

WINE, CULTURE AND CONNECTION: EXPLORING THE OPPORTUNITIES OF WINE TOURISM IN ROMANIA

Andreea Iuliana VÎRLAN (SAVA), Maria BOBEICĂ (COLPOȘ),
Georgiana Armenița ARGHIROIU, Silviu BECIU

University of Agronomic Sciences and Veterinary Medicine Bucharest, 59 Marasti Boulevard,
District 1, 011464, Bucharest, Romania, Phone: +40213182564, Fax: +40213182888, Mobile:
+40744 6474 10, E-mails: savasistems.work@gmail.com, maria.colpos@managusamv.ro,
arghiroi.armenita@managusamv.ro, beciu.silviu@managusamv.ro

Corresponding author: arghiroi.armenita@managusamv.ro

Abstract

Romania, with its millennia-old viticultural tradition, has significant potential to develop wine tourism as a driver of rural development, cultural preservation, and economic growth. While vineyards have long been integral to local culture, wine tourism has only recently emerged as a niche blending heritage, gastronomy, and immersive experiences. Historically, vineyards focused on grape production, but diversification led to complementary activities like tourism. Initially centred on passive observation during vineyard tours, wine tourism is now shifting towards experiential activities, engaging visitors in the stories and culture of winemaking. Despite its potential, the sector lacks in-depth research or a detailed SWOT analysis. This paper traces the sector's evolution from traditional grape cultivation to an industry balancing production and tourism and identifies key opportunities and challenges, emphasizing the need for strategic investments. These include creating cohesive wine routes linking wineries and cultural landmarks, improving infrastructure, and launching targeted campaigns to position Romania as a global wine tourism destination. By addressing these needs, Romania can leverage its cultural heritage and exceptional wines to attract international audiences.

Key words: wine tourism, SWOT analysis, tourism diversification, wine routes.

INTRODUCTION

Like most other countries, Romania's wine industry was primarily production-focused at its roots. However, recent years saw a shift towards wine tourism, especially incorporating experiential tourism as a key component of economic diversification, both on a global and local level. Traditionally, winemaking in Romania was centred on agricultural output, with vineyards mainly producing wine for domestic consumption and export but, as the tourism sector has expanded globally, wine regions have understood the potential of their cultural and gastronomic assets to attract visitors. Today, wine tourism has emerged as a niche sector capable of blending production with immersive experiences, transforming vineyards into destinations where culture, heritage, and wine intertwine to offer more than just tastings [12], [26].

With a history older than 2000 years, Romania's winemaking industry has been one

of the oldest in Europe, with viticultural regions like Dealu Mare, Murfatlar, and Cotnari being central to grape cultivation, contributing to Romania's reputation for producing high-quality wines [2]. State-owned wine enterprises, especially during the socialist period, were primarily geared toward mass production, which limited their capacity for diversification, and even after Romania transitioned to capitalism and a market economy, many established wineries initially struggled to balance traditional production models with modern tourism demands [17]. Globally, wine tourism has experienced rapid growth, driven by the rising demand for personalized and experiential travel. Leading wine-producing regions such as Napa Valley (United States), Tuscany (Italy), and Bordeaux (France) have long capitalized on this trend by offering curated wine tours, luxury accommodations, and cultural events [12]. Keeping pace, emerging wine destinations in Eastern Europe, including Romania, are now

positioning themselves to compete on the international stage profiting from a global shift towards sustainable tourism and the increasing popularity of local, authentic experiences, which further enhance their potential to attract tourists seeking unique wine-related adventures [1]. Wine tourism in today's Romania presents a compelling combination of cultural heritage and gastronomy, offering experiences going beyond wine production, with visitors being able to explore ancient vineyards while learning about traditional winemaking techniques passed down through generations

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The current paper aims to investigate the evolution of wine tourism in Romania, analysing the sector's transition from traditional wine making practices to experiential tourism. As global wine tourism trends emphasize interactive and immersive visitor experiences [12], the research explores how Romanian wineries can capitalize on these trends. The paper's main objectives are:

- (1) Identify historical pathways in the sector, from early beginnings to present day;
- (2) Identify opportunities and challenges through a detailed SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis;
- (3) Propose pathways for sustainable growth, focusing on strategic investments, infrastructure development, and innovative marketing approaches.

We believe the chosen theme and objectives are highly beneficial to understanding the sector because as the wine industry moves beyond production and integrates tourism into its framework there will be a significant impact on the country's rural, economic, and cultural landscapes [24]. Currently, wine regions in Romania are not only centres of agricultural production but also hubs of local culture and history therefore wine tourism can help preserve traditional viticultural practices, folklore, and regional customs, ensuring their transmission to future generations.

Throughout the paper, we employed extraction and analysis of wine-related data from existing

statistics databases such as INSS, OIV and EUROSTAT, while also reviewing existing literature and media outlets articles to determine an updated picture of wine tourism's status in Romania. While gathering data and information available for the sector, we were able to identify the need for a comprehensive SWOT analysis of this industry, especially because it will help assess the feasibility of strategic interventions and can be a stepping stone for building a roadmap of addressing key challenges.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In Romania, winemaking plays a central role in the cultural and economic life of rural communities, where grape cultivation has traditionally been passed down through generations. The first written mentions of wine-making practices in the region were found to be made during Burebista's reign (around 66 BC) [27]. Archaeological proof shows that wine was a popular product for more than 4,500 years. Ever since, wine has been used as an exchange good, partying aid, and mystical supplement in Romanians' daily lives [27].

Prior to the 21st century, wine production was largely focused on agricultural output, with little to no attention paid to tourism. Producers were more concerned with the quantity and quality of the vineyards' output than with diversifying the farm's income. The peak of productivity in the sector was registered in Romania during the socialist era, when wineries operated under state control, prioritizing large-scale production rather than experiential activities. However, this approach actually endangered the sector because while the main focus was on quantity, the quality factor became non-existent, and Romanian wines dropped in prestige [8].

It wasn't until the post-communist transition and Romania's integration into global markets that wineries realized the need to adapt to newer times and began to explore tourism as a complementary avenue to boost revenue and promote local culture. Early efforts focused on basic vineyard tours, often characterized by passive observation of winemaking processes,

followed by brief wine tastings but these offerings lacked creativity and failed to engage visitors on a deeper level [28]. Repeating the experience held no appeal, because visitors saw everything there was to see during only one trip, and the poor infrastructure didn't help - poor road access and limited accommodations near vineyards hampered the sector's growth. Romania thus came to a position where it was becoming harder and harder to compete with countries like Italy, France or Spain who were already becoming established wine tourism destinations. Realizing that they need to keep up with evolving global trends and changing tourist preferences, Romanian wineries have begun to shift from dull "look but don't touch" tours, to

adopting practices that allow visitors to actively participate in the winemaking process, from grape harvesting to wine blending because of the understanding that tourists seek authentic interactions and personalized experiences. Visitors now days have access to a wide range of activities beyond wine tastings: hands-on workshops, vineyard picnics, traditional winemaking demonstrations, and guided storytelling sessions have become increasingly popular and wineries like Crama Țelna [6] and Domeniile Sâmburești [7] have incorporated cultural elements such as folk music performances, regional cuisine, and historical tours to enhance the visitor experience.



Fig.6. SWOT Analysis of the wine sector in Romania
Source: Own concept.

SWOT Analysis of the wine sector in Romania

While there are numerous research papers and media articles about the sector, in recent years, a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the sector from the perspective of wine tourism as a focal point, is missing. We decided to bring forward such an analysis and emphasize the invaluable potential we see in Romania's wine tourism (Figure 1).

a)Strengths

Rich cultural and historical heritage is the main competitive advantage of Romania on the international wine tourism map.

It's Millennia-old viticultural heritage offers a compelling narrative for attracting tourists, because as we previously mentioned, Romania's winemaking tradition dates back over 2,000 years, with archaeological evidence of ancient vineyards in the south of Romania.

Such an extensive background helps cellars with building a story around the place and helps them differentiate themselves from more industrialized wine regions by highlighting ancient practices, legends, and customs tied to wine production [28].

Testament to this approach are also the festivals like “Vin la Cultura” in Iasi, “WineUp Fair in Transylvania” in Cluj or “Artisan Food Market” in Bucharest, events that are gathering tens of thousands of visitors that are interested in finding more about Romania’s wines and stories.

Another strength of Romania when it comes to wine tourism is the fact that the country has very diverse wine regions. Historically, the country has been divided in 9 regions, Banat, Crişana, Maramureş, Transilvania, Bucovina, Moldova, Oltenia, Muntenia and Dobrogea, and naturally, the traditions and practices concerning wine cultivation and winemaking practices shaped according to local influences. Each region holds a significant number of wineries that bring flavour and appeal to Romania’s wine bouquet. Using Crame Romania’s website, we identified a total of 234 vineyards and cellars split across historical regions of Romania (Table 1).

Romanian law states that only 162 out of the known 10,000 grape varieties are permitted for cultivation on Romanian territory [18].

Table 1. Number of Wineries and Cellars in Romania

Region	Wineries
Crisana & Maramures	48
Transylvania	25
Banat	11
Oltenia & Muntenia	83
Bucharest	3
Moldova	38
Dobrogea	26
Total	234

Source: <https://www.crameromania.ro/en/regions> [5].

However, only 129 varieties are currently cultivated. Out of these, 59 are local varieties and 70 are international varieties.

The country’s main wine regions, such as Dealu Mare, Moldova, and Transylvania, benefit from varied microclimates, soil

compositions, and altitudes, which result in distinctive wine profiles. For example, the warm, sunny climate of Dealu Mare is ideal for producing full-bodied reds, while the cooler climate of Transylvania favours aromatic whites. Romania’s wine landscape and market is shaped by its rich historical regions, each with its own distinct terroir and winemaking traditions [21]. The country’s wide variety of wineries and the large number of grape varieties authorized for cultivation contribute to an impressive diversity in its wines. This makes Romania an increasingly attractive destination for both local and international tourists.

With its reputation as one of Europe’s most affordable travel destinations, Romania also stands out as a budget-friendly option for wine tourism. Compared to more established regions such as Tuscany, Bordeaux, or Napa Valley, Romania offers similar experiences—wine tastings, tours, and lodging—at significantly lower prices. This makes it especially appealing to budget-conscious travellers like young adults, backpackers, and wine lovers who want quality experiences without breaking the bank. For instance, a two-day wine tour in the Dealu Mare region costs around 230 EUR per person [33] while a similar tour in Bordeaux starts at around 750 EUR/person [10].

Interest in wine tourism is also growing among Romanians themselves. More people are embracing local wines, with events such as festivals, grape harvest celebrations, and wine-pairing dinners gaining popularity, particularly in cities like Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and Iaşi. At the same time, wine consumption is on the rise, reflecting a broader cultural shift in which wine is increasingly seen as a refined and leisurely choice [32].

In this context, the growing domestic interest provides wineries with a reliable market that can sustain their tourism efforts during off-peak seasons when international tourists may be fewer, and wineries, by continuing to engage the domestic audience through events, workshops, and promotional campaigns, can maintain steady visitor flows and revenue. Moreover, the involvement of local tourists helps create a sense of pride in Romania’s wine

heritage, further supporting its long-term preservation.

While regions like Dealu Mare or Moldova are already recognized for their contributions to Romanian wine production, several lesser-known regions, such as Crișana and Banat, offer untapped potential for tourism development. These emerging wine regions boast unique landscapes, microclimates, and traditional winemaking practices that have yet to be fully integrated into the national wine tourism strategies [14]. For example, Banat, located near the Serbian border, produces high-quality wines that could attract tourists interested in off-the-beaten-path destinations, since this area is not a very popular destination. At the same time, Crișana, with its rolling hills and family-owned vineyards, offers multiple opportunities for rural tourism, where visitors can experience authentic village life while exploring local wineries. But investing in infrastructure and promotional efforts are the main points of pressure to put on the authorities so that these regions could diversify Romania's wine tourism offerings and help distribute visitor traffic more evenly across the country.

b) Weaknesses

Romania's struggle with underdeveloped infrastructure is well-known, especially when compared to its Eastern European neighbours. Even though there's been some progress in recent years—due to European Union funding that's helped build highways and boost businesses—we still have a long way to go. The infrastructure gap underlines the need for ongoing investments and smarter planning, especially in rural areas where most wineries are located. Many of the major wine regions, such as Dealu Mare and Moldova, suffer from poorly maintained roads, limited transportation options, and inadequate signage leading to wineries, oftentimes made only in Romanian, not in English or other international language. For international visitors, navigating these regions without a private vehicle can be challenging, as public transportation and connections between airports and wine routes are often unreliable or non-existent [13]. Also, the lack of high-quality accommodations near wineries is another major issue, and wine regions have a shortage of hotels, guesthouses,

and other facilities that meet the standards expected by international tourists. The bright side is that some wineries have made efforts to provide on-site accommodations, however, the overall availability of comfortable accommodation remains insufficient. Moreover, basic visitor amenities, such as rest areas, restaurants, and tourist information centres, are often lacking, making it difficult for tourists to fully enjoy their experiences. We need to be aware of the fact that without addressing these infrastructure gaps, Romania cannot compete with more established wine tourism destinations.

Despite its rich wine heritage, diverse offerings, and award-winning wines, Romania has very low international visibility and remains relatively unknown on the global wine tourism map [34]. Unlike regions such as Bordeaux, Napa Valley or Tuscany, which have established strong international brands, Romanian wine regions have minimal presence in global tourism guides and wine publications, largely due to insufficient marketing campaigns targeting foreign audiences. While domestic tourism promotions have improved, efforts to attract international tourists are fragmented and underfunded. Romania's low international visibility is also tied to the limited export of its wines because although Romanian wines have started to gain recognition in international competitions, they remain largely unfamiliar to global consumers, which affects their ability to draw tourists. Additionally, the absence of collaborations with major travel agencies, influencers, and wine tourism platforms reduces Romania's reach in key markets such as Western Europe, the United States, and Asia.

Another significant weakness is the lack of coordination and collaboration among key stakeholders, including wineries, local governments, and tourism operators. Unlike established wine regions that operate within well-structured networks such as “Anivin de France” [30] or Consorzio Italia del Vino [4], many Romanian wine regions function independently, resulting in disjointed and inconsistent tourism offerings. Wineries often design their tours and events without collaborating with nearby businesses, leading

to missed opportunities for creating cohesive wine routes and multi-faceted tourism packages. While projects like CrameRomania and Wines of Romania try to gather all wineries together for promotion and cohesive interests, not all cellars are willing to participate. Moreover, there is no unified branding strategy for Romanian wine tourism, and while some regions have attempted to promote themselves individually, a national-level strategy that integrates all regions and presents a consistent message is lacking. This fragmented approach hampers Romania's potential to establish itself as a unified wine tourism destination and also impedes the country's efforts to develop regional tourism networks and launch a national promotional campaign.

While studying this market we observed that many Romanian wineries still rely on traditional tourism models that lack innovation and engagement. A large number of wineries offer simple wine tastings and vineyard tours, which do not meet the expectations of modern tourists seeking immersive experiences, while activities such as grape-picking, winemaking workshops, and food pairings are limited or only available at select wineries. Additionally, few wineries integrate cultural elements such as traditional music, storytelling, or local crafts into their tourism packages limiting their appeal to tourists seeking authentic, culturally rich experiences. To remain competitive, Romanian wineries need to expand their experiential offerings by introducing more interactive activities and collaborations with local artisans, chefs, and cultural performers to bring novelty and excitement to an otherwise simple event. This can be done not only through own funds but also by accessing national and European funding. According to MADR, the funds influx in this sector is of more than 45 million EUR annually [30].

Another obstacle to progress for Romanian wine tourism is the bureaucracy of the system. Wineries that aim to improve their performance by offering tourist experience must navigate a web of complex regulations—not only those related to viticulture, winemaking, and wine sales, but also laws concerning tourism, food services, and

hospitality. The process of obtaining the necessary licenses can be slow and confusing, with inconsistent policies and red tape often delaying projects. For instance, wineries may struggle to get permits for hosting events, constructing visitor facilities, or expanding their services. The situation is further complicated by the absence of clear guidelines for rural tourism development, which tends to deter investors and limit the sector's growth. Additionally, Romania's national tourism strategy does not currently prioritize wine tourism as a key element of rural development [20].

c) Opportunities

However, there is significant potential for growth, particularly through the rising global interest in experiential tourism. Today's travellers are increasingly drawn to experiences that allow for authentic engagement with local culture, rather than just passive sightseeing. This trend opens up exciting possibilities for Romanian wineries. Activities like grape harvesting, wine blending workshops, food and wine pairing events, and guided storytelling tours offer immersive experiences that connect visitors with the history and culture of winemaking. By incorporating regional traditions—such as folk music, local crafts, and traditional cuisine—wineries can create more memorable and culturally rich experiences that appeal to both domestic and international tourists. For example, wineries could host events where visitors learn about Romanian folklore related to wine and agriculture while enjoying traditional meals paired with local wines—such experiences could gather many participants.

As global awareness of environmental issues continues to grow, Romania has a significant opportunity to position itself as an eco-conscious wine tourism destination. Many travellers are now seeking destinations that prioritize sustainability and offer eco-friendly experiences and by promoting organic vineyards, sustainable farming practices, and environmentally friendly tourism services, Romania can align itself with this global trend and attract environmentally aware tourists [23].

Wineries can adopt practices such as organic grape cultivation, water conservation, and renewable energy use to enhance their sustainability credential while marketing campaigns highlighting these efforts could help position Romanian wine regions as leaders in green tourism. For example, eco-friendly accommodations, vineyard tours that educate visitors on sustainable winemaking, and farm-to-table dining experiences featuring locally sourced ingredients could become key selling points. Sustainability-themed wine routes could also be developed, offering tourists the chance to explore wineries that prioritize environmental conservation.

The digital era presents a valuable opportunity for Romania to enhance its visibility and attract a broader audience through targeted digital marketing efforts. Social media platforms, wine tourism apps, and virtual tours are effective tools that can help promote Romania's wine regions to both domestic and international audiences because wineries can showcase their offerings through engaging content, such as videos of vineyard tours, behind-the-scenes winemaking processes, and testimonials from visitors.

Additionally, augmented reality (AR) and virtual reality (VR) technologies can be used to create immersive digital experiences that allow potential tourists to explore vineyards and participate in virtual tastings from the comfort of their homes. This strategy would be particularly effective in reaching international tourists who may be hesitant to travel initially but could be enticed by a virtual glimpse of Romania's unique wine experiences. At the same time, collaborations with travel influencers, wine bloggers, and international tourism websites can further enhance Romania's digital presence paired with creating a dedicated online platform for booking wine tours, accommodations, and experiences could make it more appealing for tourists and get them to plan their visits [31].

Developing cohesive and well-marked wine tourism routes is another major opportunity for Romania. The creation of thematic wine routes that connect multiple wineries, cultural landmarks, and local attractions can enhance the overall visitor experience and encourage

longer stays. For example, routes could be designed around specific themes, such as local grape varieties, historical vineyards, or eco-friendly wineries. The integration of lesser-known wine regions, such as Crişana and Banat, into these routes would help distribute visitor traffic and stimulate rural development while increasing their popularity at the same time. Collaborating with local businesses along the routes—such as traditional restaurants, craft workshops, and historical sites—would also help to create multi-faceted itineraries that cater to a range of interests, from gastronomy enthusiasts to history or nature buffs [14].

Investments in infrastructure, such as improved roads, signage, and accommodations, will be crucial to the success of these routes. Regional and national tourism boards can collaborate with wineries and local authorities to develop maps, guides, and mobile apps that make it easy for tourists to navigate the routes and discover hidden gems. While international tourists are an important target, Romania's domestic market and neighbouring countries offer significant growth opportunities [3]. With increasing disposable incomes and a rising interest in weekend getaways among Romanian urban residents, domestic wine tourism is on the rise. Many city dwellers from Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Iaşi and Timişoara are already participating in wine festivals, vineyard tours, and wine-tasting events, providing a reliable year-round audience, while neighbouring countries, such as Hungary, Bulgaria, and Ukraine, represent additional markets where competition is less intense compared to established wine destinations in Western Europe. Regional marketing campaigns that promote cross-border travel could attract tourists seeking short-distance, affordable getaways while collaborations with regional travel agencies, combined with promotional events and wine fairs in nearby countries, could help drive regional tourism growth.

d) Threats

Romania faces intense competition from globally renowned wine tourism destinations, such as Tuscany (Italy), Bordeaux (France), and Napa Valley (United States), which have long-established brands, sophisticated

infrastructure, and strong international visibility and benefit from extensive marketing campaigns, high-profile wine festivals, luxury accommodations, and well-developed wine routes. They also have a loyal base of wine tourists, including high-income visitors willing to pay premium prices for curated experiences. Additionally, Romania must compete with other emerging wine tourism destinations from Eastern Europe, such as Hungary and Georgia. Hungary's Tokaj wine region [9], for instance, is internationally recognized for its sweet wines, while Georgia has gained attention for its ancient qvevri winemaking method [29], attracting tourists seeking authentic and historical experiences. These countries have invested in branding and infrastructure, potentially overshadowing Romania's efforts if strategic actions are not taken. To mitigate this threat, Romania needs to strengthen its branding and marketing efforts, emphasizing its unique indigenous grape varieties, rich cultural heritage, and affordability as differentiating factors.

Economic instability, at both the national and global levels, pose a significant threat to Romania's wine tourism sector. Periods of economic downturn can lead to reduced disposable income, limiting tourists' ability to travel and spend on leisure activities such as wine tours and tastings. Domestic tourists, who form a large portion of the market, may prioritize essential spending over discretionary travel during times of financial uncertainty [16]. Moreover, wineries themselves may face financial difficulties in maintaining or expanding their tourism offerings due to rising production costs, inflation, or fluctuating demand while smaller, family-owned wineries, in particular, may struggle to invest in infrastructure improvements or experiential tourism initiatives during economic downturns. Supportive government policies, such as tax incentives or grants tailored to rural tourism development, could play a crucial role in helping wineries navigate periods of economic uncertainty.

Climate change poses a growing threat to viticulture worldwide—and Romania is no exception. Shifts in temperature, changes in rainfall patterns, and more frequent extreme

weather events are already affecting grape production. Heatwaves, droughts, and unexpected frosts can lead to lower yields and alter the flavour profile of wines, which could ultimately damage the reputation of established wine regions [15]. Environmental issues like soil erosion and water scarcity add to the challenges, especially if vineyards don't adopt more sustainable farming methods.

To stay resilient, wineries will need to adapt by implementing eco-friendly practices such as diversifying crops, conserving water, and planting grape varieties that can withstand hotter, drier conditions. But this transition shouldn't fall solely on producers. Government involvement—through education programs and financial support for sustainable initiatives—can ease the burden and encourage wider adoption of environmentally responsible practices. Framing sustainability as a key part of Romania's wine tourism identity could also attract eco-conscious travellers, turning an environmental challenge into a strategic advantage for both tourism and the wine industry.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reshaped travel behaviours, with long-lasting effects on international tourism because although global travel has gradually recovered, lingering uncertainties around health and safety continue to influence tourist preferences [11]. Many travellers are now more cautious, prioritizing destinations that offer robust health protocols, outdoor experiences, and flexible booking options [22]. Given this context, Romania's wine tourism sector, particularly its small and family-run wineries, may struggle to implement the same level of health and safety measures as larger, more established destinations. And without adequate precautions, a segment of tourists may perceive Romania as a less secure travel option compared to destinations with stricter health guidelines and better medical infrastructure. Additionally, the pandemic accelerated the demand for digital and contactless services, including virtual tours and online wine tastings for which Romanian wineries fail to adapt. Failing to implement these new expectations risk losing potential visitors to competitors that offer more tech-savvy solutions.

While Romania currently faces the challenge of low visibility, over-tourism could become a threat if the sector grows rapidly without proper planning. Over-tourism can occur when large numbers of tourists overwhelm local communities, leading to environmental degradation, overcrowding, and a diminished visitor experience [25]. In rural wine regions, over-tourism could strain an already feeble infrastructure, disrupt local life, and contribute to the loss of authenticity, which is a key attraction for wine tourists. In extreme cases, wineries may shift their focus from quality wine production to mass tourism, potentially compromising the integrity of their products and the overall tourist experience. Additionally, the commercialization of cultural elements, such as hand-made objects, traditional festivals or folk performances, could result in their dilution, reducing their appeal to tourists seeking genuine cultural interactions.

To avoid over-tourism, Romania must adopt sustainable tourism development practices, such as visitor caps, zoning regulations, community engagement initiatives, promoting lesser-known wine regions, and distributing tourist traffic more evenly. These actions could help alleviate pressure on popular areas but active collaborative planning among wineries, local authorities, and tourism boards will be crucial to maintaining a balance between growth and sustainability.

CONCLUSIONS

The SWOT analysis of the Romanian wine tourism sector we performed in this current paper highlights its significant potential for growth, driven by its rich cultural heritage, diverse wine regions, and increasing domestic interest in wine tourism. However, several structural and promotional challenges hinder its ability to efficiently compete with more established wine destinations like Tuscany and Bordeaux. To address its challenges and fully capitalize on its opportunities, Romania needs an inter-disciplinary strategy that includes infrastructure improvements, marketing enhancements, and sustainable development initiatives.

First and foremost, Romania needs to address its infrastructure deficiencies. Upgrading road networks in major wine regions to improve accessibility for both domestic and international tourists, enhancing accommodations near wineries by encouraging investments in thematic hotels, eco-lodges, and vineyard stays, or developing better transportation options, such as shuttle services between major cities and wine regions, to facilitate visits would be highly beneficial. Enhancing local infrastructure and accessibility to wineries is a key first step on the route to enhancing sector performance and productivity.

Strengthening international visibility and branding would also be highly beneficial, especially through creating a national branding strategy that highlights Romania's unique wines, indigenous grape varieties, and affordability. This can be done by launching targeted digital marketing campaigns through social media, travel influencers, and international wine publications, participating in global wine tourism fairs and events to promote Romanian wine tourism to an international audience and why not, even out-of-the-box guerrilla marketing campaigns.

To keep up with the international competitors, Romania needs to focus on building high-demand experiences in local wineries. The country as a whole need to expand its experiential offerings such as grape-picking festivals, wine-blending workshops, and traditional food and wine pairing while at the same time integrating cultural and historical elements into wine tours, including visits to historical sites, folk performances, and storytelling. National government programs need to fund projects that encourage wineries to offer personalized experiences like private tours, exclusive tastings, and luxury vineyard stays so that we could cater not only to deal-seeking tourists but also high-end luxury travellers.

Getting all stakeholders at the same table when building the strategies is essential because only through partnerships and collaboration the sector will be able to thrive.

Strengthening of the partnerships can be fruitfully done by establishing regional wine

tourism associations to improve coordination between wineries, local governments, and tour operators, by developing cohesive wine tourism routes linking wineries with cultural landmarks and gastronomy experiences or by facilitating meetings to gather local businesses together that could eventually complement each other.

Promoting Romania as an eco-friendly destination for wine lovers can bank on global sustainability trends while genuinely having a positive impact on the environment. By encouraging sustainable winemaking practices, such as organic farming, water conservation, and biodiversity protection and by developing eco-tourism programs, (including vineyard cycling tours and farm-to-table experiences) wineries can gain a competitive advantage while at the same time making a positive change around them.

Last but not least, no progress can be made without legislative and administrative support. The government needs to simplify regulatory and bureaucratic procedures for wineries and tourism operators to encourage investment and innovation, to provide financial incentives for wineries adopting sustainable practices and investing in tourism infrastructure and to develop national policies that position wine tourism as a key driver of rural economic development.

By implementing this type of development strategies, Romania could transform its wine tourism sector into a globally recognized and competitive industry. A strategic approach that focuses on infrastructure, branding, experience diversification, collaboration, sustainability, and policy support will ensure long-term success while preserving Romania's unique wine heritage.

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