

Research Article

Wine tourism in Maharashtra: problems and solutions

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Abstract

Wine tourism is one of the best ways to take the traveler off the regular track for a vineyard trip to taste, buy and learn about wines and in that process get an insight into the lives of farmers, their food habits and culture. Wine tourism is now acknowledged as a growing area of special-interest tourism throughout the world, and it is an increasingly important tourism component for many wine-producing regions. Wine tourism has been identified as a niche sector that could be a driver for increased tourism in the wine growing regions, both by attracting more visitors and extending the length of stay and spending of current visitors.

The wine sector has shown significant growth in the last five years in India and the related tourism activity has also increased, particularly in Maharashtra. Despite optimistic expectations of growth, wine tourism in Maharashtra is confronted by a range of critical development issues that have the potential to interfere with its sustainability and long-term profitability.

This paper undertakes a review of existing wine tourism activities, deals with problems related to wine tourism, identifies areas for growth and makes recommendations with respect to an action plan that will develop wine tourism in Maharashtra. The policies that lie behind the development of the wine industry in Maharashtra and Maharashtra Tourism Policy 2006 have important implications for the development of the wine tourism industry. The purpose of this paper is to explore wine tourism as a type of serious leisure and to examine the demographic and psychographic characteristics of wine consumers in order to develop solutions to the problems faced by wine tourism in Maharashtra.

Keywords: Wine tourism, Tourism Models, sustainability, Tourism destination life cycle.

Introduction

Food and wine historically have been “in the background of the tourist experience as a part of overall hospitality service provided for travelers”. However, today’s tendency is that wine and food has become a central point and determining factor for travel decision making. It was until the mid nineteenth century that food and wine have been only a part of a tourist experience. Gradually, wine became a travel product in its own right, but at the initial stage the number of tourists was insignificant due to time and monetary costs of mobility. Only in early 1970 with the improvement of technology resulting in the development of more convenient means of transportation did wine tourism started to develop to any scale [1].

Wine tourism represents a particular type of tourism, whose principal feature is given by the wine and the wine-production territories [2]. Remarkably, there are a multitude of different definitions for wine tourism, but one of the most comprehensive has been set forth by Australian researchers Hall and Macionis. They define wine tourism as "visitation 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." This definition is useful because it encompasses the various venues most frequently sought by wine tourists and highlights the fact that there are different reasons visitors go to a wine region [3]. Today, wine tourism is acknowledged as a growing area of special-interest tourism throughout the world and it is an increasingly important tourism component of for many wine-producing regions. With its wide range of benefits, including foreign-exchange earnings, the creation of both full- and part-time jobs, and the generation of secondary economic activity, wine tourism is emerging as a lucrative industry sector with the ability to generate substantial long-term wealth and sustain steady tourism growth for these regions [4].

Reasons for Growing Interest in Wine Tourism in General (Individual Perspective)

Wine tourism has been growing because of interest in wine in general. Additionally, in many cases, government provides assistance to wine producers. The Resource Guide for start-up suggests that “as government officials have become aware of the wine industry’s potential to create economic opportunities in rural communities, they have increasingly supported initiatives such as plantings of vines, other capital investments and sales and marketing campaigns”. Governments realized the benefits of wine production for the local economy. Hence, the governments are promoting wine tourism realizing the returns it provides. Another reason for the increased response to the wine industry is due to the change of values in society resulting in an increased interest in environmental issues. The ‘green’ tourist activities are gaining popularity due to increased interest in environmental issues. That is why agro- and eco-tourism have become a popular trend [5].

The Relationship between Wine, Heritage and Tourism

It has been noticed that in many countries wine is simultaneously an expression of the culture of a territory and a reservoir of traditions rooted in antiquity. It identifies a local community and its identity.

Wine is also a part of the heritage of a place. It is especially closer to it when it is identified by quality labels and brands that protect its identity and depend on the territory in which it is produced [6].

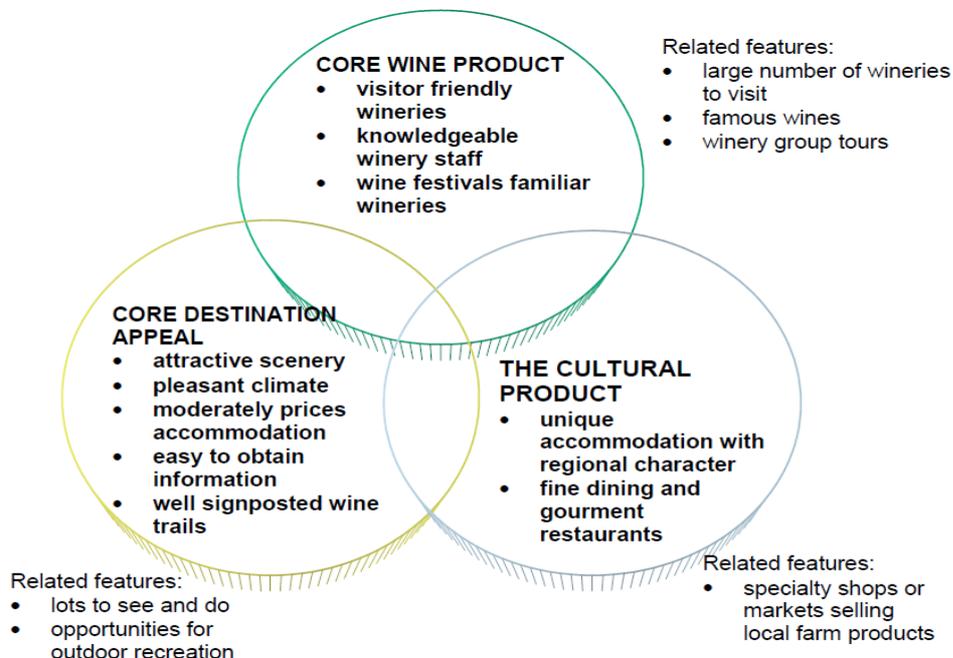
Economic and Social Benefits of Wine Tourism to Wine Regions and the Wine Industry

- Increasing the number of visitors and repeat visits
- Extending length of stay and money spent by visitors
- Enhancing visitor satisfaction by increasing activities for tourists
- Broadening the market for cellar door sales [7].

Motivations for Wine Tourists to Visit

The motivation for tourists visiting wine regions varies depending on interest, age and nationality. There ten major reasons why people go visit wineries [8]:

- To taste wine.
- To gain the knowledge about a product/ industry.
- To experience wine setting, this can include meeting a winemaker and tour of vineyards and wine cellars.
- To enjoy the beauty of countryside, learn about farming and agri-tourism.
- To appreciate the combination of local food and wine. This kind of vacation has its own name, which is culinary tourism.
- To enjoy yourself, have fun. More emphasis is put on festivals and special events.
- To enjoy the romance and elegance of wine culture.
- To appreciate agriculture and art.
- To gain knowledge about “green” and eco-tourism.
- To enjoy the health aspects of wine.



Source: Getz and Brown, 2006

Figure 1. Wine Tourism Experience from the Consumer Perspective [9]

The study of Getz and Brown reveals five primary features which vineyard visitors take into account when searching for a place to go. Firstly, tourists take into consideration whether a winery is visitor friendly or not. Secondly, it is important if the region is rich in attractions and activities. Thirdly, visitors are concerned about attractiveness of scenery. Fourthly, they would like to make sure that winery staff are knowledgeable about wine. Finally, travelers want to know if wineries are offering group tour options.

Classification of Wine Tourists

To develop and market wine destinations and wine tourism products, it is essential to understand who winery visitors are, by understanding their perception regarding the important attributes within wineries and wine regions, which might include a wide range of attractions and activities. This insight may provide managerial and marketing tools for wineries and wine regions.

There are three main categories of wine tourists [10]

- Accidental
- Interested and
- Dedicated.

- **Accidental visitors or curious tourists**
 - Wineries seen as a tourist attraction of the region visited.
 - A cellar door visit is an opportunity for a social occasion with friends or family.
 - Below average knowledge of wines, but moderately interested in wine.
 - Interest and curiosity aroused by drinking wine, road signs, brochures or general tourism promotion.
 - Moderate income and education.
 - May purchase at winery but unlikely to join mailing list.

- **Interested wine tourists**
 - Cellar door visit is an enhancement to their trip, but not the prime motivation for visiting the region.
 - Moderate to high interest in wine.
 - Moderate to high income, usually tertiary educated.
 - Likely to have visited other wine regions.
 - Likely to purchase wine at winery.
 - Likely to join a mailing list.

- **Dedicated wine tourists**
 - Wine lovers who visit wine regions frequently as an integral part of a trip.
 - Above average knowledge of wine.
 - Extremely interested in wine and winemaking.
 - Mature, high income, high education level.
 - Likely to purchase wine at winery.
 - Likely to join mailing list.

Growth of Wine Tourism in Asia: a Booming Wine Market

Asian market overview

While the demand in Europe is declining and the growth in the United States is expected to slow in the near future, most forecasts on wine consumption point to one distinct growth area – Asia.

Currently, the combined wine consumption in Asia (excluding Japan) is about US\$7 billion, and represents merely 7% of the worldwide consumption value, or equivalent to 13% of the combined European consumption and 40% of that of the United States.

However, Asia's growth is estimated by industry analysts to be in the tune of 10 to 20% per annum in the next five years with the Chinese mainland, Hong Kong, Singapore, Korea, Taiwan, Thailand and India leading the charge. The growth of Asian markets looks even more spectacular amidst the global market growth of less than 1% in the next five years.

With this growth rate, the consumption value in Asia is expected to double the current amount to reach US\$17 billion in 2012 and jump to US\$27 billion by 2017. It is also projected that by 2017, Asia's gross wine consumption value will surpass that of the United States and account for over 20% of the worldwide consumption.

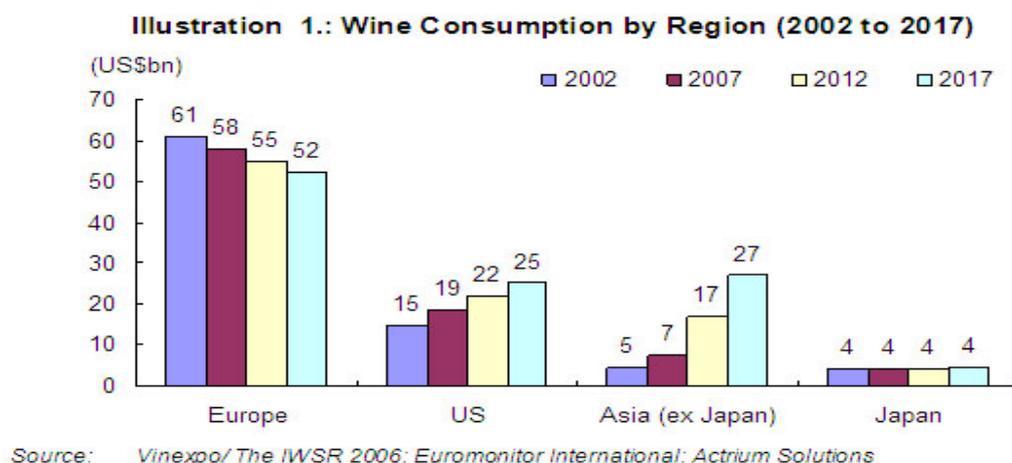


Figure 2. Projected Wine Consumption by Region, 2002-2017.

Source: <http://www.hktdc.com/info/mi/a/ef/en/1X0040Z1/1/Economic-Forum/Hong-Kong-As-A-Wine-Trading-And-Distribution-Centre-Opportunity-For-Creating-A-New-Industry.htm>

This optimistic outlook of the Asian market is based on the region's strong economic performance, the burgeoning middle class, increasing affluence of its people and still small per capita consumption. Other principal drivers of growth are lifestyle and health consciousness. Those who are health conscious are switching from strong spirits to wines, while the western-educated generation has found wine more agreeable with their palates and lifestyle than other types of alcoholic beverages. In some economies like the China, the government actually encourages consumption of wines which are made from grapes and discourages grain-based alcoholic beverages to preserve food for the growing population [11].

Asian key market for wine: India

The growing welfare, the slow improvement of social issues and the current deregulation are supporting the expansion of the alcoholic drinks sector; the business impressively grew in the last three years. Even though wine represents only 1% of the alcohol consumption in India, recent trends and those expected in the next four years make it a very interesting reality.

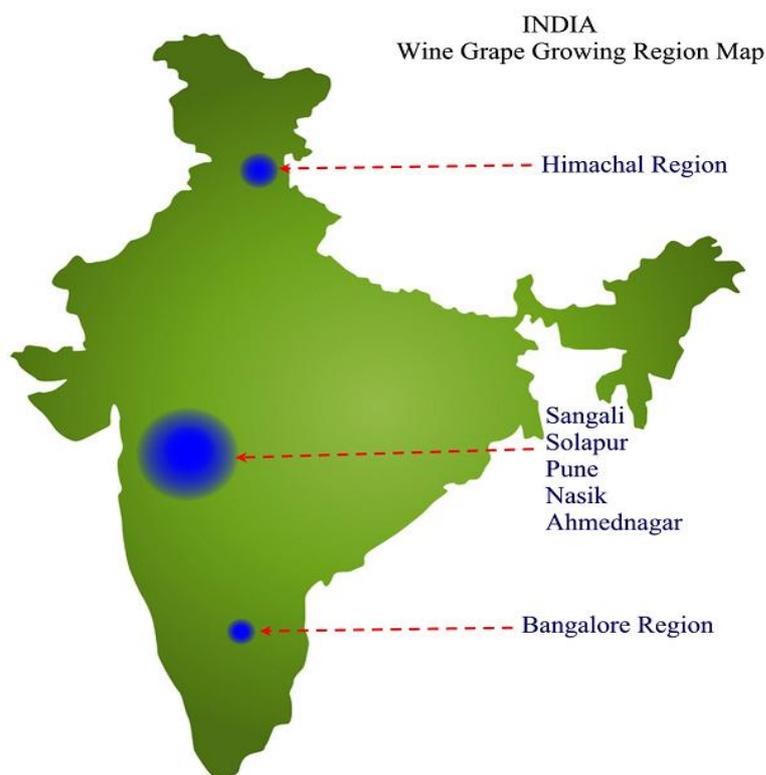


Figure 3. India as a Wine Producer.

Source: <http://www.indiawines.org/indian-wine-grape-growing-regions.html>

India is fast emerging as a good quality wine producer in the world. The predominant producing regions are as follows [12]:

- **Nasik Region (Maharashtra State):** This is the largest wine grape producing region in the country. This region includes Pune, Nasik and Ahmed Nagar. Many top wineries are located in this area including Chateau d' Ori and Sula Wines.
- **Sangali Region (Maharashtra State):** This region includes Solapur, Sangali, Satara and Latur.
- **Bangalore Region (Karnataka State):** This is located to the North of Bangalore City. The famous Grover Vineyards is situated here.
- **Himatchal Region:** This area is located in north of India. It is an emerging region for wine production.

The Indian sector is dynamic, local distribution companies are increasing their power and prices, making wine consumption more attractive for Indian consumers. 80% of the wine consumed in the country is produced in India, while exports are low. The local wine industry is still young and supported by the Government, but it is very dynamic at the same time. Local companies aim at increasing production, therefore stimulating more local operators to enter the market arena. The internal competition is rapidly growing even if the larger part of the market is still concentrated in the hands of a few big companies, the first three holding a 75% market share.

Production is mainly focused in Maharashtra State (90% of the total production), while the remainder is produced in Bangalore State. International grape varieties are grown in large quantities, together with a limited number of local ones.

The fledgling wine culture in India, together with the high level of taxes and duties, makes imports still limited to only 20% of the wine consumed in the country. Indian consumers are very price sensitive. Half the bottles are sold at less than US\$10, a segment populated by well-known brands. In the retail sector, average prices decreased in 2008, with sales led by local brands in the basic segment (less than US\$5) and by frequent promotions (in particular, the buy-one-get-one-free). The on-premise sector is subject to similar trends, because of reduced hotel mark-ups.

Advertising wine, as well as all the other alcoholic drinks, is illegal in India. Despite this, promotional events for consumers and operators are more frequently organised. As a result, a good knowledge of the product is spreading throughout the country.

In the retail sector, discounts on prices, distribution of free samples and the 'buy-one-get-one-free' campaigns are basic but common promotional tools. On the other hand, the on-trade channel bases its promotion activities on tasting events and food and wine matching sessions, which are usually organised in luxury hotels. Moreover, some of the local companies are starting to explore the potential of wine tourism, especially in the Nashik region (Maharashtra State), offering vineyard and cellar tours and hospitality in resorts [13].

Wine Tourism in India

The Indian government has been taking a number of initiatives to bring tourism back to the country. The Ministry of Tourism has adopted various tourism themes in that have increased the influx of tourists. The latest of all is wine tourism, although many eyebrows were raised by this theme, as India has always been seen as a country oriented towards culture and heritage. The big question that came forward was – will it affect its identity? However, after much brainstorming, the government has identified the significance of wine tourism in India. Although relatively new, wine tourism is catching up with other areas and would soon give good competition to other tourism themes [14].

Wine tourism in Maharashtra

Maharashtra has always been viewed as a commercial state as it includes the commercial capital Mumbai, semi-urban areas of importance and historical monuments. However, to truly market it internationally as a tourism haven, one needs to diversify tourism products and offer products of international standards. Wine tourism, with its gaining popularity globally, would completely fit the bill, especially with regards to meeting international demand. Maharashtra Tourism Development Corporation (MTDC) at this point is on a very high drive to achieve that and even the state government is very encouraging towards this endeavour.

In an attempt to put Maharashtra on the world wine map and position it as a new world wine destination, wine producers and the MTDC are to promote the Sahyadri Valley region as a wine tourism hub, using Napa Valley and the likes as models [15].

Maharashtra wine circuit: Nasik, Baramati, Sangli

India may not yet be a big destination for wine tours, but the wineries in the Nashik region of Maharashtra are certainly becoming popular for weekend breaks, between December and March every year. While about a half of India's wineries are located near Nashik, other regions with smaller wineries include Baramati and Sangli [16].

This paper focuses upon the Nasik area as a wine tourism destination. Nasik has a strategic location advantage from major visitor bases of Mumbai and Pune.

Nasik: The Wine Tourism Capital of India

Nasik (or Nashik) is a religious city in Maharashtra located in the northwest part of the state. Nasik has been called the "Wine Capital of India" and is situated in the Western Ghats, on the banks of the River Godavari. This city has proved to be the best ever rising metropolis in Maharashtra and has grown immensely in the past two decades [17].

Table 1. Description of Nasik as a wine growing region.

Region	State	Geographical Description
1. Nasik	Maharashtra	2000 ft above sea level 19-33 to 20-53 North Latitude. 73-16 to 75-6 East Longitude

Source- Marketing Mastermind – February 2010- ICFAI University Press 2010

Many people are going on wine tours to Nasik because they want to do something different from the usual weekend breaks. They end up enjoying the relaxing experience which is perfect for families and friends to spend time with good food and wine. The socialising aspect is as much part of the wine tour as is wine tasting. Most of these customers may not be regular wine drinkers but are looking for a new experience. Besides weekend groups, there are also serious overseas travellers who are keen on following the wine trails in India. This group is well-travelled around international wine circuits and have a good understanding of wine. They are here to taste Indian wine after having tasted wine from established regions around the world for years. Besides wine tasting, the vineyards offer a relaxed ambience and an opportunity to meet the winemakers and understand the process of wine making. In addition, tourists also buy wine at discounts at wineries and pick up merchandise at the wine stores [18].

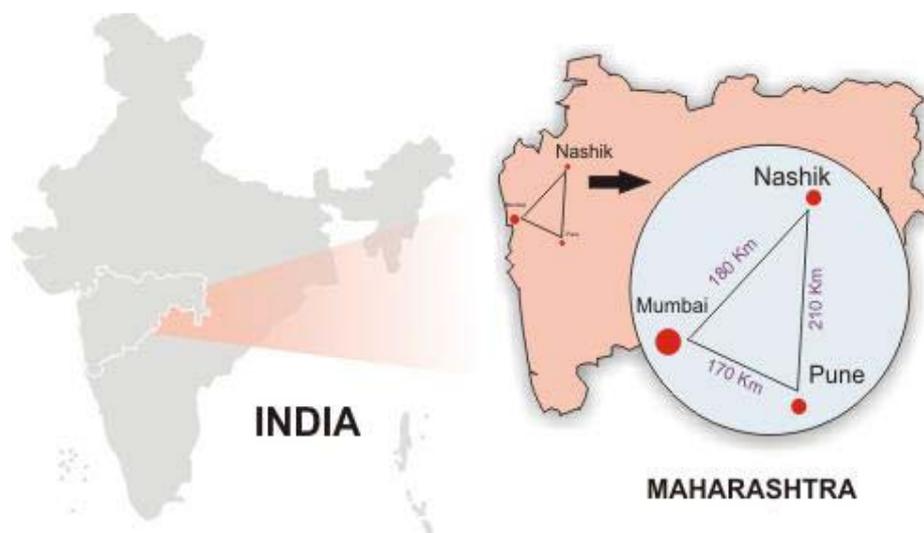


Figure 4. Strategic Location of Nashik from Key Wine Consumer Markets.

Source: <http://deccantravel.com/nashik-deccan-travel-tours-trekking-nashik-india.htm>

Wine tourist attractions in Nashik

Wine tourism is the new buzzword in Nashik, around four hours from Mumbai. There are now almost 50 wineries in and around Nashik, and excitingly for wine connoisseurs and consumers, many Nashik vineyards now have tasting rooms that are open to the public. What is also appealing is that discounts of 10-20% on retail price are available on purchases. The vineyards fan out in all directions from Nashik [19].

Sula Vineyards

Sula is perhaps India's most popular and most accessible winery. Sula organises combining wine with music at Sulafest, held there in February/March every year. Sula also offers a one day wine appreciation course every Thursday [20].

Wines: Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Rose, Sparkling Brut, Viognier, Reisling, Shiraz, Merlot, Zinfandel, Cabernet Sauvignon.

Chateau d'Ori

Significant effort is being put into developing the 400 acres of vineyards as a tourist destination, with three artificial lakes for boating and other water sports, luxury farmhouse accommodation and ambient wine tasting lounge. The winery's state-of-the-art technology is also worth seeing [20].

Wines: Sauvignon Blanc, Rose, Merlot, Syrah, Cabernet Sauvignon.

Vintage Wines/Reveilo

Vintage Wines has become the first winery in India to produce wines from Italian grapes [20].

Wines: Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Syrah, Chardonnay, Cabernet sauvignon.

Tiger Hill Vineyards

The attractive thing about this resort is that it has a tasting lounge bar and offers a wide range of wines at very reasonable prices. It is worth a visit for tourists seeking quality wines. The vineyard

talks about the ancient links to India's wine culture – Ayurvedic. Thousands of years ago, wine was made and enjoyed in India for health purposes. It still is. The resort offers a vinotherapy spa and has ISO 9001-2000 certification Kerala Vaidyashala [21].

Wines: Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay, Chardonnay Semillon, Merlot, Shiraz, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot/Shiraz (double varietal), white Zinfandel (rose).

Mountain View

This winery had its first crush in 2005. Since then it has gone on to produce some quality wines, albeit in small quantities. The owners are keen on the idea of wine tourism and are in the process of developing a restaurant and accommodation on the vineyard [20].

Wines: Sauvignon Blanc, Chenin Blanc, Rose, Shiraz-Cabernet.

Valle de Vin/Zampa Wines

With its ambient modern setting, with sunny courtyards and patios, this vineyard is a relaxing place to break the journey. Additionally, the winery's premium Zampa wine brand is becoming recognized as one of the best in India. There are also plans to build accommodation on the vineyard [20].

Wines: Chenin Blanc, Sauvignon Blanc, Cabernet Sauvignon, Shiraz, Sparkling Rose and Brut.

Hypothetical wine tourism destination life cycle

Wine tourism development, however, is a destination-wide issue and thus, Getz and Tomljenovic (under review) proposed a model of a wine tourism destination life-cycle, introducing the marketing, regional and strategic dimensions as shown in Table 2 [23].

Benefits of wine tourism for wineries in Maharashtra

The wine tours allow the winemakers to create personal relationships with customers, this later can lead to the direct or indirect sales through positive “word of mouth” [24]. Furthermore, direct sales to the consumer results in increased margins due to reduction of distributor costs. Additionally, producers gain marketing intelligence on products and consumers through getting an instant and valuable feedback from the customers. With the winery serving as an additional sales outlet, it can make a big difference for small businesses, especially if there are other by-products such as food and souvenirs. Finally, winery visitations lead to brand awareness and loyalty due to establishing links between producers and consumers and purchasing of company branded merchandise. Besides its contribution to wineries, wine tourism is considered to be an important element in the tourism industry in that the sector experience develops through the investment inflow which is the result of the increasing number of new wineries.

Wine tourism plays the role of an initiator for regional development which increases regional employment and economical advancement of an area. However, besides the benefits of wine tourism there a number of challenges for wineries in general.

Table 2. Wine tourism destination life cycle.

Four Stages & Characteristics	1: Incipient Wine Tourism	2: Developing	3: Mature	4: Declining
Scale of Wine Tourism	wineries were mostly established without regard for tourism; very few wine tourists	growth in wine tourist volume; new wineries designed for tourism; "Landmark" wineries established (Nasik 2011)	high levels of wine tourism development and competition	decline in volume of visitors; some wineries might become unprofitable and disappear
Types of Tourism	none, or the established visitor segments are not interested in wine	growth in dedicated wine tourists; some mass tourism at landmark wineries (Nasik 2011)	a broad mix of visitor segments; tensions between niche segments and mass tourism	loss of dedicated wine tourists; lower yield per visitor
Importance of Wine Tourism to Wineries	tourism is strictly a sideline to most; many are not involved	a mix of tourist oriented and export-oriented wineries (Nasik 2011)	almost all wineries are involved; some are heavily dependent on cellar door sales	declining cellar door and other retail sales; higher dependence on other distribution modes
Importance of Wine Tourism to the Region	perceived to be minor; some visionaries see the potential	recognition of potential, based on visible trends; general desire to grow wine tourism (Nasik 2011)	employment and economic impact of wine tourism is recognized and might be the dominant activity	declining economic importance of wine tourism might be seen as a regional crisis
Strategies	encourage and aid entrepreneurship; attract investment; set a vision	branding of the wine tourism destination; focus on high-yield wine tourists; integrate wine and other policy domains (Nasik 2011)	focus on sustainability; possibly demarketing to reduce mass tourism	repositioning is needed; create new selling proposition (uniqueness stressed); quality of wines stressed
Political Issues	complacency might impede or kill wine tourism development	policy is required, and resolution of conflicting interests will be a challenge (Nasik 2011)	growing costs of tourism present ongoing political challenges	Can the causes be rectified? At what cost?

Source: http://www.kgptour.tuke.sk/conferences_soubory/pdf%20f%207%202%2007/10_1_Tomljenovic%20Kosice.pdf

Challenges of wine tourism for wineries in Maharashtra

The government support is important for industry development. It is a major help to small wineries especially. "Public infrastructure, signage, the creation of wine routes, and the need for region-wide marketing initiatives are vital, as most wineries lack the funding or authority to create their external tourism product independently" [24].

Furthermore, wine tourism cannot function successfully without partnership within the community. Strong cooperation with restaurants and hotels, police, medical agencies, employment services and environmental groups are widely needed to support the growth of the wine tourism industry. Finally, it is crucial to take good care of the environment and preserve the rural beauty of the vineyards so the region can keep its status as a wine destination.

Wine Tourism Model

The research literature on wine tourism discusses certain wine tourism models which are explained in the following paragraphs [25]. These models are the tools used by the wine sector to develop visits to vineyards by taking advantage of another steadily growing economic as well as tourism sector.

Heritage wine tourism model

This is defined as the European model closely linked to tradition, to the monuments and cultural landscape. Since this concerns countries with a strong wine export tradition, tourism generates an external image in conjunction to heritage, landscape, culture and architecture. It generates an internal image so as to maintain high consumption levels and protection from interference from abroad. It encourages links with the region even when brands are imposed. It is closely linked to local development and promotes the participation of small producers to enhance the authenticity of the product. It is promoted by regional institutions and also relies on local networks for its promotion. The model has to adapt the traditional productive sector to the wine tourism initiatives.

Leadership in the training and recreation model

This model, mostly seen in the New World, was created to generate new customers, and it is better adapted to wine tourism because it was developed in parallel with the creation of new markets. The production structure of higher dimensions facilitates the supply of wine based products for large contingents. The main challenge is how to incorporate territorial authenticity in a model dominated by brands. The territory is linked to protected natural areas to provide value to its own material substrate. The larger concentration and business promotion activities allow establishing intense and ambitious proposals for wine tourism.

Followers of the model developed by leading wine tourism countries

The conditions here are very uneven. For example, Argentina tries to import the European model, especially the French, as certain conditions are similar: high tradition in the consumption and a fragmentation of the productive sector. Other countries, with a more concentrated production sector and a weaker domestic consumption, try to follow the experiences of Anglo-Saxon countries and their wine tourism model. In any case, the economic capacity and the volume of domestic consumption are conditional to the development of a specific model of wine tourism.

Conclusion and Suggestions

Wine tourism model for Maharashtra (Nasik)

India, as a new world wine country, cannot replicate the wine tourism model developed by old world countries, despite having a culture and traditions stretching back for many centuries. The model of the new world was created to generate new customers and it better adapted to wine tourism because it was developed in parallel with the creation of new markets. The wine tourism in Maharashtra, especially the Nasik region, is still at a nascent stage and needs a proper tourism development plan. Conscious collaborative efforts are required from the wine and tourism industries to come together and form a wine tourism development board. Such board or body should own the overall wine tourism road map and will remain committed to finance and support its implementation. A long term development program needs to undertaken which includes development of overall road infrastructure for better accessibility, affordable accommodation and restaurants, accessibility to airports, uninterrupted access to basic amenities like water and electricity, tourism information centre for tourist guidance, enthusiastic wine clubs and tasting centres, Indian wine history museum, corporate tie up for corporate events, theme-based wine festivals, wine by-products i.e. beauty products, souvenirs and spas etc. The wine tourism board also needs to undertake measures which include integrating wine tourism marketing with other state and national level tourism marketing drives. Wine tourism marketing should be taken to the next level of using international tourism channels like Incredible India, Agro-tourism and Indian tourism.

In summary, the expected outcomes of this model are the following:

It will have an impact of more inflow of tourists to the region. Tourists will enjoy a tourism experience which is more value for money, gain more knowledge of wines and develop a taste for wine. It will also create awareness about wines among consumers as Indian consumers are currently mostly wine illiterate. Once consumers experience wine tasting it will definitely boost the sale of local Indian wines from the cellar door. As this model talks about collaboration of wine producers and tourism industry it will also bring more opportunity to local farmers and other residents in the wine region vicinity.

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