

## SWOT analysis of wine tourism development opportunities in the Trstenik vineyard district

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**Abstract:** Serbia is traditionally a wine-growing region and it is slowly approaching those countries that have benefited from the development of this type of tourism. The subject of this paper is the analysis of the Trstenik vineyard district, whose wine-growing areas, although within a small municipality in Central Serbia, are one of the largest in the country within the Three Morava Rivers region. The Trstenik vineyard district can take a chance and find its place in this specific tourism market. The aim of the paper is to present all the strengths and opportunities, but also the threats and weaknesses for the development of wine tourism in this wine district. This is presented through SWOT analysis. All the results could be used to make this municipality as wine tourism destination in Serbia.

**Keywords:** Trstenik vineyard district, wine tourism, vineyards, municipality Trstenik, tourism destination

**JEL classification:** Z30, Z32

## SWOT analiza mogućnosti za razvoj vinskog turizma u Trsteničkom vinogorju

**Sažetak:** Srbija je tradicionalno vinorodno područje i polako se približava onim zemljama koje su iskoristile veliku šansu u razvoju ove vrste turizma. Predmet rada je analiza Trsteničkog vinogorja koji je jedan od najvećih vinogradarskih regiona u zemlji u okviru rejona Tri Morave. Trsteničko vinogorje može iskoristiti svoju šansu i pozicionirati se na tržištu vinskog turizma. Cilj rada se odnosi na prikazivanje svih snaga i prilika, ali i pretnji i slabosti za razvijanje vinskog turizma u ovom vinogorju. Navedeno je predstavljeno pomoću SWOT analize. Svi dobijeni rezultati bi mogli biti iskorišćeni kako bi vinogorje postalo destinacija vinskog turizma.

**Ključne reči:** Trsteničko vinogorje, vinski turizam, vinogradi, opština Trstenik, turistička destinacija

**JEL klasifikacija:** Z30, Z32

### 1. Introduction

“Serbia, as a country with rich cultural and historical heritage and preserved natural resources, has comparative advantages for the development of different types of tourism” (Milovanović & Milićević, 2014, p. 39). In recent decades, tourists have shown a growing interest in visiting rural areas (Dimitrovski et al., 2019). Wine tourism, as an authentic,

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specific and original tourism product, occupies an increasingly important place both in the domain of tourist demand and in the domain of tourism offer (Vujko et al., 2017). Serbia has excellent conditions for the development of wine tourism, especially considering that it has cellars from 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries as well as newer ones, which are open for visitors. Furthermore, it has many wine events and accommodation capacities to support these events (National Tourism Organization of Serbia, 2019). Also, Serbia has adopted a trend of forming wine routes as an inseparable part of wine tourism (Milić et al., 2018). Serbia has 9 wine routes in total: Palić, Fruška Gora, Vršac, Šumadija, Smederevo-Belgrade, Negotin, Župa, Niš-Kragujevac and Kosovo and Metohija. The Trstenik vineyards with their own wineries belong to the Župa wine route.

The subject of this paper is the supply analysis of the Trstenik wine district which belongs to the municipality of the same name in central Serbia. The goal of this paper is to show that, through the SWOT strategic analysis, this small municipality has the potential to become famous for wine tourism. The development of wine tourism in this wine district would be a great stimulus for other wine districts, especially for those that are small and relatively unknown. In order for them to include this kind of tourism as their own tourist product, they should consider how it could have a good economic effect. The economic effects of tourism development in rural areas are primarily reflected in the employment opportunities for rural citizens and the provision of additional revenue, thereby increasing their living standard (Podovac et al., 2019).

Visiting wineries in the Trstenik area is an integral part of rural, excursion and sometimes even religious tourism. Sporadic individual tours of wineries are also common. However, by creating a complete tourist product dedicated exclusively to wine tourism, which would mean connecting all existing capacities and activating new ones, this wine district could offer a unique atmosphere for a specific type of tourists.

## **2. Literature overview**

Ever since tourism became a global phenomenon, in recent decades there have been evident changes in the tourist demand. “Classic destinations and travel motives are changing. A way is given to new, specific forms of tourism, which also include rural tourism” (Krejić et al., 2016, p. 602), as well as wine tourism. Wine tourism shows a great growth index on the tourism market (Chartes & Ali-Knight, 2000) and becomes very important for wine regions (Stein, 2010; Yüncü & Sevil, 2011). It is also among the increasingly popularizing types of special interest tourism (Erguven, 2015). Tourist travels, which include visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine exhibitions are all included in the wine tourism, whereby wine degustation and/or vineyard region attractions represent the primary motivation for these travels (Hall et al., 2000). Therefore, tourists go travelling primarily for wine degustation, to gain new knowledge about wine, learn how to combine wine and food, enjoy wine culture, enjoy rural areas, etc. “Beside those activities, wine tourists usually visit castles and farms and sometimes participate in agricultural activities (for example, pruning or grape picking), inspect wine cellars, etc.” (Dorofeeva et al., 2019, p. 1).

Wine tourism is of great importance for small wineries that have a possibility of a direct sale of wine in their own wine cellars (Milićević & Štetić, 2017). Amarando et al. (2019) consider that the development of wine tourism not only increases the chances of business success for direct participants in the chain, but also brings benefits for the local community. The suppliers of wine tourism can have crucial and determinant role in speed and quality of the development of wine tourism (Jurinčić & Bojnec, 2011). “It is important to create a positive climate by increasing interest of local people and businesses to be engaged in the development of this form of tourism” (Milićević & Petrović, 2017, p. 176). “To start a

development of this form of tourism, it is necessary to animate and educate local people, develop strategic plans at the local level, establish local working groups or groups for the development and marketing activities” (Jovanović & Milićević, 2014, p. 250). Croce and Perri (2011) indicate that wine tourism, besides food tourism, generates many opportunities, but it must be managed and organized in a responsible and sustainable way.

Even though wine tourism can be seen as special, that is, a specific form of tourism, Bruwer (2003) considers that wine tourism in individual areas and regions has become an integral part of rural tourism. “Rural tourism today represents an important factor of recovery and development of rural areas and is an important revenue generator for rural households” (Milićević et al., 2015, p. 752). The development of rural tourism increases the economic position and social activity of rural area citizens (Mandarić et al., 2017).

### **3. Characteristics of the Trstenik wine district as the basis for the development of wine tourism**

The Trstenik wine district, according to the official area division, belongs to the Three Morava Rivers region. The district borders coincide with the borders of the territory of the municipality. The wine district encompasses vineyards that are located in the mountainous terrain of the Trstenik area, on the left and right bank of the Zapadna Morava River. There are 2,211.72 hectares of vineyards, in other words 29.3% of the area is under vines (Jakšić et al., 2019).

The municipality of Trstenik has the largest area covered in vineyards in the country. Also, it is ranked third according to the area among the vineyards that are in the viticulture registry. For comparison, Vršac is ranked first with 1296.32 hectares, then Fruška Gora with 932.96 hectares and then Trstenik with 534.61 hectares (Jakšić et al., 2019).

2.928 households are in the viticulture business (Jakšić, 2016). The Trstenik wine district ranks third according to the area among the plantations of Merlot at the national level. It encompasses 50.17 hectares of vineyards. Cabernet Sauvignon vineyards cover a bit larger area of 54.12 hectares, and are ranked second at the level of whole of Serbia (just behind the Fruška Gora district). As for the autochthonous variety Prokupac, the Trstenik wine district ranks second with an area covering 28.8 hectares. The first place at the national level is held by the regional autochthonous variety Vranac with an area of 51.39 hectares (Jakšić, et al., 2019).

Prokupac was once quite widespread in wine districts Smederevo, Jagodina, and Župa and all the way to southern parts of Macedonia (Johnson, 1972). The Trstenik wine district was recognizable for this type of grapes. More precisely, already after 1946, it was characterized as the dominant variety (Stojanović, 1957). Trstenik becomes famous for its wine Trstenička Ružica which was a blend of red wine with the dominant Prokupac. It was being produced in the “Sloga” agricultural combine and was being featured on the wine lists of the most famous restaurants and hotels throughout the SFRY (Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia).

The presented data clearly show that this wine district is one the most important in the country. As for the production plants, that is wineries, there are only 5 registered ones. This is a small number compared to, for example, the neighbouring Župa wine district, which has as many as 56 registered wineries. Still, the Trstenik wine district is famous for a large number of households that produce wine in the traditional way for their own needs or for sale on the so-called “black market”. In the past, large Yugoslav wineries from Slovenia and Croatia were coming for Vranac and Prokupac in the vicinity of Trstenik. Favourable natural conditions for growing the grapes are shown in the fact that probably the only Belgrade winery (Škrbić winery) has its vineyards in the vicinity of Trstenik, in the villages of Mala

Drenova and Rujišnik, the so-called “Serbian Tuscany” as it is described on the winery’s website (Vinochicha, 2019). Perhaps it would be more appropriate to call the Levač hillside the “Serbian Bordeaux”, since Levač lies at one degree smaller latitude than the French Bordeaux (Simić, 2014).

Trstenik is still relatively unknown at fairs and wine salons, however, for more than 25 years, an event dedicated to Saint Tryphon, the protector of winemakers, has been held on February, 14<sup>th</sup>. The event is one of the rare events which are officially held. In addition to cutting the holy bread and honouring all the rituals associated with the Trstenik area, awards are given to the best small winemakers. The event is festive in nature, but it is also a competitive one because all the wine samples are evaluated in several categories. In addition to local participants, samples often come from nearby wine districts and in the recent years, samples have been coming from Vojvodina. In addition to traditional meals and wine degustation, there is a showroom for companies involved in viticulture, wine making and grafting. This event often involves organizing educational panels and lectures related to viticulture and winemaking, as well as opening exhibitions of paintings of museum exhibits dedicated to this theme.

Trstenik and the surrounding area are known as the only area which is in the grafting business. The tradition is 100 years old. This area supplied ex-SFRY and ex-Soviet Union with grape grafts. Revenues from grafting during the 70s and 80s were in millions of US dollars. Since the borders of both countries were drastically reduced, this has certainly led to a decline in production, but the Trstenik area and partly Kruševac area remain the only suppliers of vine grafts in the country. To honour vine grafts, the Grafting Fair is annually held in Velika Drenova, which is visited by businessmen and others involved in this production. For a couple of years now, groups of Russian business tourists sporadically come to visit, and their main motive is exclusively to visit vine graft nursery gardens, planting grounds, production facilities, wineries and distilleries around Trstenik. A cultural and historical sightseeing tour is included but as a secondary activity.

The existence of registered wineries, as well as exhibition spaces (museums, galleries) dedicated to wine making and viticulture as well as events is certainly a good basis for developing wine tourism. There is a small number of commercial wineries in this wine district. They are often visited by groups and excursions from nearby Vrnjačka Banja, as well as by other tourists visiting the Trstenik area. The positive fact is that there is a large number of households that are also involved in wine production but are not officially registered as producers and could, with some incentives, become empowered and join the official number of wineries or be engaged in some kind of rural or agricultural tourism with grapes and grapevines as their main products and activities around them.

#### **4. SWOT analysis as an indicator of opportunities for the development of wine tourism in the Trstenik wine district**

According to Čerović (2009, p. 226) SWOT analysis or its methodological frame is often used in strategic planning and management. The same author emphasizes that with the help of this analysis, it will be possible to identify a development behaviour of an organization or in this case destination in which chances and the opportunities are offered to this destination, and all weaknesses and threats during the development are minimized. The overview of the above analysis is listed, which discusses the Trstenik wine district and opportunities for the development of wine tourism.

**Key strengths of the Trstenik vineyard district for the development of wine tourism:**

- Trstenik has a long tradition in viticulture, winemaking and grafting;
- Excellent geographic position of the municipality and the wine district itself;
- Excellent traffic interconnectedness of the municipality and the wine district. Very favourable position in relation to soon to be Morava Corridor highway;
- Road infrastructure is of satisfactory quality (this refers to roads leading to production facilities - wineries), and to other natural and cultural attractions;
- Wineries from these wine districts are included in the Župa wine route;
- The heritage in the form of cultural and historical monuments nearby from various historical periods (numerous monasteries, monuments from newer history, etc.);
- Close to the most popular Serbian tourist centers: Vrnjačka Banja and Kopaonik;
- Trstenik organizes two events dedicated to this theme: Saint Tryphon day and Grafting Fair in Velika Drenova;
- Visits to wineries are included in other types of tourism (excursion, religious).

**Key weaknesses of the Trstenik vineyard district for the development of wine tourism:**

- The existence of only 5 commercial wineries compared to a great number of smaller family producers;
- Not having proper tourist signalization for all wineries;
- Total or partial unrecognizability of the Trstenik area as a vineyard area;
- Products are not branded enough;
- The lack of promotion and other marketing activities of Trstenik and the Trstenik wine district as a possible destination for wine tourism visitors;
- Insufficient awareness of all interested parties about the immediate strong effects that this type of tourism would bring to the whole region;
- Insufficient awareness of possible small wine makers about possibilities and benefits they would have if they changed their traditional production to the commercial one;
- Still the insufficient number of accommodation units or inadequate category of the existing ones.
- Insufficient education, training or any other programmes that would be available to all interested parties that would participate in wine tourism.

**Key possibilities of the Trstenik vineyard district for the development of wine tourism:**

- Development of a strong and systematic program for promoting the Trstenik wine district and wine tourism; Taking part in tourism fairs in the country and the region where wine tourism would be promoted as the central “product” and not an accompanying one;
- Further development of capacities which would be of great interest to tourists (for example, building a small museum in Velika Drenova which would be dedicated to grafting and wine making, revitalization of the so-called vineyard huts located in the vineyards themselves and which could be visited by tourists);
- Further development of local events dedicated to wine makers and Saint Tryphon as to gain a stronger and larger scope, given the fact that it is one of the few that has been ceremoniously held for over twenty years; Development of the Grafting days event in Velika Drenova. Creating new events dedicated to wine tasting (for example, wine salons, wine fairs, etc.);
- Designing and organizing easy and medium hiking tours of vineyards;

- Designing the tours that would, beside wineries, include a tour of nursing gardens with grafts of grape vines and other plants;
- Wine tourism and its capacities could still be “accompanying” in relation to religious tourism, excursion tourism, cultural tourism etc.
- Providing encouragement and incitement to small winemakers who continue to practice traditional wine production to open and register small family wineries. Another option would be to sell their wine at their doorsteps but by registering and equipping their households for rural and ethno tourism.
- Collaboration with other nearby areas as to create a single integrated package for tourists that would be at the level of either the Rasina district of the Three Morava Rivers Region.

#### **Key threats of the Trstenik vineyard district for the development of wine tourism:**

- Insufficient incentives from local and state authorities for primary registration of small family wineries; An immediate proximity to one of the most developed wine districts (the Župa district) which could “take away” tourists simply because of its more famous name and much more recognizable brand;
- Reducing areas covered with vine grapes, which is happening for years now, can also indirectly influence the possible projects related to wine tourism;
- Due to the still unfavourable economic situation, many well-to-do households that are under financial pressure are abandoning viticulture and winemaking business and are switching to other more profitable cultures;
- Insufficient promotion of the wine district from local authorities as a possible destination for wine tourism.

## **5. Conclusion**

Many authors and experts have agreed that the best examples of Serbian practice of wine tourism are in Vojvodina, in Fruška Gora and Vršac districts respectively, whereas all other districts are not fully using their conditions, potentials, capacities to make similar or same rappers in their respective areas.

The Trstenik wine district does not operate at full capacity, although it is very significant for its number of vineyards and types of grapes it is cultivating, has a long tradition in grafting, viticulture and winemaking and has production capacities, small and large and has a chance to fully integrate wine tourism as one of its main tourist products. First of all, production capacities exist, but there could be more of them than the number of private households that produce wine for their own needs. Wineries are situated along the Župa wine route, but not all of them, also the proximity to one of the most famous wine districts (Župa) is not fully used in terms of creating one regional wine tourist product. There is a lack of additional accommodation in the city itself as well as in the villages. There is also an insufficient promotion and marketing campaign dedicated to the wine district by the local tourist organization and municipal authorities, which would lead to a better positioning of the wine district not only in the wine market but also in wine tourism. Finally, there is a lack of clear strategy and clearly defined operational activities, which would be the starting point for wine tourism to become an instrument of development of the whole area. Designing such a strategy would make all possible participants in such a project aware of all the benefits of developing this type of tourism. Wine tourism would be a great economic impetus for developing the Trstenik area, especially because it would employ capacities that have not been used earlier and thus further refine its purpose. The Trstenik area has excellent

conditions for the development of religious and excursion tourism, so wine tourism could become the main tourist product of the municipality in the near future.

The contribution of this paper can be significant. Primarily, a relatively unknown wine district is being researched in terms of areas and varieties among the first in the country, so presenting the facts about it can be a further incentive for other under-established wine districts, which could see their chance in the development of this type of tourism.

The limitations of these researches are of course numerous. Firstly, there are not enough new and different papers dealing with the study of wine tourism in Serbia, which could serve as a theoretical basis for research. In particular, there is an insufficient number of papers dealing with less well-established or unbranded wine districts, which could be the focus of a comparative analysis. Also, there are few relevant data about the Trstenik wine district, which is also making the research even more difficult. All mentioned above can be justified, given that wine tourism is still a theoretically unexplored topic of Serbian tourism, and it is only logical that it does not have representative examples in practice.

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