HOW TO DEVELOP SUCCESSFUL WINERIES THROUGH FARM TOURISM

POSIBILITĂŢI DE DEZVOLTAREA A UNOR CRAME DE SUCCES PRIN PRACTICAREA TURISMULUI DE FERMĂ

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Abstract: *Wine tourism is very widespread around the globe where they meet three main points characteristic to this type of tourism: visitors' expectations, developing a successful winery, and developing a first good impression. Most visitors of a winery reach it as part of a one day-trip, of a mini-holiday, or of a weekend, and it is difficult they are willing to drive for 1 or 2 hours for just buying a bottle of wine.*

Key words*: developing, successful winery, farm tourism*

INTRODUCTION

Tourists come to regions where there are vineyards and wineries to experience character, food, lifestyle, and cultural attractions; to visit friends and relatives; or, more and more often, to relax. We cannot ignore the wish to have fun and to get rid of the stress, or the wish to purely and simply see another landscape or to be together with the beloved one. Sentimental investment, no matter its origin, makes tourists have expectations about visiting a winery [1, 3].

Since, in most cases, visiting a winery takes 2 days (i.e., an interval of 48 hours because, after one has tasted 7 assortments of wines, one no longer is able and/or wishes to drive), tour-operators including a winery in their tours should bear in mind the following:

- accommodation;
- food services, including coffee shops, travel food packages, coffee;

- available trustworthy advice concerning accommodation and food services;
- hospitality of tour-operators and of locals;
- easiness of travelling around the winery (route signalling and roads), and easiness of finding information and maps (from the perspective of those who visit the winery for the first time, not of those who repeat the experience);
- the variety, quality, and authenticity of attractions and activities.

All these components of an experience should meet the tourists' expectations if the tour-operators wish to avoid negative-impact experiences [2, 4]. Since, as a rule, those who visit a winery do it to repeat a pleasant experience or because it was a word-of-mouth recommendation, it is very important to take into account all the aspects mentioned above.

The visit of a winery should cover the following:

- the visit of the vineyard together with the presentation of the grapevine cultivation technology;
- the visit of a winemaking complex together with the presentation of the technological flow;
- the visit of the cellars together with the presentation of the wine maturation processes in barrels, with the preservation of the wine bottles in the storage rooms, and with the presentation of the exhibition of bottled wines;
- the tasting of wines together with the presentation of the tasting techniques.

The wine tasting variants suggested by the different wineries is as follows:

- the tasting of 7 wine samples;
- the tasting of 7 wine samples plus traditional menu (goulash), with wine price included in the bill;
- the tasting of 7 wine samples plus traditional menu (roasted pork, roasted chicken, steamed potatoes, fresh vegetable salad or pickles), with wine price included in the bill.

Upon special request, wineries can offer other menus to complete and valorise taste wines.

MATERIAL AND METHOD

To get maximum of benefit from the practice of farm tourism, we have analysed visitors' expectations and we suggest the implementation of a successful winery model for the development of both wineries and agritourism farms.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the case of each winery, three main aspects of **wine tourism** should be met: visitors' expectations, developing a successful winery, and developing a first good impression.

a) Visitors' Expectations

Among the numerous reasons why people visit a winery, the most frequent are as follows: to buy wine, to taste wines, to learn more about wines, in general, and about a certain wine-making area, in particular, and to have fun.

But why would somebody prefer to visit a winery instead of just buying a bottle of wine from a super-market? Because the visitor of a winery wishes more than just buying a bottle of wine – he wishes to experience something he/she cannot buy from a super-market, which makes him/her have great expectations from the staff and from the services purchased:

- discover a new palatal sensation, a new wine he/she can take back home;
- learn something new in an informal, funny way, without feeling uneasy or intimidated;
- be able to taste wines.

The great difference between buying a bottle of wine in a super-market and visiting a winery is that, if the former is done within the wider framework of routine purchases, the latter is done under the form of leisure activities, during the holidays, which makes the visitor have different feelings. Though visiting a winery is also a profitable activity, the manager of a winery should always bear in mind that the visitors expect to be instructed about something in particular and also have fun. This is why the staff of a winery should have the same skills as anybody else involved in hospitality. Moreover, the staff of a winery should be able to interact with the visitors more than shop-assistants do in a super-market.

The location of a winery is extremely important. Are considered strategic locations for wineries the following: an important source-market, a well-known tourism area, and an important route.

Competition should not be avoided in the case of wineries, on the contrary: the co-existence of two quality wineries underlines the wine-making character of a region and increases consumers' interest. Getting the public aware and enhancing people's desire to visit the region can be easier done if several tour-operators unite their efforts.

b) Developing a Successful Winery

A successful winery, i.e. a winery that is visited again and again by both older and new tourists, should be memorable. These are the elements that make a winery memorable: inside atmosphere, design and physical aspect together with the setting within a beautiful landscape, the products themselves – the wines, the quality of the services, and the ambiance developed by the staff.

But it is not enough to meet only one of these criteria to create an unforgettable experience for the visitors. Even if the wine is excellent, if the service is unprofessional, if people feel intimidated, or if the outlook of the winery is not at all appealing, wine quality is soon forgotten and the visitors will make only negative comments when asked about their experience at the winery.

If the staffs are made up of sociable people who like to interact with other people, then there will be no problems. The basic rules, in this case, should be as follows: be nice to everybody, never assume anything and never judge somebody's purchase power by the car parked outside, by the clothes he/she is wearing, or by the way he/she behaves or speaks, etc.

As for winery owners, the best solutions would be for them to first visit one or several other wineries to note what he/she liked or not during the visit: this is the only way he/she will know what and how to do, and what and how to avoid doing in his/her own winery.

There are, among wine lovers, two main categories of winery visitors: *people who know about wines and wineries*, who are more and more demanding and who visit wineries and/or wine shops on a regular basis; *people who do not know about wines and wineries*, but who wish to find out about wine tasting and to learn about wines: the latter should leave the winery with the firm belief that they have learnt something new in an informal and funny, not at all intimidating way and with the strong urge to buy something.

Fact is that a winery owner or manager does not simply sell wine and food to his/her customers, but several things at the same time: wine, hospitality, experiences, amusement, an entire area, himself/herself, etc. if he/she manages to do that, the visitor – turned into a regular customer – will surely come back alone or accompanied by friends and/or by relatives: he/she will recommend to other people a visit to the winery or to buy the wine produced in the region from a city shop purely and simply because the wine reminds him/her of the winery where he/she felt so good.

c) Developing a First Good Impression

A successful winery should be as follows:

- *inside atmosphere* – appealing from the moment one gets into it;
- *outside look of the building* – remembrance or forgetting depend on it;
- *inside look of the building* – it needs remodelling or revitalising, from case to case, with more care for the details, functionality, and innovation than the design or the investment in themselves;
- *image consistency* – the winery should reflect, through design and aspect, the image of the produce and to correspond to the brand;
- *entrance* – the first impression is the one that always counts;
- *winery surroundings* – the terrace, the picnic area, the children playground are also important;
- *the parking site* – it should not be closed, but drained well and without holes if we care about first impressions;
- *landscape* – its style, state, and aspect are also very important;
- *walls* – they should not only show diplomas and medals, but also, for instance, old photos illustrating the history of the winery and of the wine-making area;
- *inside – outside relationship* – both visually and physically, there should be a relationship between the inside and the outside in structure and design (doors, panoramic view windows, etc.) that suggest the flow between the two;
- *signalling* – the entrance one is the one that creates the first impression through style, information (the most important is the timetable).

An inventory of the winery should also contain non-negligible elements such as: *association with other tourism attractions in the area* (museum, national park, historical site, etc.) for a new dimension of the winery; *facilities for little children* – a playground, special chairs for the children to sit at table, etc.; *information concerning the wines*: grape varieties presented through posters, the reasons for cultivating certain cultivars, photos of grape clusters, photos of grape picking, photos of must preparation, photos of wine preparation, information about the impact of climate on wines, vineyard maintenance works, main moments of vine vegetation – appearance of leaf buds and of floral buds, appearance of the fruits, utensils used in wine-making etc.; *use and promotion of local crafts*: temporary exhibitions of items produced by local craftsmen (ceramic, metal, wood, glass, waving, etc.) from the sale of which the winery could get a certain percentage (another source of income for the winery).

Last (but not least), winery staff training, the public face of the winery, equal to the wine producer in importance. It is not enough that the staff have excellent knowledge about the produce they sell – wines and foods: they should also know how to greet, how to take care of several customers at the same time, how to classify customers (from the point of

view of purchase interest), how to sell information through questions, and how to close a deal.

CONCLUSIONS

If we want a wine tourism destination to become a successful tourism destination, we need to locate it within the area and to make sure it meets the following requirements: attractions for the visitors, good accommodation facilities, good foods, good pre-publicity and public relations, well-known brand or identity, good access, good route signs, and clear information. When a winery meets most of these criteria, then there is critical sustainable support for it to become a tourist attraction. This is the place where two industries meet – wine industry and tourism industry.

Any winery manager should be aware that the staff should be impeccable from all points of view, and particularly from the point of view of the way he/she perceives, in due time and correctly, the customers wishes. The staff should know what "body language" is and how "to read" the customers after a several-minute talk, i.e.: find out what their expectations are and what expertise they have in the field of wines, to anticipate the needs, the expectations (tasting preferences, the questions customers ask, etc.), and the state of mind of the customers.

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