routes as a preferential wine tourism tool based upon the structuring of a coherent product and the collective action in order to enable and promote its correct work. Indeed the dynamics of the route results mainly from the collective thought and the need for cooperation to create a structure between multiple partners. This led to a coherent and integrated product

that became attractive to the tourist and produced a value-added to the wine producer.

It was also observed the effect of wine routes in multiple socioeconomic dimensions as an essential tool for regional promotion. As such, these movements must be understood as sustained policies for territorial development.

Implicitly from this article, arise some suggestions for future study such as:

The development of a conceptual model, to capture and measure the wine routes' impact in the territorial development, facilitating the establishment of an efficient territorial management policy.

The understanding of the wine routes as essential interorganisational networks and the key factors that drive or hassle the joint involvement of the different actors involved in it.

The comparison and analysis of different wine routes' dynamics, in time and space, in order to perceive the influence of specific factors on such dynamics.

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