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OENOLOGICAL AND GASTRONOMIC TOURISM RESEARCH IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE

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Abstract: *Wine and gastronomy connect visitor experiences with local production and cultural identity. This paper compares selected empirical studies from Central and Eastern Europe through a qualitative literature review. The material covers wine tourists in Romania and Moldova, culinary events in Slovenia and stakeholder cooperation in Croatia. Findings highlight different visitor motivations, the appeal of local cuisine and heritage, and difficulties in coordinating tourism providers. The comparison suggests adapting activities to their audiences and improving access to local experiences through cooperation between producers and tourism organisations. These case-specific insights support locally adapted decisions in destination management.*

Introduction

Wine and gastronomy give visitors opportunities to encounter local products and the places where people make and serve them. For rural destinations, this connection raises questions about visitor expectations and how businesses organise the experience.

The reviewed research approaches these questions from different perspectives. Oltean and Gabor [1] compare wine tourist profiles in Romania and Moldova. Topole et al. [2] examine culinary events in Slovenia, while Đurkin Badurina et al. [3] study provider cooperation in Croatia.

Reading these studies together connects demand with the conditions under which destinations provide food and wine experiences. Visitor preferences help explain the choice of activity. The supply side concerns how producers, hospitality businesses and tourism organisations work together.

This paper examines how the selected studies link local identity and visitor motivation to tourism development. The comparison considers practical implications for experience design and cooperation in each setting.

Material and method

We reviewed selected empirical studies on wine and gastronomic tourism in Central and Eastern Europe. The material comprised published research on wine tourists in Romania and Moldova [1], culinary-event visitors in Slovenia [2] and tourism providers in Croatia [3].

For each publication, we noted the setting and research question, the methods used and the groups whose views it examined. We then grouped the reported findings by topic, comparing visitor motivations and the use of local food and wine in tourism. We also examined cooperation between providers and public organisations.

The analysis used a qualitative comparison of the published findings. We interpreted each result in its original context, taking account of differences between visitor surveys and stakeholder research. This approach identifies connections between the cases without assuming that they represent all destinations in the region.

Results and discussions

The reviewed studies link visitor expectations with the organisation of food and wine experiences. Their findings concern specific national samples, events and local business networks.

Study setting	Reported finding
Romania / Moldova [1]	Wine tourists in the surveyed samples differed in their motivations and profiles, supporting locally tailored experience design.
Slovenia [2]	Karst culinary-event visitors valued local cuisine, novelty and heritage. Public transport access presented a sustainability challenge.
Croatia [3]	Ravni Kotari had limited cooperation among private providers. Public projects and food festivals brought local stakeholders together.

The comparison suggests connecting visitor interests with what local providers can offer. The Romanian and Moldovan findings support adapting activities to different audiences [1]. In Slovenia, culinary appeal coexisted with limited public transport access [2]. In Ravni Kotari, festivals and joint projects offered opportunities for collaboration, while private providers often worked individually [3]. These cases suggest linking promotion with practical arrangements for access and cooperation. Differences in research design and local conditions limit direct comparisons.

Conclusions

The reviewed cases suggest building food and wine experiences around visitor interests and local products. Destination managers should link promotion with access and cooperation among providers. The findings support locally adapted decisions, with conclusions specific to the settings examined.