

An Overview of Marketing Opportunities in Wine Tourism with Special Reference to Malta

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Abstract: Wine tourism has become the latest 'buzz word' in niche tourism marketing along with the slow-food movement. It is growing in popularity in traditional wine-making regions, such as Italy and France (old world wine), but also in the new world of wine production, namely Australia, New Zealand, and America where wine tourism is a major industry. This has been assisted by the prominent sales and exposure of their wines globally. As a result, most available research in this field has been conducted in the new world and wine-makers have a good, although not conclusive understanding of their consumers and also the wine tourist. It is an important segment with many governments supporting initiatives undertaken by wineries as they understand the value of such a market and its 'knock on' effect on the local economy and other areas of industry such as accommodation, restaurants, and farmers. Since Malta has a tradition of wine-making, critical success factors as identified by Getz *et al* (2006) were considered in a Maltese context to determine its potential as a wine tourism destination. Although, Malta does exhibit many positive criteria for success in this area, there are also many challenges. There is the need for substantial academic research in this area and further co-operation between various stakeholders, both private and public, in order to create a synergy that could determine a positive economic outcome and opportunity.

Keywords: wine, marketing, wine-production, tourism, Malta.

Tourism is probably one of the most dynamic industries and destinations and travel companies are affected by trends and fashions that are determined by the tourists themselves. One such current trend within the industry is wine tourism.

Wine tourism is a growing trend in many parts of the world which is set to continue with the increased competition between new and old world wines, wine-producing regions, and wineries opening up their cellar doors for consumers. In an effort to understand this trend, wine tourism has become the subject of interest for a lot of academic research since the 1990s. This area is, academically, quite new and has become the new ‘buzz word’ as a niche market with significant growth potential.¹ There has also been an increase in the number of conferences dedicated not only to wine but also to wine tourism that are attracting participants ranging from wine producers, academics, and wine enthusiasts.

Research objective

This paper will set out to explore the marketing opportunities in wine tourism for Malta. Since this is a new concept locally, research at this stage is purely exploratory in nature and is aimed at gaining a better understanding of the industry and to evaluate whether Malta has potential to offer a similar product.

Visits to vineyards and wineries, including open days, were undertaken in order to become familiar with the wine-tourist experience. Informal discussions with wine producers were held to gain a better understanding of the industry.

Further research was conducted by way of viewing journals and articles by respected academic researchers who have already carried out primary research and reported their findings. Such secondary

1 B. Cambourne, ‘Wine Tourism in Canberra district’, Wine Tourism – Perfect Partners, Proceedings of the First Australian Wine Tourism Conference (1998), Bureau of Tourism Research, 99–10 – cited in M. O’Neill, S. Charters, ‘Service quality at the cellar door: implications for Western Australia’s developing wine tourism industry’, *Managing Service Quality*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (2000), 113.

data provides a valuable insight to the nature of wine tourism, what factors contribute to its success, and the behaviour and motivations of consumers.

What is wine tourism?

Historically, the movement of people to visit vineyards dates back to the Grand Tour in the mid-nineteenth century when wine became a special interest for travellers, although Hall *et al.* suggest it started as far back as ancient Greece and Rome and that wine trails were evident in Germany in the 1920s.²

Wine tourism may be thought of as tourists visiting an area specifically to taste wine and learn about its production. Hall defined it as ‘... visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which the grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of grape wine region are the motivating factors for visitors’.³

Getz *et al* go on to explain that, in addition, wine tourism is in fact about destination planning and marketing strategy for wineries and wine-makers. It is not only about the consumers. They offer the following definition:

Wine tourism is a form of consumer behaviour based on the appeal of wine and wine regions, and a development and marketing strategy for the wine industry and destinations in which wineries and wine-related experiences are the dominant attractions.⁴

2 C. Hall, L. Sharples, B. Cambourne, N. Macionis, ‘Wine Tourism: An Introduction’, in C. Hall, L. Sharples, B. Cambourne, N. Macionis (eds.), *Wine Tourism around the World* (Oxfordshire, 2000), 2

3 C.M Hall, ‘Wine Tourism in New Zealand’, in *Proceeding of Tourism Down Under II: A Tourism Research Conference, University of Otago* (Otago, 1966), 109–19.

4 *Ibid.*, 21.

Who is the wine tourist?

The World Tourism Organization states that ‘A visitor (domestic, inbound, or outbound) is classified as a tourist (or overnight visitor), if his/her trip includes an overnight stay.’ This immediately poses a challenge since the wine tourist is not necessarily a tourist in the traditional sense of the word, i.e. a visitor who has left his home for 24 hours. The wine tourist in many instances is a day-tripper or a domestic tourist visiting the area from another region. Each type of visitor will be embarking on the wine ‘experience’ and will have different expectations and needs, characteristics, and behaviour and may not necessarily stay overnight in a chosen wine tourist region.

There have been several approaches and methodologies used to attempt to profile the wine tourist. Treloar identified that there were several similarities in previous studies and that the winery visitor was ‘predominately female, generally a university or higher educated and with a slightly higher than average income ... usually domestic or interstate traveller who has some experience with wine or wine education’.⁵ Similar characteristics were also identified in Australian-based research by Charters and Ali-Knight⁶ and O’Neill and Palmer,⁷ by Brown and Getz⁸ in America, and by Kolyesnikova *et al*⁹ in Canada. In British Columbia and South Africa similar findings were reported. Conversely, in some countries, such as Spain and Italy, the average wine tourist is a young male and in Greece he is mainly a middle-aged

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- 5 P. Treloar, C.M. Hall, R.D. Mitchell, ‘Wine tourism and the generation Y market: any possibilities?’, Paper presented at the CAUTHE conference in Brisbane, Queensland, February 2004.
 - 6 S. Charters, J. Ali-Knight, ‘Wine Tourism – Thirst for Knowledge?’, *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2000), 70–80.
 - 7 M.A. O’Neill & A. Palmer, ‘Wine production and tourism: Adding service to a perfect partnership’, *Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2004).
 - 8 G. Brown & D. Getz, ‘Linking wine preferences to the choice of wine tourism destinations’, *Journal of Travel Research*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (2005).
 - 9 N. Kolyesnikova, T. Dodd, & D.A. Laverie, ‘Gratuity purchasing at wineries: An investigation of the determining factors’, *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, Vol. 19, No. 4 (2007).

male. Alebaki and Lakovidou observed that a majority of wine research comes primarily from Australia and New Zealand and also from Canada and the US, which all happen to be new world wine-producing countries.¹⁰ As a result, this method of research regarding the profile of the wine tourist may not be applicable to all markets since profiles of the new and old wine-producing areas are distinctly different.

In addition to traditional methods of segmentation, such as demographics and socio-economic variables, academics stress the importance of understanding the wine tourist through his motivations, lifestyle, values, and personality traits.¹¹

Bruwer and Alant imply that a clear and concise definition of the typical characteristic and motivations of a wine tourist are yet to be determined with certainty because ‘...wine tourist behaviour can vary in different regions and cultures and even from one winery cellar door to the next’¹² and that even ‘... visitors with similar demographics may present differences concerning their attitudes, lifestyle and wine consumer behaviour’.¹³

Mitchell *et al.* claim that understanding the behaviour of wine tourist is of utmost importance for all stakeholders as:

... it can help to provide important insights into who the wine tourist is, and what motivates them to visit a winery, take a guided tour, attend a wine festival or purchase wine and why, thus allowing marketers and managers to effectively target and develop markets.¹⁴

10 Alebaki and Lakovidou, 125.

11 G. Galloway, R. Mitchell, D. Getz, G. Crouch G. & B. Ong, ‘Sensation seeking and the prediction of attitudes and behaviours of wine tourists’, *Tourism Management*, Vol. 29, No. 5 (2208), 950–66; W. Gronau & R. Kaufmann, ‘Tourism as a stimulus for sustainable development in rural areas: A Cypriot perspective’, *Tourismos*, Vol. 4, No. 1(2009), 83–96, cited in Alebaki and Lakovidou, 12.

12 J. Bruwer & K. Alant, ‘The hedonic nature of wine tourism consumption: an experiential view’ *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, Vol. 21, No. 3 (2009), 237.

13 L. Bruwer, E. Li, & M. Reid, ‘Segmentation of the Australian Wine Market Using a Wine-Related Lifestyle Approach’, *Journal of Wine Research*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2002), 217–42, cited in Alebaki and Lakovidou, 126.

14 R. Mitchell, C.M. Hall, & A. McIntosh, ‘Wine Tourism and Consumer Behaviour’,

Interestingly, research undertaken by Tourism New South Wales classified wine tourists into three categories: accidental, interested and dedicated.¹⁵ Each group also has its own set of characteristics and behaviour. Hall suggests that there are three other types of wine tourist: ‘wine lovers’, ‘wine interested’, and the ‘curious tourist’.¹⁶ However, Charter and Ali-Knight suggest that there is still not enough research to support this theory and that it is an area for future research.¹⁷

Academics have suggested various methods of profiling the tourist which are not always coherent with each other and therefore such findings highlight the complexity and challenges in determining an accurate wine tourist profile even within the same region. It is of utmost importance that further research is carried out in this area if wine producers are to understand their visitors and behaviour in order to successfully target them with an effective marketing mix.

Wine production in Malta

Wine production in Malta is said to date back to approximately the Roman era, although the Ministry for Rural Affairs and the Environment suggests that it was the knights of St John who ‘... laid the foundations of today’s wine industry in Malta’.¹⁸ Today, Malta and Gozo’s main producers of wine are Marsovin, Delicata, Camilleri Wines, Meridiana, Montekristo, and Ta’ Mena (Gozo) but there are smaller less established wine makers such as Izola Wines in St Paul’s Bay and Bacchus Winery in Gozo.

in C.M. Hall, L. Sharples, B. Cambourne and N. Macionis (eds.), *Wine Tourism Around the World, Development, Management and Markets* (Oxford, 2000), 118.

15 ‘Wine Tourism Development Information, understanding your tourism market (New South Wales, 2000), http://corporate.tourism.nsw.gov.au/Sites/SitesID6/objLib13.understanding_your_market.pdf (accessed 30 March 2010) cited in E. Croce, G. Perri, *Food and Wine Tourism* (Oxfordshire, 2010), 48.

16 Hall (2006) cited in Charter and Ali-Knight.

17 Charter and Ali-Knight, 70.

18 ‘Malta Quality Wines’, Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs (2008) <http://www.maltaqualitywines.com/maltaqualitywine> – accessed 30/05/2011.

Each producer has its own website which discusses wine production in Malta and how each company was founded. Other sources of information regarding wine production in Malta are principally published officially through the Ministry for Resources and Rural Affairs.

Wine tourism in Malta

Since it is only recently that research has been carried in traditional wine-producing regions of Europe regarding wine tourism, it came as no surprise that statistical research in this field was limited in Malta. Local wine tourism research consisted of two articles published in local magazines with no real statistical data or formal research. One such article by Donatella Cinelli Colombini discusses the potential for a wine route in Malta but also suggests the need for further research.¹⁹ The other article entitled ‘Maltese Wine and Wine Tourism in Malta’ was published in the October 2008 edition of Air Malta’s in-flight magazine *Sky Life*. This article by Margareta Zaveri focuses on the issue that there are quality wines in Malta and suggests how to create one’s own wine route since there are not yet any official wine-tasting tours or routes.

By comparison, Italy, Spain, Greece, and Cyprus offer reputable wines and wine routes and are exploiting wine tourism. These same destinations were identified by the Malta Tourism Research Unit as Malta’s key tourism competitors during 2010 as the tourist’s potential choice of destination before choosing Malta.²⁰ From a Maltese perspective, to try and compete with these already established destinations would be a difficult task initially owing to the lack of local experience and wine trails although Cinelli Colombini suggests that Malta does possess the potential to offer tourists wine- and food-related experiences and discusses the possibility of implementing wine trails.²¹

19 D. Cinelli Colombini, ‘Malta’s Wine and Flavour Route’, *Journal of the Institute of Tourism Studies*, Issue 6, Dec. 2010.

20 ‘Market Profile Analysis Year 2010’, Malta Tourism Authority (Malta, 2010).

21 Cinelli Colombini.

Critical success factors for wine tourism: Malta

From the journals and articles referred to, one paper in particular entitled, 'Critical Success Factors for Wine Tourism' by Donald Getz *et al.*, tried to determine if there were generic factors that influenced the success of wine tourism.²² The authors undertook the research in an attempt to '... shed light on what wine and tourism industry professionals think are the most important factors for destination and winery tourism development'.²³ The surveys were conducted amongst wine tourism professionals in Australia and Washington State, USA. According to Getz *et al.*, the outcome of the research identified that there were '... many factors that will influence the success of wineries and destinations in competing for a share of the growing wine tourism market'.²⁴ Overall, the research identified four categories that were critical to the success of wine tourism in terms of what was considered important by suppliers. These included quality; wine country appeal; winery appeal; and developing and marketing wine tourism.

These four categories differ from the original generic factors that were assumed to contribute to the success of wine tourism in an area but, as previously mentioned, the research was undertaken in new world wine destinations that already have established wine tourism and wine trails. In the old world, and especially Malta, that is relatively new to this type of tourism, the original factors initially outlined by Getz *et al.* are a good foundation upon which to build an exploratory model for examining Malta's potential as a wine-tourism destination, especially since local research is very limited.

The key factors that have been analysed include assessing benefits sought (reasons for visiting wineries); cultural and historical factors; wineries and other tourist facilities; location relative to markets, i.e. accessibility; seasonality; natural resources; production consumption and export of wine; the law; quality and reputation; critical mass; and organization and marketing efforts. Such exploration may also assist in

22 Getz *et al.*, 22.

23 *Ibid.*, 20.

24 *Ibid.*, 32.

identifying which stakeholders can gain from such a niche market and the challenges it may pose in addition to identifying further areas for research.

Benefits sought (reasons for visiting wineries)

First and foremost, it is important for wineries to understand why customers visit their premises. Previous research indicates that some visitors are wine-lovers, others may be just passing through as part of a day trip organized by the tour operator, while others are those who drive by. Others could be attending corporate events or locals hosting family or friends from other areas, as research from Australia by Getz *et al.* suggests. All these are very important indicators for Maltese wineries. Owing to Malta's size, these reasons may not apply; however, the islands offer a wide array of historical and cultural attractions.

Cultural and historical factors

Ongoing research suggests that '...wine-producing methods and wines have long been associated with cultural and heritage endeavours'.²⁵ Croce and Perri suggest that wine tourism shares similar characteristics to cultural tourism and that 'people who expressly choose food and wine tourism are essentially cultural tourists'.²⁶ This view is also shared by Getz *et al.* who state that 'tourists in general tend to travel more to regions with strong cultural and historical links...'.²⁷ Malta has not yet established a reputation for wine tourism in spite of the fact that wine is very much part of the local culture. The islands also have a strong reputation for its historic and cultural attractions. According

25 P. Williams, J. Kelly, 'Cultural Wine Tourists: Product Development considerations for British Columbia's Resident Wine Tourism Market', *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2001), 61.

26 Croce and Perri, 45.

27 Getz *et al.*, 23.

to research conducted by the Malta Tourism Authority, 36 per cent of visitors surveyed in Malta do so for its culture and history.²⁸ Malta has an abundance of historical sites, including several UNESCO world heritage sites. Positioning wine tourism as part of the overall cultural tourism segment is a very viable option and museums and places of interest can be incorporated into a holiday to Malta, in addition to wine-tasting.

Wineries and other tourist facilities

In addition, Getz *et al* propose that the wineries should be the core built attraction; however, other related facilities such as museums and visitor information are also important.

Although Malta has many museums, it unfortunately does not as yet, have any wine museum to speak of, which is surprising considering the local history of wine-making. This would be of interest to visitors to Malta and also for local residents. Puntan-Galea reported that in 2006 the Ministry of Rural Affairs and the Environment had proposed to open a National Enoteka.²⁹ A later article in *The Times of Malta* (2 April 2009) stated that ‘Maltese wines deserve to be showcased, which is why the government is planning to invest in an enoteca in Valletta where tourists and locals will be able to taste the local produce’. However, there has been no further news regarding this project so far.

Location Relative to Markets: Accessibility

Malta possesses an ideal location in the Mediterranean and is served by various airlines and also ferries from Sicily. According to the Malta Tourism Authority report of 2010, 17.4 per cent of visitors chose Malta for its accessibility, which was a 3.4 per cent increase on 2009. The size

28 ‘Market Profile Analysis Year 2010’.

29 S. Puntan-Galea, ‘First Maltese enoteca to open next year’, <http://www.timesofmalta.com/articles/view/20050828/business/first-maltese-enoteca-to-open-next-year.79937>; accessed – 02/06/2011.

of Malta also makes it an ideal destination to travel around even during a short stay. Wineries can take advantage of this to encourage visitors to come to Malta and incorporate a visit to a winery either as part of an overall holiday or as part of a short break, thus increasing value for money.

Getz *et al.* suggest that high-volume visitors are not necessarily essential for the development of wine tourism but that it is possible to focus on smaller numbers of high-yield tourists who often spend the most. It was also suggested that ‘...small-scale wine tourism can be a good strategy in that it avoids problems of congestion and over commercialisation’.³⁰ Owing to Malta’s small size and the small scale of its wineries, this is probably a good reflection and a positive factor to consider. This strategy certainly complements the size of Malta’s wineries and other attractions.

Seasonality

Malta is fortunate to have mild winters and hot summers and therefore has something to offer the tourist at any time of the year. In fact, research conducted by the MTA (2010) identified that the agreeable climate accounted for 52 per cent of reasons for choosing Malta as a holiday destination. Malta does, however, have the issue of higher demand during the summer months, an issue which the MTA is trying to address in an effort to even out demand. Wine-making is very much a seasonal process, so it is not possible to experience all elements of wine-making all year round. However, statistics compiled by Frochot in the French region of Burgundy, indicate that arrivals in the winter months are higher than in the summer and that the length of stay is shorter.³¹ This suggests that wine tourism does not follow typical tourism trends. Taking note of the French example, this may be an opportunity to target a different type of tourist during the quieter times of the year.

³⁰ Getz *et al.*, 24.

³¹ I. Frochot, ‘Wine Tourism in France: A Paradox?’, in Hall *et al.* (eds.), 79.

Natural resources

Malta's landscape cannot be compared to the greenery of Bordeaux or the rolling hills of Tuscany. Maltese wineries are at a disadvantage even in terms of their location as the island cannot 'create' dramatic natural landscapes. Ways need to be sought to exploit the scenery in which the wineries are located. Meridiana's winery is set in Ta' Qali with the historic city of Mdina in the background; however, other wineries such as Delicata and Marsovin lie in an industrial part of Paola and are not as fortunate. This point was raised and emphasized during an informal conversation with Bill Hermitage of Emmanuel Delicata Wines. It would be impractical for the wineries to relocate, so this does pose a definite challenge for these wineries. In addition, Malta has limited natural resources but they are sufficiently acceptable for wine-making. The fact that Malta is not exposed to frosts, as other wine-producing areas in Europe are, is to its advantage. Malta also has ideal grape-growing climate which also means that harvesting also takes place slightly earlier than in other countries.

Production, consumption, and export of wine

The quality of local wine has increased over the years with market leaders winning various awards. Wine-makers have also invested heavily in equipment to assist in the production of wine and improve production and quality. Malta's accession to the EU back in 2004 posed a huge challenge for local wine producers as foreign wines could now be enjoyed at more competitive prices. An article by Camilleri Wines claims that it was a time to either 'brush up' or 'get lost'.³²

Statistics compiled by the National Statistics Offices (NSO) in a lifestyle survey back in 2007 identified that 'Wine is the most widely consumed form of alcohol with 42.7 per cent of the population

32 Camilleri Wines (2009), http://www.superbrandsmalta.com/pdf_sito/camilleri_wines.pdf – accessed 15/06/2011.

consuming at least one glass of wine per week.’ Such high consumption could be attributed to the increase in wine bars around the islands. This is a new trend for all ages but again there is little specific research.

The NSO survey also identified that women consume more wine than men in Malta. This may be an opportunity to target women, especially since research indicates they form the majority of visitors. Although this demographic is more prominent in new world wine regions rather than old world regions, Maltese wineries could try and target this segment locally.

More research is needed into the drinking behaviour of wine consumers in terms of demographics and lifestyle. It is also important to identify whether consumers are drinking local or foreign wine and which brands they are consuming, as well as identifying if there is any brand loyalty. There is currently no information available and yet this would be so valuable not only in the marketing of local wine to residents but also to tourists and in the development of wine tourism.

The main wine producers also export their product, albeit in very low quantities, mainly because of lack of land to plant more vines, but also because of current EU laws.

The law

Since Malta is a member of the EU there are legal constraints on production and land use. Locally, there are also drink-driving laws and age limits for consumption and licensing. Destinations such as Australia and New Zealand, the US, South Africa, France, and Spain, receive support in that the respective governments are actively involved in the development of wine tourism. For now, in Malta the most pressing of legal issues would be the Wine Act.

In Malta, on 23 October 2001 the Wine Act (Chapter 436) was enacted in Parliament.³³ The new wine act attempts to offer amongst other things the

- control of practices and processes used in the production of wine;

33 <http://www.agric.gov.mt/viticulture-oenology> – accessed 01/06/2011.

- labelling of wines;
- establishment of an inventory of the wine potential of Malta;
- rules on the production of quality wine produced in a specific region.

In effect, the Wine Act provides more control over various aspects of wine production from grape growing to the marketing of wine and its related products.

In addition to this Act, Malta's accession into the EU in 2004 also meant that, as of May 2007, wine production had to meet certain criteria. This saw the introduction of the systems to ensure quality standards. The Ministry of Rural Affairs states that 'One such system is the category of wine known as Quality Wine Produced in Specified Regions (QWPSR), a system that in Malta is known as D.O.K. (*Denominazzjoni ta' Origini Kontrollata*) wines'.³⁴

This category of wine will carry a certification on the bottle that offers the consumer an assurance to the quality and origin of the wine and that quality wines have been produced in specified regions as defined by EU regulations.

There is also another category which is I.G.T. *Indikazzjoni Ġeografika Tipika*. The ministry states that this refers to '... those wines which have been produced from wine grapes grown on the Maltese Islands and processed in accordance to the production protocols that regulate this category. The parameters are less stringent than for quality wines and do not require an organoleptic analysis prior to certification.'³⁵

Quality and reputation

Unfortunately, the attitude towards Maltese wine in the past was not always positive. In an interview for an article written by in 2004 by De Aenlle, an executive for a local producer who declined to be named

34 <http://www.maltaqualitywines.com/maltaqualitywines/enoteka.html> – accessed 30/05/2011

35 <http://www.maltaqualitywines.com/maltaqualitywines/igt.html> – accessed 30/05/2011.

was quoted as saying ‘You practically have to burn their fingers with a foreign wine before they will pick up a local one.’³⁶

Margareta Zaveri³⁷ has suggested that this attitude may be attributed to previous wine-making method when grapes that had not been consumed were used to create a poorer quality wine.

Once Malta joined the EU in 2004, levies were removed from foreign wines. This meant that the Maltese consumer could now purchase a wider variety of wines for a similar price resulting in a move towards higher quality wine.

Initially it was thought that the locals’ attitudes could pose a challenge for the promotion of wine to tourists. However, further research has indicated that the quality of local wines has improved significantly and Maltese wines have progressed considerably, with some local wines receiving recognition overseas and also winning awards. The success of local wine festivals which are increasing in popularity (by companies such Emmanuel Delicata and Marsovin) also demonstrate a change in attitudes to local wines. Although these are highly successful events, it would be interesting to conduct research to evaluate whether these events influence consumers purchasing of local wines or if they are solely perceived as a social event.

Critical mass

Getz *et al.* claim that one winery alone will not have much impact on influencing wine tourism to a destination.³⁸ Although the ideal number has not been researched, it is apparent that there needs to be a significant number of wineries to make a visit to a destination appealing specifically for wine tourists. Since Malta is not renowned for its wineries, nor is there an abundance, this highlights the importance for wine producers to

36 http://www.nytimes.com/2004/08/14/business/worldbusiness/14iht-malwine_ed3_.html – accessed 30/05/2011.

37 M. Zaveri, ‘Maltese Wine and Wine Tourism in Malta’ (2008), <http://www.guidetomalta.net/articles/maltese-wine-malta-wine-tourism/>, accessed 30/05/2011.

38 Getz *et al.*, 24.

pool their resources and work together to create and develop a positive image of Maltese wine rather than working as individual companies. Thus one needs to explore marketing efforts of local wineries. The fact that local wineries are also few can also work to each one's advantage since they can all be visited by tourists in one trip. Also, instead of competing with each other, they can try and complement each other's shortcomings with each offering something unique.

Organization and marketing efforts

For wine tourism to be a success, as with any product albeit goods or a service, creating and raising awareness is essential. Individually, Getz *et al* claim that each winery may not be large enough to generate its own demand as previously discussed which is definitely true of local producers.³⁹ Each local winery undertakes extensive local promotion but there is the opportunity for wineries to conduct joint marketing efforts to strengthen the image of Maltese wine at overseas events.

Marsovin's director of export and marketing, Jeremy Cassar, was quoted as saying: 'The Maltese wine industry needs to be supported if it is to survive ... 65 per cent of Marsovin's sales are derived from tourism.'⁴⁰

Discussion and conclusion

From a Maltese perspective, the critical success factors as suggested by Getz *et al.* are present, although they need to be explored in more detail. Malta does have the potential to implement wine tourism but there are many shortcomings that require further in-depth research. It is very difficult for Malta to compete on the same level with already established wine destinations owing to reputation, natural resources, quality of wine, and marketing efforts. Malta does not have the same

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 26.

⁴⁰ *The Times of Malta*, 24 December 2009.

prestige as Bordeaux or the beauty and reputation of Italy and it is also difficult for wineries to implement wine tourism and wine trails independently.

The success of wine tourism requires an inter-coordinated approach and extensive planning and research. Wine tourism does not only involve wineries, but it also requires the co-operation of many stakeholders if it is to achieve its objective. Various authors such as Hall *et al.*,⁴¹ Cambourne,⁴² and Macoinis,⁴³ amongst others, stress the importance of industry integration. This concept illustrates the importance of organizations and companies working together. This would involve wineries, tour operators, hotels, restaurants, wine bars, farmers, food manufacturers, and wine distributors and retailers. Malta can take advantage of its new place in the market and learn lessons from established destinations. In Spain, for example, there are wine tourism product clubs. José Del Campo Gomis *et al.* offer this definition: ‘A wine tourism product club is a group of companies that agree to work together to develop new tourism products or to increase the value of existing products in relation to the wine market segment or wine tourist activity’.⁴⁴ These have been successfully implemented on a national and regional level with the assistance of the state.

It is important to emphasize that this should be a long-term focus with companies and organizations aiming to build long-term relationships and work together to achieve a common goal so that all may enjoy the benefits this industry could generate. Getz has also suggested that wine tourism has the potential to generate further business and profits for wine-makers and other wine-related products, as well as for visitor services.⁴⁵ It should not be used as a means of short-term financial

41 Hall *et al.* (eds.).

42 Cambourne and Macoinis, ‘Meeting the wine maker: wine tourism product development in an emerging wine region’ in Hall *et al.* (eds.).

43 Macoinis, 43.

44 F. José Del Campo Gomis, D. López Lluch, J. Sales Civera, A. Agulló Torres, M. Brugarolas Mollá, A. Bauzá, F. Martínez Poveda, F. Camacho de los Ríos, A. Nogués Pedregal, ‘Wine tourism product clubs as a way to increase wine added value: the case of Spain’, *International Journal of Wine Research*, Vol. 2 (2010), 34.

45 Getz *et al.*, 34.

gain or to ‘make a quick buck’ which could jeopardize the image not only of Maltese wines but also of Malta as a tourist destination. As already mentioned, the market is competitive and if tourists or visitors feel that they are being exploited, they will not return nor promote the destination or winery.

Government assistance is also needed in terms of financial investment and marketing. In new world wine destinations, governments take an active role in wine tourism as they understand the economic benefits to the various regions. Even in old world wine countries, such as Italy, the government has encouraged and supported wine tourism and agritourism for a long time. It seems that the Malta Tourism Organization does not really focus on wine tourism as a distinct segment although it does list food and wine under ‘what to see and do’ – holiday ideas. The Ministry of Tourism and that of Rural Affairs similarly need to take a more active role in participating in such initiatives.

Limitations of research

There have been many limitations in researching this area. Lack of local published research was probably the most significant issue. One cannot only use blogs and articles in local media and there was no information of any significant academic value. Existing articles did support the idea of wine tourism and that it needs to be explored further.

The lack of time and resources were also fundamental restrictions. To conduct all the proposed research to gain a deeper understanding into the behaviour of wine tourists and perceptions in addition to researching current visitors’ attitudes at wineries would have taken a lot of time and financial resources.

Areas for further research

Even though exploratory in nature, this research alone is not enough to justify the promotion and implementation of wine tourism in Malta. Nonetheless it should provide a valuable insight into the industry. There

is a lot of opportunity for wine tourism in Malta but it would require further in-depth research.

Research to determine visitor profiles and motivations to visit local wineries is necessary. It would also be useful to investigate if visitors have been to wineries before, and if so, where and why. This will lead to a better understanding of visitors. Identifying their expectations and perceptions will also be useful in developing the product.

Maltese people have to be ambassadors of local brands, especially if they are hosting family or friends from abroad. Their negative perception of Maltese wines may be passed on. Further research into local consumption patterns would therefore be useful.

Wine festivals are extremely popular events. Research into why people attend and whether this affects the brands of wines they drink would also be useful. Do they influence consumers to buy that respective brand?

It is also important to measure the awareness of local wineries and wine tours amongst tourists and local visitors. Sometimes, locals and tourists may not even be aware of the option to visit wineries, unless they specifically seek the information out of personal interest.

Further research into what other countries have done is also required. It is also important to research what grants and support the EU can offer, as other countries have benefited from such funding.

Conclusion

It is evident that more research and planning is needed to launch wine tourism successfully in Malta and this cannot be implemented overnight. Malta does lack international awareness, reputation, and landscape but local wines have increased in quality and deserve recognition. Through the development of wine tourism, wineries, the tourist industry, and many other stakeholders, could benefit economically from this developing trend. However, it does involve an integrated and regulated approach from all interested parties. With the co-operation and investment from all those involved and perhaps the introduction of a wine tourism product club, the initiative could be successful so long as

everyone has the same ambition and desire to promote local wines and Malta as a destination. Such co-operation and regulation would ensure that the product is well-planned and delivered efficiently to ensure and maintain high standards. It is important that each area though does not try to compete but to pull together.

Given Malta's rich heritage and culture and already strong competition, wine tourism should not be promoted as a stand-alone product until it has established a better reputation and raised more awareness overseas. In the meantime wine tourism could be incorporated into the heritage and culture segment that is already established.