AN EXPLORATORY ANALYSIS OF WINERIES WEBSITES FUNCTIONALITY: THE CASE OF THE DOQ PRIORAT ROUTE-WINERIES

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ABSTRACT

Wine tourism has emerged as a branch of special interest tourism in recent years. There are numerous wine regions where tourism is used as a strategic tool to promote rural areas and increase competitiveness. Likewise, the Internet has become an extremely useful marketing tool to promote and disseminate tourism products. The aim of this paper is to analyze the usability of DOQ Priorat Route wineries websites. The paper examines the presence of wineries members of the route on the Internet and the quality of their websites, taking various elements into consideration: information relating to the company, information relating to the website usability and information relating to the wine tourism products and activities developed. Findings reveal the restricted presence of this wineries on Internet, the low tourism usability of their websites as a marketing tool, and the lack of real commitment to the Priorat Wine Route and to wine tourism.

Keywords: wine tourism, wine routes, websites, wineries.

RESUMEN

El enoturismo se ha convertido en una rama de turismo de especial interes en los últimos años. Existen numerosas regiones donde el enoturismo se utiliza como una herramienta estratégica para promover zonas rurales y aumentar su competitividad. Así mismo, Internet se ha convertido en una herramienta de marketing muy útil en la promoción y difusión

de productos turísticos. El objetivo de este trabajo es analizar la usabilidad de las páginas web, entendidas como una herramienta de marketing, de las bodegas de la Ruta del Vino del Priorat en Cataluña. El documento analiza la presencia de las bodegas, miembros de la ruta del vino Priorat, en Internet y la calidad de sus sitios web, teniendo en cuenta varios elementos: información relativa a la empresa, información relativa a la usabilidad web, información relativa a la promoción del enoturismo y de la ruta del vino. Los resultados demuestan la escasa presencia en la red de estas bodegas, la poca funionalidad de las páginas web como instrumento de promoción, la escasa implicación real con la ruta del vino, y en general con la práctica del enoturismo.

Palabras clave: enoturismo, rutas del vino, sitio web, bodega.

I. INTRODUCTION

Numerous regions with agriculture-based economies require tools for developing and managing their resources in order to obtain additional revenue to that earned from their main business activity, such as wine tourism.

Wine tourism has been developed by many wine regions around the world as a strategic means of increasing competitiveness of rural areas with wine industries (vineyards, producers, etc.). Wine tourism can be considered as a form of special-interest tourism (Hall 1998) and includes a range of activities such as visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine shows (Hall 1996); these activities are often linked by means of a wine route. In essence, a wine route is created by the wine-producers themselves and stresses the particular attributes of the grapes and wines they produce (Bruwer 2003). Routes construct one (or several) «paths» that highlight the value of the region's resources and therefore have the capacity to strengthen areas which are particularly sensitive, invisible, secondary, or peripheral. Routes may even be linked to one specific economic activity of the region (gastronomy, crafts, industrial activity, etc.). Naturally, this also means that any route must be based on a series of strategic decisions regarding the identity and objectives of the tourism region or regions where the activity is situated. In summary, the design of a route needs to take both its geography and resources into consideration; these constitute basic tools for territorial management and planning. Many wine regions around the world (Canada, France, Germany, Australia, United-States, South Africa and Spain) have indeed opted for developing routes for tourists as a strategy for complementing their main business activity: wine production. In this context, the Internet has become a basic tool for both management and promotion of this type of activity, becoming a powerful communication and distribution tool for disseminating information about any kind of tourism products and destinations, and wine tourism is an example of this (Amaro, Barroco, and Antunes, 2010).

Carlsen (2004) identifies four areas in the study of wine tourism: (a) consumer studies of wine tourists, (b) potential benefits and costs of wine tourism, (c) wine tourism strategies; and (d) wine products such as wine routes, wine regions, wine festivals and events. In this context, Getz (2000) believes that one of the main lines of research in wine tourism needs to be the study of effectiveness of marketing, as well as other factors that condition the success of wineries and destinations.

Considering this background, the aim of this paper is to analyze the use of websites as a tool for aiding wine route promotion. We take the particular case of the Designation of Origin & Quality (DOQ) Priorat route, located in a leading wine region in Catalonia (Spain). The route is promoted by the Priorat Tourism Board and includes 25 wineries. In recent years, the demand for wine tourism in the DOQ Priorat region has experienced a significant increase, rising from 5,400 visitors to 9 wineries in 2006 to 15,800 visitors to 25 wineries in 2011.

The paper is organized as follows. Firstly, we provide a literature review focusing on wine tourism and Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in tourism, specifically websites analyses. The methodology used to carry out the exploratory research is then presented, followed by the research results. Finally, the main results and managerial implications are discussed in the conclusions.

II. LITERTURE REVIEW

II.1. Wine tourism

Wine tourism and the active development and marketing of the wine tourism product is a relatively recent phenomenon (Bruwer 2003: 423). Over the past decade, numerous academics have attempted to define and analyze this new form of tourism (Bruwer 2003; Hall 1996; Getz 1998; Charters and Ali-Knight 2002).

Hall and Macionis (1998: 267) stated that wine tourism can be understood as special-interest tourism, and defined it as activities associated with «visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors». Charteers and Ali-Knight (2002) look at the wine tourism experience from a broader perspective, and consider it can be offered in a number of different ways. For example, events and festivals, cultural heritage, dining, hospitality, education, tasting and cellar door sales, and winery tours. In this context, «wine tourism is, simultaneously a form of consumer behaviour, a strategy by which destinations develop and market wine-related attractions and imagery, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to educate, and to sell their products, directly to consumers» (Getz 2000).

Considering the growing tourist interest in activities related to wine, numerous wine regions have identified this situation as a strategic opportunity to increase competitiveness of their wine industry, creating a connection between tourism and wine sectors. In this context, a destination plan and a well-defined marketing strategy are needed (Getz, Dowling, Carlsen, and Anderson 1999), particularly because numerous regions are now aggressively marketing to attract high-yield tourists (Getz and Brown 2006).

One of the common strategies in defining territorial identity and emphasizing unique attributes is the creation of a wine route, which is created by wine-producers and highlights the particular attributes of the grapes and wine they produce (Bruwer 2003). «Wine routes are characterized by a bounded space in the form of an often officially demarcated wine region or geographical indication (GI) that has an identity in the form of a (branded) descriptive name» (Bruwer 2003: 424). This involves a high level of coordination and cooperation between the agents participating in the wine route: wine producers, destination marketing organizations (DMO) and the tourism sector (hotels, restaurants, attractions, etc.) in order to create a satisfac-

tory and attractive product for consumers. Although the DMO is usually the institution responsible for marketing the destination, the role of other agents (wine producers and the tourism sector) is essential in guaranteeing that the tourism product is successfully consumed by tourists.

II.2. Information and Communication technologies in tourism

Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have evolved radically in recent decades. Buhalis (2003) identifies four main eras of technological evolution: the data processing era (1960s), the management information systems era (1970s), the strategic information system era (1980s) and the network era (1990s onwards). According to Buhalis (2003), the network era allowed the proliferation of intra and inter-organizational networking, including the Internet, intranets and extranets, which have revolutionized communication. Nowadays «ICTs are used as indispensable tools for almost all business functions […]. Therefore, ICTs have been driving the globalization and re-engineering of most business processes and practices» (Buhalis 2003: 12-13).

The tourism sector has changed dramatically with the evolution of ICTs and particularly the Internet (Ho and Lee 2007). Namely, there has been a profound change in distribution channels and the emergence of new tourist services and products, as well as information sources for tourists, leading to changes in consumer behaviour. In summary, the Internet has become a valuable tool for both suppliers and consumers in the dissemination and communication of information, and for online purchasing (Law et al, 2010).

When it comes to guaranteeing the effectiveness of websites as a communication tool, Morrison et al. (2004: 234) mention that «website evaluations are needed to facilitate continuous improvements as well as to judge site performance against competitors and industry peers». Recently, Morrison et al (2004) and Law et al. (2010) have published a review of website evaluations, considering 20 and 75 published articles, respectively. Morrison et al (2004) determine that content analysis is the most common method for analyzing websites, whereas Law et al. (2010) examine characteristics of content analysis in previous studies, concluding that evaluation methods are based on the following: counting, user judgement, automated, numerical computation, and combined methods.

In general, no common agreement exists on which elements to consider in website evaluation, or on standards or techniques (Law et al. 2010), as the field is still at an early stage of development (Law et al. 2010). One proposal, by Morrison et al. (1999), suggests four areas: technical, marketing, internal, and customer, whereas other authors consider aspects such as website design (Perdue 2001; Lu et al. 2002), information quality (Jeong and Lambert 2001), and website performance (Murphy et al. 1996), among others.

III. METHODOLOGY

This article analyzes the content of 21 active websites belonging to members of the Priorat Wine Route, employing various indicators to examine their presence on the Internet and the quality of their websites. The route is promoted by the Priorat Tourism Board and includes 25 wineries. The information obtained from the analysis allows us to prescribe some recommendations for improving the wine route.

The research was conducted during the months of October and November 2011 and is based on three types of indicators (see Table 2). These indicators give us access to a complete analysis of the internet strategies the wineries use, as well as how ITC is used and its implications for the Priorat wine route.

III.1. Study site

As mentioned above, the setting for the study is the DOQ Priorat region. The DOQ (Designation of Origin and Quality) Priorat label recognizes the quality and singularity of Priorat wines and was awarded DOQ status by the Catalan Government on 18th December 2000. Priorat is one of the Spanish wine regions recognized internationally and is located in Catalonia.

Table 1
DOQ ROUTE MEMBER DETAILS

Id.	DOQ Route member	Website
1	Devinssi	http://devinssi.com/es
2	Agnès de Cervera	http://www.agnesdecervera.com
3	Clos Berenguer	http://www.closberenguer.com/
4	Cal Pla	http://www.cellercalpla.com/
5	Buil&Giné	http://www.builgine.com/
6	Joan Simó	Unavailable
7	La Conreria	http://www.scaladei.org/
8	Masia Duch	http://www.masiaduch.com/
9	Joan Ametller	http://www.ametller.com/
10	Celler Els Cups	Unavailable
11	La Vinícola del Priorat	http://www.vinicoladelpriorat.com/
12	Domini de la Cartoixa	http://www.closgalena.com/
13	Celler Cecilio	http://www.cellercecilio.com
14	Celler Mas Blanc-Pinord	http://www.pinord.com/
15	Cellers Capafons-Ossó	http://www.capafons-osso.com/
16	Celler Gratavinum	http://www.gratavinum.com/
17	Celler de Scala Dei	Unavailable
18	Ferrer Bobet	http://www.ferrerbobet.com/
19	Clos Dominic	Unavailable
20	Celler Sangenís i Vaqueé	http://www.sangenisivaque.com/
21	Clos Figueras	http://www.closfigueras.com/
22	Celler Burgos-Porta	Unavailable
23	Celler Pasanau	http://www.cellerpasanau.com/
24	Torres Priorat	http://www.torres.es/
25	Celler Ripoll Sans	http://www.closabatllet.com

Two years after the region's wines were awarded DOQ status, the Priorat Tourism Board promoted the creation of a wine route for the region: the DOQ Priorat Wine Route, with a dual objective: (a) to promote the designation of origin (DO), and (b) to create a new product linked to wine tourism that would allow promotion of tourism in the region and particularly the wineries (which, thanks to the route obtain a source of extra revenue in addition to their main activity - wine production -). The DOQ Priorat Wine Route (www.turismepriorat.org/ca/que-fer/ruta-dels-cellers) includes two designations of origin: Priorat and Montsant. A total of 25 DOQ Priorat wineries became members of the route, only a quarter of the wineries in the region. Our analysis focuses on these 25 DOQ Priorat wineries.

III.2. Study method

The research methodology focused on analyzing the content of the wineries' websites. This information was compared with that provided by the Priorat Tourism Board for the route.

Data was gathered for 22 different items, and based on three types of complementary data, following the method set out by various authors, such as Amaro, Barroco, and Antures (2010); Begalli, Codurri, and Gaeta (2008); Bruwer (2003); Doolin et al. (2002); Mills and Morrison (2003); Morrison et al. (1999); Pérez-Bustamante (2010); Velikova, Wilcox, and Dood (2011). The 22 items selected for evaluation were classified in three categories:

(a) Information relating to the company, its product and the route. This section included aspects such as availability of the information in different languages, contact information, map location, company history, wine information, wine-selling, newsletter, awards received, pictures and videos, ethical issues, use of social networks and route references.

(b) Information relating to the usability of the website, particularly the browser-friendliness of the site, whether it had a return button and a search engine and whether the website map is visible.

(c) Information related to the winery's promotion of its immediate tourism environment and its capacity to create tourism products. That is, we were interested in determining the relationship wineries have with local tourism. In this respect, data was collected on tourist information available on each of the company's websites, links to the Tourism Information Board, links to accommodation, restaurants, tourism attractions, links to other route partners, and, finally, information regarding the tourism products created by the winery.

Each winery website was evaluated twice by two different evaluators, who worked firstly independently and then together to compare results. For validation purposes, any inconsistencies in the evaluation were reevaluated and corrected (Kassarjian 1977).

Table 2
ANALYSED ITEMS

Item	Amaro et al. (2010)	Begalli et al (2008)	Bruwer (2003)	Doolin et al. (2002)	Mills & Morrison (2003)	Morrison et al. (1999)	Pérez-Bustamante (2010)	Velikova et al. (2011)
Indicators related to business information, tourist product and the wine route								
Wine route references	x							
Languages used on websites	x	x		x		x		
Contact details (address, telephone, e-mail, fax and contact form)	x			x		x	x	x
Location map						x		
Company history	x			x				x
Wine information (product)	x	x		x				x
On-line wine selling	x	x						x
Newsletters	x			x				x
Awards and distinctions received	x					x	x	
Photo galleries & videos	x			x		x		
Ethical issues	x							
Social network use	x						x	x
Activities in wineries		x	x	x				x
Items included in the tourist activities		x	x					x
Opening times and the need to book in advance								x
Indicators related to website usability								
Browser-friendliness		x			x	x		x
Site map		x		x		x		x
Search engine		x		x	x	x		
Return button						x		x
Indicators related to tourism in the region								
Information provided about the destination	x			x		x	x	
Links to other member partners	x		x		x	x	x	x
Tourism information provided	x			x			x	

Note: Additionally, there were also considered other three items: tour price, group size and language use on guided tours.

IV. RESULTS

The results obtained show members' strengths and weaknesses when it comes to Internet marketing strategy, and that successful winery websites can positively influence customer perception (Nowak and Newton 2008; Velikova et al. 2011). However, the results demonstrate passiveness by the wineries in this area. In fact, most of the empirical studies focused on winery website evaluation, i.e. Stevens and Burns (2005) in New Zealand, Velikova et al. (2011) in United States, or Amaro et al. (2010) in Portugal, agree on the need for wineries to utilize the web better.

The first result we found surprising was the low number of wineries affiliated to the route, a quarter of the total, despite free membership. As mentioned, the Priorat Tourism Board is the organization responsible for developing and promoting the DOQ Wine Route, meaning that member wineries have no additional work to do. This lack of interest is explained by the fact that the wineries consider tourism to be secondary to their main activity and even of very little importance; they do not regard it as part of their work.

Of the 25 DOQ Priorat member wineries on the route, 80% have an active website. This is consistent with previous studies such as Getz and Brown (2006), who found in their study of Okanagen Valley (Canada) that 87% of analysed wineries had their own website. Although in the case of DAO Wine Route in Portugal, Amaro et al. (2010) identified a relatively lower presence on internet (73%).

Even though the majority of the wineries analyzed have their own website, none of them indicated that they are a participating member of the DOQ Priorat Wine Route. In fact, no references were found to the wine route on any of the websites analyzed. This clearly shows the wineries' lack of interest in promoting the DOQ Priorat Wine Route, and lends credence to the idea that as an activity, tourism is very much of secondary importance for them. Moreover, only 25% of the wineries refer to the possibility of visiting their facilities or that there are activities for visitors. This contrasts with information appearing on the DOQ Priorat Wine Route website, which states that it is possible to visit most of the wineries and includes more detailed information about tourism activities that can be done at member wineries, as we shall explain later in this paper.

IV.1. Languages used on websites

The fact that the information on the website is in different languages demonstrates an interest in reaching international markets (Doolin et al. 2002; Pérez-Bustamante 2010). Of the 20 wineries with an active website, 15% only have the information in Catalan or Spanish (official state languages); by contrast, most, or 85%, offer information in other languages.

Of this 85% of websites in other languages, 70% (14 companies) provide information in English in addition to Catalan and Spanish; the remaining 15% are more dynamic companies which offer information in four or more languages (adding French and/or German). There is a surprising lack of French, given that France is one of the most important wine markets in Europe (Hall and Sharples, 2000). It is also one of the European countries with the highest number of wine tourists (Amaro et al., 2010) and is on the border of the region studied.

Even so, the situation of the DOQ Priorat members is relatively good in this respect, considering that in other cases, such as that studied by Amaro et al. (2010), only 47% of the wineries had foreign languages on their websites. Those who did not, claimed that translation and website maintainence costs would be too high.

In any case, having the website available in other languages is essential for members wanting to attract the international market. However, it is evident that only English is commonly used as a foreign language, when other very important languages in the wine tourism market (such as French) have almost no presence.

IV.2. Contact details & Location map

In order to strengthen relationships with the sector and particularly potential tourists and consumers, information must be provided on how to contact the company: address, telephone, fax, mail, or contact form. It is also appropriate to provide information on how to get there.

Coinciding with previous studies (Amaro et al. 2010; Velikova et al. 2011) all members provide some type of contact information. In most cases (90%) this is the telephone number and address; 85% provide the fax number; and 85% also provide an e-mail address (probably the most convenient instrument). In some cases, 45% in total, provide a form for consumers to contact the company.

With regard to location, 70% provide a map on their website, while 30% do not. Surprisingly, one member had a link to a location map but did not have it activated.

Table 3
CONTACT DETAILS

Item	n	%
Address	18	90
Telephone	18	90
e-mail	17	85
Fax	16	85
Contact form	9	45

IV.3. Company history and Information about wine

Websites give information about the company and its products (Charters and Ali-Knights 2002; Amaro et al. 2010). According to Charters & Ali-Knights (2002) wine-tourists feel it is important to have access to information on how wine is produced.

Most of the members (90%) provide detailed information about the wines they produce, such as the types of grapes used, the production process, tasting, and so on. 85% of the wineries also provide information regarding company's history. In some cases, the year of start-up, or the company's founders, the growth of the company, the vineyards, etc.

In fact, analysis of these two sections clearly demonstrates that the companies are highly concerned with selling their wines (information is very precise and well-publicized, in this respect) but have very little interest in selling other products associated with wine production (guided visits, tasting, courses, wine tourism activities or tourism in the surrounding area), as there is practically no information on this.

IV.4. On-line wine sales

Online wine sales can be a useful tool for a company as it gives customers an opportunity to buy its products. Bernet and Stricker (2001) consider that wine is suited to online sales, as the difference between wines from the different wineries is high and also because websites provide detailed information about the product. Lockshin (2000), also believes that wine is perfectly suited to online sales, as customers can look for unique wines and compare prices. However, even though is seems that every winery ought to be interested in selling its products online (if it has a website), only 30% of them offer this service. That is, 70% of the companies do not sell their product through their website. According to Begalli et al. (2008) large companies have adapted to e-business quicker than smaller ones, considering that most of the wineries in the DOQ Priorat are family businesses, this is an expected consequence.

We can conclude that most of the wineries analyzed do not make sufficient use of their website as a marketing tool, to their own detriment. Once again, this demonstrates the very static nature of the websites.

Other studies, such as the one carried out in Portugal by Amaro et al. (2010), or in the USA by Velikova et al. (2011) have come to the same conclusion.

IV.5. Newsletters

The club member's online newsletter publishes information, announcements, reminders, advice, instructions, advertising, and communication.

One of the advantatges of newsletters is that the winery can reach a wide audience at very little cost, promoting business and providing updated information to potential and interested subscribers (Amaro, et al. 2010). Also, by featuring newletters or wine clubs on their websites, wineries endeavour to build club membership beyond the traditional face-to-face opportunites (Velikova et al. 2011).

We found that only four members (20%) give website users the opportunity to sign up for newsletters or a club newlsetter. A similar result is given in the Amaro et al. (2010) study of the Dao Wine Route (Portugal).

IV.6. Awards received and distinctions

In addition, 50% of members' websites mention awards or distinctions attributed to their wine. This information is very relevant, as it demonstrates the quality of the product the winery is producing and hoping to sell on its website (Amaro et al. 2010).

In contrast to other items analyzed in this study, we see that most companies are proud of this and feel it is important to tell customers of their achievements.

We are unaware of whether the remaining 50% of wineries that do not mention awards or distinctions do not do so because they do not have any, or because they have omitted this information from the website, which would be of more concern.

IV.7. Photo galleries and videos

Photo and video galleries are available for website users to view pictures of what the site wishes to sell and communicate. Pictures and videos on websites are an effective marketing technique as they add visual appeal; they make the site lively; and they show the company, its products and services, therefore making them more attractive and understandable, among other things.

Regarding photo galleries, 55% of the companies had a link on their websites to photographs of the vineyards, wine cellars, warehouses, wines, production process or services offered. With regard to videos, only one member (5%) had a YouTube video on its website. The video presented the vineyard, as well as some reports on the winery, in various languages.

IV.8. Ethical issues

We only found information on ethical issues on three of the websites (15%). In this respect, the information mainly refers to issues of environmental sustainability. In fact, two of the wineries refer to their respect for the environment. The other winery refers to responsible wine consumption and drinking in moderation, even providing a link to the European programme wineinmoderation.eu (http://www.wineinmoderation.eu/). This particular winery is the largest in the Priorat region (Torres Priorat).

IV.9. Social network use

Recent growth in social networks (Facebook, Twitter, Linkedin, MySpace, etc.) demonstrates that today this is an essential social communication tool (Kim, Jeong, and Lee 2010). Among other aspects, social networks provide greater opportunities for forming relationships; they offer greater interaction and visualization of relationships; they simultaneously offer communication, integration within communities and co-operation; and they reach a much larger and more diverse audience, than traditional distribution systems (Sweeny 2005).

We were therefore surprised to find that only 20% of DOQ Priorat members use social networks, with Facebook being the most common (15% had a Facebook link on their homepage). In the study carried out by Velikova et al. (2011) in Texas, the authors conclude that despite the popularity of social media, few wineries know how it can help them and how to exploit it (Velikova et al. 2011).

IV.10. Website usability

Websites should be user-friendly so that users can easily navigate with no difficulties (Kim and Fesenmaier, 2008). In order to determine the usability of each member's website, we analyzed three different aspects, according to Miranda and Bañefil (2004) and Pérez-Bustamante (2010). These are browser-friendliness, site map, search engine and return button.

As already mentioned, most of the websites are very static, very simple to use and have very basic information; which makes them very user-friendly. From our analysis we found that 85% of sites are browser-friendly, with only 15% having some type of problem or difficulty when searching for information. In fact, this ease of use clearly justifies only 15% having a site map and 20% a return button.

The most negative aspect regarding usability is that only 20% have a search engine. We consider this relevant, as this allows the user to search for information regarding a subject of interest while browsing the winery's website.

IV.11. Information provided on the DOQ Priorat Wine Route

None of the members provide information regarding the Priorat Wine Route. This was the most surprising finding of the study, as mentioned above. What we have determined from this study is that although the Priorat Tourism Board (responsible for the DOQ Wine Route) handles the tasks of promoting and managing the route for member wineries free of charge, the wineries themselves, who have most to gain from the product's success, do not even refer to its existence on their websites.

IV.12. Links to other member partners

Amaro et al. (2010). establish that links to other partners and the wine route, would reinforce the company's reputation and network reliability. However, none of the members provide links to other members' websites and only a few (10%) have a link to the website of the DOQ Priorat Designation of Origin Regulatory Board (http://www.doqpriorat.org/). The DOQ Priorat certifies registration of companies, wine producers and vineyards, and classifies products obtained from the vine and the wineries (grapes and the wine itself).

IV.13. Tourism information provided

To check if wineries see themselves as a local tourist attraction, we analyzed if the tourist information on their websites included links to local attractions, accommodation, and restaurants. With the exception of Torres Winery, none of the members offer tourist information about the local area. In fact, Torres has a link called «Places of interest nearby», which explains the history and surroundings of Siurana (the village near the winery). There is also a link to the Priorat Tourism website, and one called «Leisure and Tourism», which provides information about accommodation, gastronomy, leisure and nature in the region. Here again we find evidence of a lack of interest and professionalism in tourism by the wineries on the DOQ Priorat Wine Route. Dodd and Beverland (2001),

in their model of wine tourism life-cycle recognise this, along with the difficulties found where the two industries overlap due to the micro economic differencesbetween them.

IV.14. Activities

In this paper we also analyzed tourism activities organized by wineries, highlighting guided tours. Note that only 28% of the wineries analyzed provide information on guided tours or other activities offered to visitors on their website. However, on the Priorat Tourism Board website, all wineries (with the exception of Joan Ametller) state they organize guided tours (96%), either with or without a reservation. In order to analyze the characteristics of the tourism product offered in more depth, we considered the following aspects: (a) items included in the product, (b) opening times and the need to book in advance, (c) prices, (d) minimum and maximum number of people per group, and (e) language used on guided tours.

In general, all guided tours include visiting the winery and the vineyards and wine tasting (see table 4). However, 16% of wineries do not provide information about whether it is possible to visit the vineyards and 8% do not offer this service. At a few wineries (28%) there are other products available, which are associated with guided tours: art exhibitions, audiovisuals, green shops, museums, wine tasting courses, and so on. These results are congruent with previous wine tourism studies, where guided tours, wine tasting and cellar-door sales are the main activity offered to visitors (Bruwer 2003; Getz and Brown 2006). However, Bruwer (2003) demonstrates that South African wine routes have an active wine tourism market, where a number of complementary facilities are offered to visitors, such as restaurants, picnic facilities, conference facilities, cellar lunches, horse/pony rides, and so on.

Regarding opening times, we find a variety of schedules, with little overlap. These are generally mornings and/or afternoons, seven days a week, although this varies significantly between wineries. We found that 48% of wineries require advance booking on specific days (e.g. the weekend), in particular periods of the year, 40% of wineries always require advance booking, and only 12% of wineries have fixed opening times throughout the year with no need to book. We stress that the need to book in advance during the harvest season (September and October) is common to almost all wineries. One exceptional case is the Joan Simó winery, which is open every afternoon during the harvest, while the rest of the year visits must be booked in advance.

Tour prices vary between the various wineries, ranging between €6 and €10, However, 12% of wineries offer free visits. Only 8% of wineries discriminate on entrance fees according to age, offering reduced prices or free admission for minors. Additionally, some wineries (16%) specify different prices depending on the tourist activity undertaken, for example, whether vineyard visits or wine tasting.

With reference to the minimum and maximum number of people per group, almost all wineries admit individuals or small groups two although we did detect a case where a admission was limited to groups of four minimum.The maximum number of people per group is more variable, ranging from 20 to 30 people. We also identified some extreme cases that admit groups of up to 300 people, or very small group maximums of 8 or 10 people. Restrictions to maximum number of visitors per tour is not unusual, this is validated in other studies (Getz and Brown 2006).

Regarding the languages offered on guided tours, we observed that all of the wineries have guided tours in Catalan and Spanish, followed by English (84%) and French (28%). Finally, some wineries also offer guided tours in other languages such as German, Russian or Czech. While it is true that linguistic requirements are met on most guided tours, it is worth noting that 36% of the wineries mention that guided tours in foreign languages require advance booking.

Table 4
ITEMS RELATED TO ACTIVITIES OFFERED

Activities	n	%
Type of activities		
Guided tours	24	96
Visit the winery	24	96
Visit vineyards	23	92
Wine tasting	24	96
Cellar-door sales	24	96
Other activities	7	28
No visitors received	1	4
Advanced booking		
Fixed opening times	3	12
Always	11	40
Some days a week/period of year	12	48
Prices		
Paying visitors	21	86
Free visits	3	12
Price reduction (age)	2	8
Price depending on activities	4	16
Minimum size of groups		
Min. 1 pax	12	50
Min. 2 pax	11	46
Min. 4 pax	1	4
Languages		
Catalan	24	100
Spanish	24	100
English	21	84
French	7	28
German	4	16
Other languages	4	16

N=24, considering that no visitors are admited to one winery.

An analysis of the Priorat Tourism Board website leads us to conclude that almost all of the wineries associated with the DOQ Priorat Wine Route do make an effort to develop and manage a wine tourism product. However, we detected three aspects that demonstrate how, in reality many of the wineries consider tourism activities as a secondary issue. Firstly, only 25% of wineries mention tourism activities on their website. Secondly, comparing the information on these websites and that of the Priorat Tourism Board, inalmost all cases there is a failure to update and/or coordinate the information provided. Finally, as we mentioned above, very few wineries are ready for visitors on a daily basis without booking in advance, therefore, visitors need to plan their route and book the wineries they want to visit in a priori.

V. CONCLUSIONS

Some regions with agriculture-based economies require tools, such as wine tourism, for developing and managing their resources in order to obtain additional revenue. The case of DOQ Priorat follows this dynamic. The Priorat Tourism Board has endeavoured to create a wine route that will boost the wine-growing industry in this Catalan region. However, a very low level of commitment has been detected on the part of the wineries themselves, both in the region as a whole and from the 25 members of the wine route. This study has examined the 25 websites of the route members, analyzing the use of websites as a tool in helping promote the DOQ Priorat wine route. Thus, this study contributes in the analysis of the use of a website as a strategic marketing tool for the promotion of wine tourism destinations and wineries, as outlined by Getz (2000).

The overall results demonstrate that most of the wineries have very static websites, offering the minimum amount of information, and without the visitor or the web administrator being able to or to interact with the website (for example, it is not possible to write comments, upload picture files, shop on-line, etc). This shows that most wineries do not understand the real potential of the internet as a marketing tool (promoting and selling products and services, attracting customer loyalty, building a client database, etc.).

Tourism products are generally underdeveloped and, in general, only based on visits to the winery, vineyards and wine tasting, and only with prior booking. Some wineries are beginning to introduce other products, but this, as yet, is not a widespread trend. There is a lack of real commitment to wine tourism on the part of the wineries, particularly those on the DOQ Priorat Wine route. Priorat wineries clearly do not yet see tourism as a source of real revenue or an opportunity to promote their products.

Dodd and Beverland (2001) outline five phases of development in wine tourism: winery establishment, winery recognition, regional proinence, maturity and tourism decline. As we can see, the present situation in the DOQ Priorat Wine route and its member's implication is typical of the first phase of the life cycle of wine tourism in this region. For this very reason, the Priorat Tourism Board needs to establish strategies which will allow it to move from «winery recognition» to «regional prominence». Strategies which incorporate new services into the tourism product, and alliances between wineries, tour operators, festival organizers and other tourism agents are established in order to create specialized packages, as seen in other, well established products such as in the Okanagan Valley (Getz and Brown 2006) or in South Africa (Bruwer 2003).

Finally, this study has concentrated on only one region in Catalonia (Spain), which means that the strategies observed in this particular region cannot be extended to the rest of the country, nor other world wine destinations. Nevertheless, we found indications that the strategies employed in this region indicate have similarities with other case studies in regions where wine tourism destination is in the initial stages of development, but differ from those used in mature destinations.

Future research should aim to compare this study with other studies from other wine regions in Catalonia or regions with similar characteristics to verify whether the results obtained in this exploratory study are valid for other areas. Another interesting line of research might take the visitor as the object of study, identifying visitor profiles and needs, and then comparing the results with other, previous, international studies conducted in this area (Ho and Lee 2007; Getz and Brown 2006; Charters and Ali-Knight 2002; Galloweay et al. 2008).

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