Collaborative Performances of Wine Tourism Destinations in the Northern Rhone Valley

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Abstract

Purpose: The main aim of this article was to identify the wine tourism destination models set up on collaborative performances driven by Tourism Offices (Destination Marketing Organization, DMO) and wineries (private enterprises) from the appellate areas in the Northen Rhone Valley.

Design/methodology/approach: The ethnographical methodology was used, including methods of participating observation (applied by a mysterious tourist method), study tours (to explore the study field), expert analysis (based on knowledge exchange with Tourism Office Managers) and official interviews (with Mangers of small and large wine producers from the areas).

Findings: Two of the three surveyed wine tourism destinations from the Northern Rhône Valley (Vienne Condrieu and Rhône Crussol) are distinguished by the very active role of tourism organizations in building collaborative wine tourism offerings, in particular with small wineries. The third destination surveyed (Ardèche Hermitage) is more oriented toward collaborations with large wine producers and their independent role in leading wine tourism marketing.

Research limitations/implications: Managers of tourism organizations should be oriented toward collaboration with both: large and small wine producers. Large wineries are helpful in raising the visibility and image of a wine destination. Small producers, on the other hand, offer a distinctive and individual wine tourism experience.

Originality/value: The key aspect of wine tourism marketing is the building of collaborative wine tourism offerings led by DMO's collaboration with both large and small wineries from the destination.

Keywords: wine tourism destination, wine tourism marketing, destination marketing organizations, wine tourism experience, Northern Rhone Valley.

JEL: M31, L83, L32

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Kolaboratywność destynacji turystyki winiarskiej w Dolinie Północnego Rodanu

Streszczenie

Cel: głównym celem artykułu było zidentyfikowanie modeli marketingu turystyki winiarskiej stworzonych w oparciu o współpracy lokalnych organizacji turystycznych (*Destination Marketing Organization, DMO*) i winiarni z apelacyjnych obszarów winiarskich z północnej części Doliny Rodanu.

Design/metodologia/podejście: zastosowano metodologię etnograficzną, w tym metody obserwacji uczestniczącej (tajemniczy turysta w biurze informacji turystycznej oraz winiarniach), badań terenowych oraz analiz eksperckich (wywiady z menedżerami organizacji turystycznych oraz małych i dużych producentów wina).

Wnioski: dwie z trzech badanych destynacji turystyki winiarskiej z Północnej Doliny Rodanu (Vienne Condrieu i Rhône Crussol) wyróżnia bardzo aktywna rola organizacji turystycznych w budowaniu kolaboratywnej oferty enoturystycznej w szczególności z małymi winiarniami. Trzecia z badanych destynacji (Ardèche Hermitage) jest bardziej nastawiona na współpracę z dużymi producentami wina oraz prowadzenie przez nich samodzielnych działań marketingu enoturystyki.

Ograniczenia/wnioski z badań: menedżerowie organizacji turystycznych powinni być zorientowani na współpracę zarówno z dużymi, jak i z małymi producentami wina. Duże winiarnie są pomocne w zwiększaniu widoczności i wizerunku destynacji winiarskiej. Mali producenci oferują natomiast bardziej indywidualne doświadczenie enoturystyczne.

Oryginalność/wartość: kluczowym aspektem marketingu turystyki winiarskiej jest budowanie kolaboratywnej oferty enoturystycznej (współpraca DMO tak z dużymi, jak i z małymi winiarniami z destynacji).

Słowa kluczowe: destynacja turystyki winiarskiej, marketing turystyki winiarskiej; organizacje turystyczne, doświadczenie enoturystyczne; Dolina Północnego Rodanu.

1. Introduction

Collaborative destination performance matches two theoretical perspectives: wine tourism marketing and tourism destination collaboration. The two closely interfere by taking collaboration in the centre of tourism destination marketing, which, according to the recent literature, can develop a unique network of wine tourism offerings (Fyall et al., 2012). Although it seems natural to collaborate for the sake of common win-win relationship within a wine tourism network, it rarely happens due to the very competitive wine business ecosystem. From the producer point of view, wine tourism is a tool of marketing strategy and brand awareness, whereas the destination context treats the wine tourism ecosystem as a condition to co-create collective products such as wine routes, by which a destination recognition can be strategically strengthen (McGregor & Robinson, 2019; Sigala & Robinson, 2019; Williams, 2001). Yet, to do it, territorial actors must engage into the collective actions integrated by the DMOs (Destination Marketing Organization) (Bornhorst et al., 2010).

Therefore, the wine tourism collaboration can be viewed from the perspective of engagement of tourism actors into a network as well as from collaborative initiatives, actions or projects (Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011). The main point is

to co-create a win-win relationship in the wine tourism ecosystem between wineries and/or wine producers (Carvalho et al., 2021). DMOs in France are usually public bodies govern by the administrative areas such as Regions, Departments and Agglomerations which perform destination marketing actions on the international, national and local level, respectively. So, the multilevel French system plus the very competitive local market of wine business makes the wine destination management a very complex game (Fyall et al., 2012).

In the wine researches, wine tourism collaboration has been divided into the marketing and destination aspect, but, in practice, they can be linked by the idea of destination collaboration for a successful marketing performance. For this reason, the research goal of the study was to explore the reciprocal approach that encompasses the aforementioned aspects in one collaborative performance of wine tourism destination. The conceptual manoeuvre is, thus, the result of the research gap in the literature dedicated to Wine Destination Management in which marketing actions are analysed either through performances of DMOs based on the destination governance' approaches (e.g., Pechlaner et al., 2012; Festa et al., 2015; Guedes, 2022) or through performances of wineries based on the wine consumer-service and experience approaches (e.g., Mitchell et al., 2009; Joy et al., 2018; Madeira et al., 2019). To exemplify destination collaborative performances understood as a collective action implied into a wine destination market, there were conducted analysis of three case studies from the Northern Rhone Valley in France: *Condrieu Côte-Rôtie, Ardèche Hermitage, Rhône Crussol*. In terms of wine destination images, the three wine-growing areas are similar by being recognised as the world-famous Grand Cru appellations according to the AOC accreditation system (*Appellation d'origine contrôlée*) of the Rhone Valley wines. But in terms of destinations collaborative performances, they tend to make dissimilar relationship models which affects their setup of wine offerings, events, products and communication.

2. Literature Review

When wine tourism marketing is discussed, various elements are examined. Wine tourism can be performed by both, in destination and at wineries (Getz et al., 1999). Therefore, surveys based on researching the marketing approach are focused on consumer behaviour, wine tourists' perceptions and segmentations as well as on wine experiences.

The meaning, types, and contexts of wine tourism experience have been explored by many different ways. It can be discussed in the strict sense as a combination of quality of wine, service and experience (Getz et al., 1999; Santos et al., 2019) or, more recently, in the wider sense as the hedonistic (Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Quadri-Felitti & Fiore, 2012), cultural (Mason & O'Mahony, 2007), interactive (Carvalho et al., 2021) and holistic (Cuomo et al., 2016; Cubillas et al., 2017) nature of time spending at a wine destination.

Approaches related to segmentations, motivations and the purchasing power of wine tourists are another direction in the wine tourism researches (Alebaki & Iakovidou, 2011) helpful to design wine offerings, marketing & communication channels and type of wine experience which should be modelled adequately to consumers profiles and visions (Madeira et al., 2019).

While there is a large number of studies deliberating the consumer side, far less scholar attention is put on how wine tourism offering is co-created within a destination (Sigala & Robinson, 2019). In the insofar literature can be found the successful factors of wine region promotion in which wine visits, guided tours, wine festivals and wine activities become an important component of policy-making (Getz et al., 1999; Mitchell et al., 2009).

Collaboration and cooperation in wine regions is, however, the way of building destination branding and regional image (Hamlin & Watson, 1997; Carlsen & Dowling, 1998; Williams, 2001; Bruwer & Johnson, 2010). Therefore, the collective actions which are leading to integrate food and wine service providers into a collective body are needed (Hall & Mitchell, 2005; Cavicchi & Santini, 2014). The particular issue has been discussed in the literature in two contexts: regional and networking collaboration. As for the regional aspect, collaboration is absolutely essential to influence, shape and perform regional tourism strategies (Getz & Brown, 2006; Carlsen & Charters, 2006) or develop institutional support (Hall et al., 1997) as well as to position destination image (Williams, 2001). While the network approach focuses on leading a well-balanced coordination and cooperation within the ecosystem of wine tourism business (Baggio, 2011; Hashimoto & Telfer, 2003).

The product of wine destination collaboration should involve wine tourism-related stakeholders in a networked wine route (Bregoli et al., 2016). The collaboration in a wine route requires, however, to set up beneficial relationships between wine tourism stakeholders (Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011). While the barrier of vertical collaboration (between restaurants and wine producers) is the result of lacking a strong integrator (Hall, 1997; Mitchell & Schreiber, 2006), the low horizontal collaboration (between wine producers) is caused by insufficient understanding of common benefits and interest (Lewis et al., 2015). Therefore, successful collaboration is, on the one hand, a matter of relationship coordination managed by DMOs which is considered as an integrator and/or intermediated organization of a tourism network (Bornhorst et al., 2010), and on the other hand, a well-integrated wine route projects which are able to obtain concrete business effects appreciated by wineries. Briefly, territorial network collaboration should include the interest of tourism stakeholders and coordinate a network in adequate manner (Brás et al., 2010).

Thus, a wine route should involve complementary wine products (Hall & Mitchell, 2005) and offer attractive activities for different segments of

wine tourism experience (Corigliano, 2016), and only then can there be a stimulus of synergy-network effect for the destination stakeholders (Bregoli et al., 2016). But wineries do not evince similar attitudes in engagement and collaboration for wine tourism branding (Koch et al., 2013). Their participation depends on wine tourism or wine industry focus (McGregor & Robinson, 2019). Thus, coordination of relationships with different wine business models is a high-importance task for the network integrators within a wine destination (Hall et al., 1997). Moreover, coordinators must pay attention to the role of particular winery towards a wine tourism ecosystem. Iconic wineries have greater potential to be a driver for promoting wine tourism, and so DMOs can use their image to increase destination visibility and tourists' interest. On the other side, familiar producers need more support in marketing but can deliver more customized experience.

3. Research Objectives and Questions

As forementioned, wine offerings can be created and promoted collectively, in collaboration with DMOs and/or individually, by wine producers. Scholars have pointed out that while the body of knowledge is well-developed in the latter context, there is little known how wine tourism product is co-created, managed and integrated within a tourism network. Therefore, the aim of the article was to explore the issue how wine tourism events and activities are performed in collaboration with Tourism Offices (which play a role of DMOs) in three wine destinations from the Northern Rhone Vally in France.

One of the main problems which has been identified in the literature is the difficulty in coordination tourism stakeholders (wineries) relationships (Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011; Bregoli et al., 2016). Some wineries are highly engaged in collaboration and others are not interested in being a part of wine tourism (Hall et al., 1997; Koch et al., 2013). The discrepancy in their attitudes can be explained by the fact that large wineries usually possess wine tourism facilities and thus, are able to offer independent wine products, events or activities. But small producers often deal with a lack of basic resources, facilities and most of all, staff dedicated to wine tourism service. That is why, they do not offer wine tasting or open doors as a regular offer, but rather organize special events irregularly.

In the specific context, the mail role for a tourism network's coordinator is to balance collaboration with all wine tourism partners and take an advantage from diversity of small and large wineries' offerings. In France the role is played by Tourism Offices (TO), they are in charge of tourism development and destination branding within a territory. As a public body, however, they ought to support all actors being their official partners (touristic sites, products & events) to evolve an attractive destination image (Légifrance, 2020; Offices de Tourisme de France, 2020) and position it

on travel markets (Williams, 2001). Moreover, in order to be successful in wine tourism destination, additionally a value co-creation model should be defined and performed collaboratively (Festa et al., 2015; Festa et al., 2020).

It means, however, that, the Tourism Offices in France as local DMOs, have far more active role in creating a destination network which can be considered as a network orchestrator (Hollebeek & Brodie, 2009; Corigliano, 2016; Nilsen & Gausdal, 2017). The French tourism system is especially interesting in the matter due to the fact that Tourism Offices can also provide a commerce service (e.g., ticket sales, product sales) which enables them to lead a wine tourism network more effectively and avoid the problem of tourism network inertia caused by an intermediate organization (Westering & Niel, 2003).

The main research goal of the study was aimed at exploring the phenomenon of destination collaborative performances incorporated into collective wine offerings and their marketing and underpinned by territorial relationships between DMOs and wineries. Therefore, detailed research goals can be divided into two parts: collaboration (regarding relationship model between the Northern-Rhone Tourism Offices and territorial small/large wineries) and collective performances (regarding wine offerings, products and events organized or promoted in collaboration). In consequence the following research questions were inquired about the two parts:

I. With regard to the aspect of collaboration:
    – How collaboration of DMOs (Tourism Offices) and territorial wineries was set up in the researched wine destinations?
    – Can any differences in collaboration be identified of Tourism Offices and territorial wineries in the researched wine destinations?
    – What is the researched TOs' collaboration model with small and large wineries?
II. With regard to the aspect of collective performances of wine marketing:
    – Which wine tourism products, events and activities (shortly wine offerings) were co-created in collaboration between TOs and territorial wineries?
    – How the organization and promotion of the collaborative offerings were shared?
    – How did it impact the wine tourism branding for the researched destinations?

Wine destinations from the Northern Rhone wine-growing areas are stimulated by Tourism Offices which play fundamental role in the wine tourism marketing. So, in this case the successful creation of wine tourism products mainly depends on how collaboration between TOs and wine producers is performed. If the wine tourism marketing is performed collaboratively, then the synergy effect can be achieved by competence sharing (e.g., wine offering is proposed by a wine producer but communicated by a Tourism Office).

Moreover, collaboration with large producers can be easier for TOs than with small ones. The previous usually possess better facilities (e.g., professional wine house, hotel or gite, own restaurant etc.), are able to promote and provide independent wine events, and finally are prepared to welcome business and international groups as well as have a tasting room open permanently for individual tourists who visit them by surprise at the place. For small producers, it is often more problematic. They do not have enough staff and/or financial potential to provide wine tourism services. For some a spontaneous wine tourist can be considered as an "intruder" who distracts them from the main job (wine production).

Therefore, we've assumed that the way TOs of the area collaborate with each group of wine producers needs to be specified according to their capabilities in wine tourism. The more diversified and individual approach of co-working with them is represented by TO Managers, the more attractive wine tourism activities can be performed and delivered.

4. Research Process and Methodology

The research methodology was designed in accordance with the ethnographic approach in tourism studies in which qualitative methods are used to explore a phenomenon in its specific context until it allows to conduct the critical discussion based on the double-reflexivity analysis (Kostera et al., 2012). It requires checking and re-checking the subjectively gain knowledge in order to reduce the individual situation and its unrepetitive nature (O'Gorman et al., 2014). Therefore, the ethnographical case studies are time-consuming and demanding for researchers (Prince and Ioannides, 2017; Clark et al., 2009).

The research was designed according to three research phases of data collection, discussion & analysis (Fig. 1). At the beginning, a shadowing technique (Czarniawska, 2014) was used in order to get out the implicit knowledge of understanding wine tourism specification embedded in the local collaboration ties between the TO area and wine producers (Fig. 1 – Research phase no. 1 – RP_1). The next step included the re-thinking and expert analysis methods phases which were used simultaneously through having the interviews with both sides: wine producers and TOs (Fig. 1 – Research phase no. 2 – RP_2 – and Research phase no. 3 – RP_3).

Overall, there were 24 semi-structured interviews conducted: 1 with the large producer from each AOC (in total 7), 2 with the small producers from each AOC (in total 14), and 3 with the managers of each TO area (in total 3). The semi-structured interviews were conducted during the participatory field-study so that they allowed to conduct the interview in the time of having wine tourism experience at the place. The manner has mitigated the perception of "a suspicious researcher" and build up the trustful space for discovery the issues that a discussant wants to reveal

Figure 1

Ethnographical and participatory methodology applied in the research process
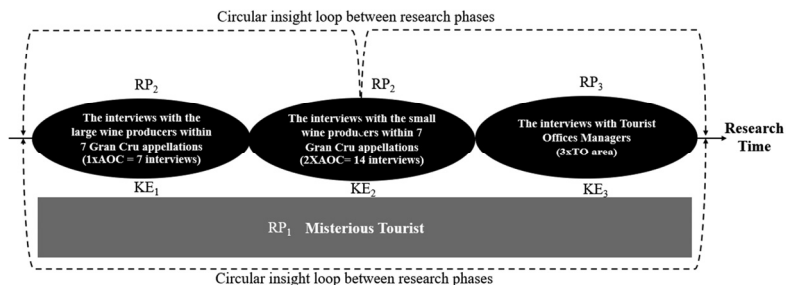
Legend:
KE_{1-3} – knowledge exchange,
RP_{1-3} – research phases.

(Schmidt, 2004; Magaldi & Berler, 2020). Thus, each research phase was developed through the knowledge exchange and meaningful interaction which have enriched the contextual understanding of the wine tourism actors' perspectives. The following research action were undertaken during the period of 3 months (research time):

Phase 1: Exploration of TO marketing strategies through the conversation between a mysterious tourist and contact person at the place of the TO. The following issues and research questions were identified:
- wine tourism offerings promoted by maps & brochures (What kind of wine tourism brochures were given to a tourist? How much importance was put on wine tourism?),
- content analysis of wine tourism brochures (Were wine tourism products, events and activities from the brochures explained in detail? Are there wine products promoted on the regular basics? Is there any calendar of wine events? How many wine events were regular and irregular? What events were about to happen and proposed for the moment being?),
- wine tourism service (How significant was to present wine tourism offerings in comparison to other tourism proposals e.g., of heritage, leisure & events during the conversation with a mysterious tourist?).

Phase 2: Conducting semi-structured interviews with small and large wine producers from each researched AOC (21 in total) to verify:
- wine tourism offers (What is your wine tourism offering? Do you offer it permanently and/or temporarily in the season? Do you organize wine events? Which events are supported by collaboration with a TO?),
- wine tourism customers (What type of tourists participate in your wine events/products? Are they usually national, local or foreign tourists? What is the most attractive in your wine tourism offerings?),

- wine tourism strategy & development (Why did you decide to do wine tourism? Is wine tourism important for you wine business at the moment? Are you going to invest more in wine tourism facilities to extend you offerings?),
- wine tourism collaboration (Which wine tourism associations are you a member of? Are you satisfied with the alliances? Are you a member of your local TO? Which initiatives worked out and which didn't? What do you think about wine tourism network in your destination? Do you consider a TO as a supportive integrator of such network? What are your expectations towards wine tourism collaboration with a TO? Why do you/don't consider your destination as a competitive wine tourism destination?).

Phase 3: Conducting semi-structured interviews with TO Managers from each wine destination (3 in total) to verify:
- wine tourism position among other priorities in the tourism development strategy performed by TOs (What are tourism and wine tourism potentialities in the TO area?),
- collaboration with wine tourism producers (How many wine producers are the official co-partners of a TO and how many of them collaborate in frame of the label "*Vignobles et Découvertes*"? Is wine tourism important for promoting themselves or the area?),
- design and delivery of wine products and events (Which offers are the most attractive in the season? Which offers are available at the moment?),
- co-shared communication of wine tourism offers (Which wine events/ activities do TOs and wine producers promote together and individually?).

5. Results

The exploration research revealed that all three TO territories (*Vienne Condrieu*, *Ardèche Hermitage*, *Rhône Crussol*) consider wine tourism as a strategical priority of destination marketing. All of them are labelled "*Vignobles et Découvertes*", a national label carried by "*Atout France*" (Atout France, 2020a) which is responsible for promoting France internationally. In the label, *Vienne Condrieu* label is called "*Condrieu Côte-Rôtie*" (Atout France, 2020b), *Ardèche Hermitage* is called "*D'Hermitage en Saint-Joseph*" (Atout France, 2020b) and *Rhône Crussol* is "*De Cornas et Saint-Peray*" (Atout France, 2020b). The names allow to expose and make advantage of having the AOC terroir in their promotion of wine tourism destination. Moreover, it underlines the fame and prestige of the Grand Cru appellations located in the Northern part of Rhone Valley.

Surprisingly, although the wine destinations from the Northern Rhone have shown similarity in destination marketing through the AOC, their

wine offerings much vary and the models of wine tourism collaboration vary. While the cases of wine producers from the *Vienne Condrieu* and the *Rhône Crussol* destination claimed that they do not need to perform wine tourism, the *Ardèche Hermitage* producers declared that it is essential to contribute to the performances of wine tourism destination. The interview with the Manager of the latter destination has revealed the reasons. It is because of the Crozes-Hermitage appellation in which there are many young, small and unknown producers which need to develop the business in general, and wine tourism is for them a perfect tool of increasing brand awareness on local markets. So, it turned out that the appellation size and profile (including production and hectares) influence the potential of wine tourism performance.

5.1. Collaborative Performance of the Vienne – Condrieu Destination

Wine tourism in the area is based on three AOC: Côte-Rotie, Condrieu, the northern part of St-Joseph as well as on the Vitis Vienna appellation project. All of the main actions supporting wine tourism have been initiated around 10 years ago by the public administrations. At that time the goal was to promote three wine appellations (Côte-Rotie, Condrieu, St-Joseph) in collaboration with wine producers and other tourism actors (accommodations, restaurants, touristic sites etc.). The TO is an integrator of wine tourism and has been working with producers on wine activities intensively. Usually, they are performed by wine events and aim at attracting local groups from Lyon (small friends' groups, touristic groups, local communities).

Figure 2
Wine tourism offerings in the Vienne – Condrieu destination
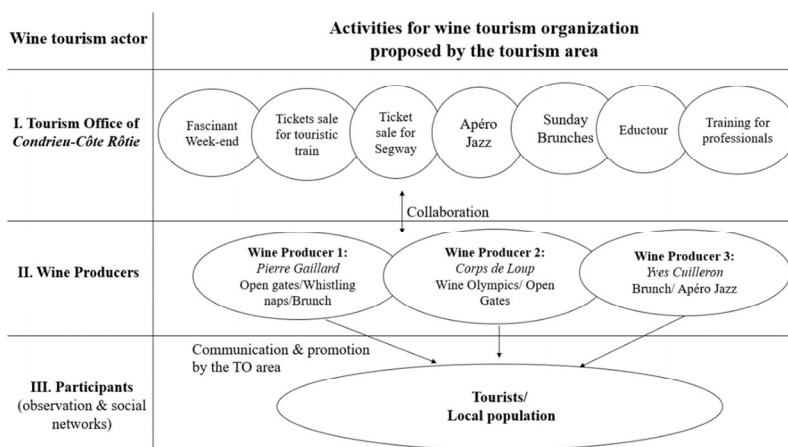
The TO of *Condrieu Côte-Rôtie* has plenty of actions just dedicated to wine tourism development and a fully-time Manager responsible only for that. As a tourist office worker, he does all activities related with wine tourism communication & marketing and as a special person dedicated to wine tourism, he also takes care of programming, organization and reservations for the co-shared wine events that take place at wineries. So, in the frame of the dedicated activities of TOs for wine tourism the following can be pointed out (Fig. 2):

a) tickets sale for a tourist train: visiting vineyards and tasting at different winemakers
b) ticket sale for Segway (reservations and sales of tickets)
c) "*Jazz à Vienne*": organizing a lot of small e.g., "*Apéro Jazz*" events in a big event
d) Sunday Brunches: an open system of having brunches with wine tasting at the winery (to offer something on the "close" Sundays in the summer season)
e) "*Eductour*" for professionals (organization of the study tours for winemakers and wine tourism makers from the area to get a better "know-how" of benchmarks of Europe)
f) training for professional: workshops for staff working in the wine-related service, e.g.: English lessons for winemakers.

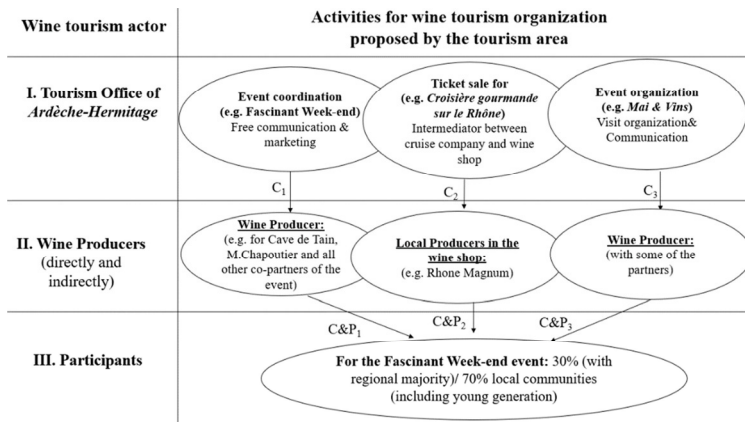## 5.2. Collaborative Performance of the Ardèche Hermitage Destination

First priority of Ardèche Hermitage area concerns wine tourism. Wine destination is based on three famous wine-growing areas (Hermitage, Crozes-Hermitage and Saint-Joseph) what brings well-known recognition in France and even promotion at the international market. But in order to be able to co-work with the large wineries such as the Cave de Tain or M. Chapoutier, Managers of TOs have to offer unique competences that allow them to animate collaboration. Wineries with dedicated people and facilities to wine tourism are usually self-sufficient in performing wine tourism and so also more demanding in collaboration with a public-govern organization. In contrary, small and medium wineries in the Ardèche Hermitage destination are very innovative in creating wine experiences but do not have time or human resources to become more competitive.

The Ardèche Hermitage TO offers a large list of wine events especially during the summer, e.g., "*Di'Vin clair de Lune*" in the Tournon Castle, tastings with winemakers and lounge music for the "*Fascinant week-end*". The first task of the TO for performing "*Fascinant week-end*" is to coordinate all the imagined animations proposed by winemakers, wine shops and touristic sites and make promotion in brochures, radio ads and journals, etc.

Secondly, the TO secures PR actions by inviting and welcoming wine journalist to the destination, and bringing them to meet winemakers. The relationship with the press and media is extra competence of wine marketing in the area and is more active than in the others.

The third key element of the Ardèche Hermitage' collaboration model is to be an intermediate between wine professionals. A good example is to do meetings arrangement between a wine shop and a boat company for wine tasting while taking boat sailing at the sunset called "*Croisière gourmande sur le Rhône*"). In this case, the TO also sells tickets for the product.

Figure 3
Wine tourism offerings in the Ardèche Hermitage destination

Legend:
C_{1-3} – Collaboration,
$C\&P_{1-3}$ – Communication & promotion.

5.3. Collaborative Performance of the Rhône Crussol Destination

The TO area covers two main appellations: *Cornas* and *St-Peray* and the southern part of St. Joseph. But most of the wineries are small producers (average Cornas producers possess between 1 and 4 hectares of vineyards and the same for *St. Peray* even if some of them have more hectares) and there is none as large as is the *M. Chapoutier* from the Ardèche Hermitage.

Nevertheless, wine tourism is a very important competence in both meanings, by immersion with the events organized around the castle and by having an individual wine experience at the wineries. Both parts of wine tourism delivery are actively supported by the TO and developed through the following actions (Fig. 4):

a) "Fascinate week-end" (TO is a moderator of all the actions: propose, stimulate and co-organize events with the wineries),

b) Event organization dedicated for wine appellations (promotion & communication of "Journée prestige" – the event is co-organized with the brotherhood of *St. Peray* wine producers; and communication and organization of the "Marche aux vins de cornas" for Cornas).

c) Wine events organization during the summer (tasting in the *Château de Crussol*, *Vino Veryjazz*, wine o'clock).

Figure 4
Wine tourism offerings in the Rhône Crussol destination
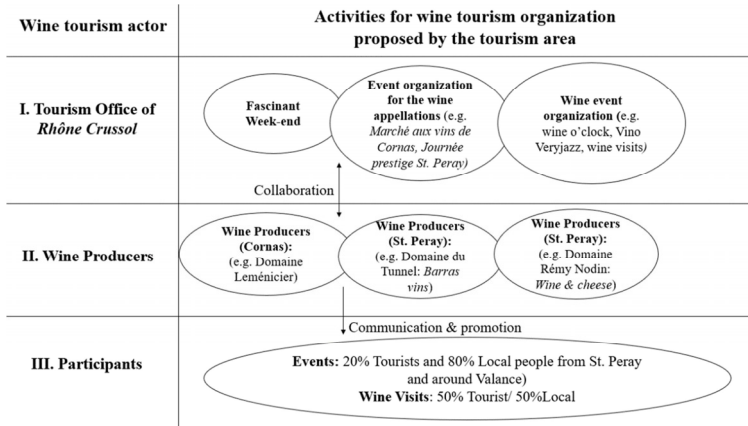
The wine producers from the destination are more known in the local wine consumer perception in terms of producing red Syrah from the slopes of Cornas and the sparkling wine of St. Peray than in wine tourism offerings. For that reason, they need more animation from their TO. Some of them have already developed few events, a wine shop in the town and cottages in the vineyard but it is not enough for developing a wine tourism destination. For the Managers of the area the greatest tourism and wine tourism proposals are based on the leisure and event activities around the Château de Crussol. It is mainly due to the fact that the majority of customers participating in the events (80%) are local people (from and around Valence) for whom the Château de Crussol is a very recognizable icon.

6. Theoretical Contributions and Managerial Implications

The study is a new proposal for researching the destination marketing performances which are, however, embedded in the specific context of wine destination management and wine tourism marketing. It offers the approach of collaborative performance of wine tourism destination which contributes to the two literature mainstreams: relational governance of wine tourism (Pechlaner et al., 2012; Festa et al., 2015; Fyall et al., 2012; Guedes, 2022) and performances of wine tourism marketing (Williams, 2001; Pinto & Kastenholz, 2011).

The destination stakeholder theory speaks of an increase of destination competitiveness and awareness when mutual relationships between destination stakeholders and DMOs are well-understood (d'Angella & Go, 2009) and a broad stakeholders' involvement into marketing actions is observed (Festa et al., 2015; Lewis et al., 2015). Collaborative performance

specifies that the relationship can be even more successful in performances when DMOs (French TO) are able to provide a well-balanced collaboration with small and large wineries by knowing that the previous are capable to deliver customized wine experiences and the latter can be brand creators and visitors captures.

The paper contributes also to discussions of wine tourism marketing and branding. It has been already discovered that using the appellation marketing (called region-of-origin) is not sufficient to get an increasing interest of wine tourists and being successful in wine sales at the place (Hamlin & Watson, 1997; Bruwer, 2014). The study has explored that while it is essential to educate tourists of an appellation system which may enhance building a successful collective wine branding (e.g., AOC Hermitage for the *Ardèche Hermitage* destination), yet it does not develop an attractiveness of wine tourism offerings, which can be applied through defining key competences in collaborative marketing.

Due to the study period that took place during the Covid times, the research did not include any valuation of tourists' perception that could determinate the wine tourism attractivity of the Northern Rhone Valley from the consumer point of view. Yet, there can be drawn important implications for the wine destination stakeholders. Since the research was contextualized by the local aspects of managing the specific wine destination in the Northen Rhone Valley, collaboration between the DMOs (Tourism Offices) and wine producers can be divided into two groups: with large and small wineries, and it can be improved by the following applications:

- large wineries should enforce a TO's destination image: if a famous producer is located within the destination territory, it should increase the popularity of the area,
- large producers can create professional wine tourism products on a greater scale, so they should be recommended for bigger events and touristic groups,
- for large producers with facilities an organization of wine tourism products and activities does not require as much effort and assistance by TOs as for a small producer with no human resources for that,
- the advantage of wine activities performed by small producers is a possibility to have direct, open conversation with winemakers and customized experience,
- small producer' offers allow to alternate wine tourism (there are customers who expect to discover unknown producers in the atmosphere),
- evolution of wine tourism can happen only if both, small and large producers can adapt to the emerging expectations of wine tourists.

Furthermore, Managers of TOs have mentioned that collaborative performances in both dimensions, product creation and marketing, should be practiced in order to face the challenges of future wine tourism dynamics. Furthermore, wine tourism managers should take into consideration that:

- Wine tourism management should be integrated with respect to main missions of each of the public and business wine tourism structures. For a TO the main target is to attract people in general (public service without business orientation) and assist to make business for wine producers, whereas the objective of wine producers is primarily to increase wine sale and revenues. So, the two seemingly different visions have to find original ideas for promoting wine tourism on the collective level represented by TOs and individual level represented by wine producers.
- Building up wine tourism network structures institutionally (by public management) is time-consuming (the example of the TO area of *Vienne Condrieu* where it has taken more than 10 years to improve their wine tourism networking).
- Sometimes wine tourism development is a consequence of the bottom-up movement (wine business management), which is visible in the *Ardèche Hermitage* area where wine tourism was primarily inspired and dynamized by wine producers themselves.
- It is not obvious that the large structures are more active in performing wine tourism because, as two pieces of evidence have shown (e.g., *Corps de Loup* and *Domaine Pradelle*) that small wineries can be effective in wine tourism either. But the two types of wine tourism business cannot be compared in terms of returns and revenues numbers.

7. Conclusions

In the Northern Rhone Valley, there was not found a universal model of collaborative performance for wine tourism destination from the Northern Rhone Valley.

There is no one collaborative destination performance that can served as a role model, but in reality, it depends on how collaboration is managed by the DMO. What was observed in the area of *Ardèche Hermitage* cannot be transferred to the other two researched destinations and the other way round. For instance, the strategy of the *Vienne Condrieu* as well *Rhône Crussol* is much more focused on wine events, whereas the *Ardèche Hermitage* is to develop wine products. Nevertheless, some small inspirations can be taken from one area to another. For instance, the *Ardèche Hermitage* TO is going to re-think their support service for small wineries, otherwise they are not able to be active in wine tourism (the *Vienne Condrieu* example is a great inspiration for its application). Conversely, the *Rhône Crussol* and *Vienne Condrieu* can adopt the orientation on international tourism groups and work on extending possibilities for accommodation.

Therefore, each of the collaboration models should be assessed in relation to the individual stage of destination performance of wine tourism marketing and wine tourism products. The researched destination can be distinguished by the following final conclusions:

(1) In two destinations of the *Vienne Condrieu* and *Rhône Crussol*, wine tourism is dominated by the active role of TOs. It brings about, however, a need to delegate a special TO Manager who is able to develop communication, reservation and organization of a wine tourism network. A slightly different phenomenon was identified in the approach of the TO of *Ardèche Hermitage* where wine tourism has been developing as the natural process of wine business evolution.

(2) Collaboration and co-working with large producers are more efficient for the image of wine destination and professional wine experiences, while small producers are capable to enrich their wine tourism offer by its potential of proposing creative and individual wine experiences as well as giving an opportunity to have a direct contact with a wine-maker. Both wine experiences are complementary and necessary to alternate in the wine destination marketing in order to deliver a complex offer.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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