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Promotion and Development of Wine Tourism in the Republic of Moldova

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Abstract: Tourism is a way of life in the contemporary world that represents an important force for the development, prosperity and well-being of nations. Over the last two decades, wine tourism has experienced a continuous expansion, with average annual growth rates of between 5 and 10%, thus becoming a sector of major importance for both the world's major powers and developing countries. It is important to note that tourism, as a branch of economic interference, drives and stimulates the production of other economic areas. The research carried out in this paper has shown that the activity of some fields is largely determined by the needs of tourism and tourists, which are very varied and constantly changing. Under these conditions, there is a need to adapt the tourism industry to the increasingly diverse and complex requirements of tourists, causing the state and private economic agents to modernize the technical and material base and infrastructure, while developing new forms of tourism one of them being wine tourism.

Keywords: tourism; wine tourism; inbound tourism; outbound tourism; winemaking

JEL Classification: M11; Z30; Z32

1. Introduction

Wine tourism is a motivational form of tourism practiced by tourists to visit wine companies and wine regions in order to combine the pleasure of tasting wine products with the opportunity to learn about local lifestyle, rural environment and cultural activities. Wine tourism is also called oenotourism. The main methods of practicing wine tourism are: organizing excursions following the stages that the grape goes through until it becomes wine; recreational trips in the middle of vineyards; introductory courses in wine science; organizing visits and other activities in wine farms; wine parties and festivals; wine fairs and auctions.

The Republic of Moldova as a touristic destination offers great opportunities to its visitors. The country's "tourism product" is a complex combination of natural and man-made environments, ancient monasteries, quiet forests, endless hills, blue sky and friendly sunshine, which gives a special charm to this country.

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2. Result and Discussions

In 2020, travel agencies and tour operators provided tourist services to 124.5 thousand tourists and hikers, which is 33.1% compared to 2019. Thus, the number of tourists and hikers in the reporting year compared to 2019 decreased by 252.1 thousand visitors, due to the reduction of the number of participants in the outbound tourism by 235.9 thousand visitors (-76.0%), the inbound tourism by 12.9 thousand visitors (-65.0%) and domestic tourism by 3.3 thousand visitors (-7.1%).

Table 1. Number of Tourists and Hikers, Participants in Tourism Organized by Travel Agencies and Tour Operators, by Purpose of Visits [1]

| | The year of 2020 | | The year of 2020 in % compared to 2019 | |
|--|---------------------|----------------|--|---------------|
| | Tourists and hikers | tourists-days | Tourists and hikers | tourists-days |
| TOTAL | 124 506 | 602 158 | 33,1 | 25,0 |
| Inbound tourism (<i>receiving foreign visitors in the country</i>) - total | 6 950 | 3 821 | 35,0 | 6,3 |
| of which, for the purpose of: | | | | |
| leisure, recreation and entertainment | 6 612 | 1 862 | 39,1 | 4,2 |
| business and professional purposes | 238 | 781 | 10,1 | 7,8 |
| treatment | 97 | 1 166 | 17,3 | 16,3 |
| other purposes | 3 | 12 | - | - |
| Outbound tourism (<i>travelling of Moldovan residents abroad</i>)- total | 74 708 | 498 682 | 24,0 | 24,5 |
| of which, for the purpose of: | | | | |
| leisure, recreation and entertainment | 73 725 | 492 272 | 24,2 | 24,7 |
| business and professional purposes | 538 | 1 956 | 27,0 | 24,0 |
| treatment | 445 | 4 454 | 12,8 | 11,7 |
| Domestic tourism (<i>movement of the residents of the Republic of Moldova within the country, for tourist purposes</i>) | 42 848 | 99 655 | 92,9 | 32,0 |

Of the approximately 7.0 thousand foreign tourists and hikers who visited the Republic of Moldova in 2020 and benefited from the services of travel agencies and tour operators, 95.1% arrived for leisure, recreation and entertainment, 3.4 % - business and professional purposes and 1.4% - treatment.

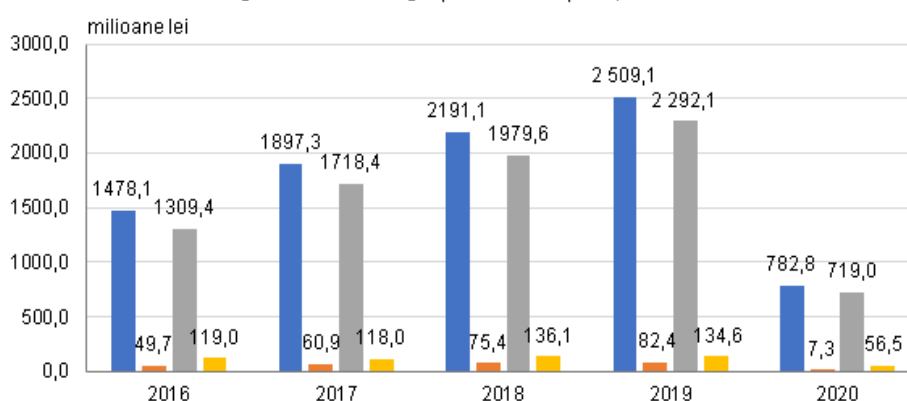
More significant shares in the total number of foreign tourists and hikers arriving in the Republic of Moldova are attributed to the citizens of Romania (73.4%), Ukraine (14.9%), the Russian Federation (3.1%), Turkey (1, 6%), the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1.1%).

By the intermediary of travel agencies and tour operators in 2020 74.7 thousand tourists and hikers went abroad which is 4.2 times (76.0%) less than in 2019. Most Moldovan citizens (98.7%) went abroad for leisure, recreation and entertainment. The citizens of the Republic of Moldova preferred to travel mainly

to Turkey (57.4% of the total number that went abroad), Egypt (17.8%), Romania (7.9%), Bulgaria (5.1%), Ukraine (3.9%), the United Arab Emirates and Greece (0.8% each), Czech Republic (0.7%).

The number of tourists and hikers participating in domestic tourism in 2020 was 42.8 thousand, a decrease of 7.1% compared to 2019. The movement of Moldovan residents inside the country, for tourism purposes, was organized mainly by travel agencies, tourism and tour operators in Chisinau (60.9%), the development regions Center (30.5%) and South (8.5%).

Figura 1. Încasările agențiilor de turism și turoperatorilor



Total revenues inbound tourism outbound tourism Domestic tourism

Figure 1. Revenues of travel agencies and tour operators [1]

The revenues of the travel agencies and tour operators from the tourist activity in the year 2020 amounted to 782.8 million lei, which constitutes 31.2% compared to 2019. The biggest decrease of the revenues is observed in the outbound tourism - by 1573.2 million lei less (-68.6%) compared to 2019 and in the inbound tourism - 75.1 million lei less (-91.1%) (The touristic activity of the tourism agencies and tour-operators in 2020, 2021).

The people of this country are famous for their hospitality. This people has always been happy to host guests in their homes, to talk about their culture and traditions and to share what they have best in their houses- their wine.

The art of winemaking has been valued by the local population since the oldest times. The companies that produce wine, Champaign and cognac are an integral part of the tourist potential of the Republic of Moldova. The capitalization of this potential could offer to Moldova an imposing image in the international tourism and would contribute to the development of the wine tourism by making appropriate arrangements, necessary for the reception and service of the foreign and local visitors. Moldovan people have been growing vineyards and making wine since antiquity. Our wines have become famous both abroad and at home. Even from the geographical point, the territory of the Republic of Moldova has the shape of grape which naturally confirms the vocation and occupation of the Moldovan people. The centuries-old tradition of wine production has been reflected in the history and culture of our land, which has many attractions of great interest, including the wine sector, which is our national pride and dowry, being valued as a true Moldovan brand.

Our country asserts its right to be a member of the European Wine Road with increasing certainty. The wine itineraries, which start from the capital, cover practically the entire territory of the republic and all the wine enterprises in the country, of which of special importance are Cricova, Milestii Mici, Purcari, Chateau Vartely, Branesti, Asconi, Et Cetera, Castel Mimi etc. (Wine of Moldova, 2021).

Grapes and grape juice are also widely used in aquatic spa treatment centers. Many Moldovan wine companies offer facilities for receiving visitors. Here tourists can get the experience of tasting wine correctly and they can learn about the complex production process, they can be present at the bottling process and, of course, taste the final product with a professional sommelier, who will guide them on the path of complex smell and taste of home-made wine.

Being a wine-making country, the Republic of Moldova offers visitors the opportunity to choose their favorite routes: cellars and underground cities, wine storage rooms, wineries, they can assist in the production of sparkling wine, divine, heresy, balm, etc. Surrounded by vineyards along the tourist route “Wine Road in the Republic of Moldova”, wineries are a substantial reason to visit the country. Wine tourism is one of the forms of tourism that has quickly integrated and adapted to the requirements of the world tourism market. In this context, it is an additional opportunity to focus on the development of tourism in the Republic of Moldova.

The European Day of Wine Tourism has been celebrated since 2009, on the second Sunday in November, with the participation of wineries belonging to the European Network of Wine Cities. The purpose of the holiday is to highlight the culture and traditions of those cities and regions associated with grapes cultivation and wine production (Burbulea, 2010, pp. 238-246).

Wine tourism is aimed at tasting, consuming and buying wine directly at the winery. Wine tourism can include visits to wineries, vineyards, famous restaurants, wine festivals and other special events.

The Employers Association of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Moldova is the only Association that represents the tourism industry of the Republic of Moldova at European level, being a member of the European Association of Tour Operators since 2020 and it is meant to stimulate the development of national and regional tourist routes.

The need to know and analyze wine tourism appeared as a result of the modification of the tourist demand in favor of tourism in the middle of nature and the discovery of local traditions along with wine tasting and knowledge of technologies for its preparation.

Since 2002 the annual “Wine Festival” has been organized in October. Tourists from more than 100 countries come to Moldova in order to see the products of the wine factories and to taste the best, most aromatic and most valuable wines. The objectives of the festival are:

establishing a close connection between the tourist sector and the wine sector;

international promotion of the image of the Republic of Moldova as a wine tourism destination

finding new partners and new markets for the wine production of the Republic of Moldova

attracting foreign tourists

At the present time, grapes processing takes place in 142 wineries that are geographically situated in 23 wine regions. The total capacity of the grapes processing lines is 2.0 million tons. In recent years the global average of grapes in Moldova has been 300-500 thousand tons that shows that the processing capacities are used at about 20-25%. However, in recent years, some wineries have not processed grapes at all (Burbulea & Movileanu, 2021, pp. 75-81).

At present, wine tourism has proven to be a good alternative to the economic diversification for wine-producing countries, and especially for the Republic of Moldova, which is currently in its development.

The position of the Republic of Moldova in international tourism in recent years reflects a negative balance with a permanent increase in international outbound tourism. However, wine tourism shows a

visible increase, this being influenced by the increase in wine quality that brings popularity to this type of tourism. Another factor is the desire of wineries to reach the international market through numerous competitions and of course a very important factor is marketing.

The current situation of tourism in the Republic of Moldova is due to the neglect of the tourist activity and the absence of a sound policy in the creation of tourism infrastructure and territorial tourist arrangement. However, the Republic of Moldova is trying to raise this field to the highest level, the emphasis being on authenticity, eco-tourism and winemaking. These are the main tourist pillars of the Moldavian tourism.

The initiation of tourism development in the Republic of Moldova requires organization, planning and management of the tourist activity at the state level, which can be achieved through the respective organizational structures. Of course, the involvement of the basic pillars, which have been listed above, is of great value. The demand must appear first, followed by a visible development.

In this sense, the role and strategy of the state regarding the development of tourism in the Republic of Moldova should be elaborated and achieved on the basis of sustainable development concept.

Thus, the development of tourism in the country will have to manifest a correlation between development and certain criteria of sustainability: in other words, the development of wine tourism must be sustainable in the long run in terms of ecology, economically viable and ethically and socially equitable for the local population. A good management of the tourist activity, supported by an active role of the state, guarantees a sustainable management of the tourism development in the Republic of Moldova.

In the countries where wine and tourism industries are developing, the economy is gradually recovering from the pandemic. This is a strategic sector that needs better organization and we rely heavily on it. It is necessary to solve this problem at a digital level, to promote this type of tourism, to integrate wine tourism in other fields, so that we can make a qualitative leap that will contribute to the further prosperity of wine tourism, which would be one of the driving forces behind the long-awaited recovery of tourism in general. The more tourists visit wine-producing countries, the higher is the export of these products, especially in the countries from where guests arrive.

3. Conclusions

In conclusion, following the carried out research, we can mention that wine tourism plays a special role in the economic and social sector because it contributes both to the training of the workforce and the reduction of unemployment, it is also the engine of the global economic system. Wine tourism remains the most appropriate form of tourism that has a positive impact on the inbound tourism. Tourism is a form of viticulture and wine production marketing, which can be combined with all activities from grapes cultivation, promotion of raw material (grapes) and wine production from agricultural producers and wineries to final consumers. The development of wine tourism will restore this kind of tourism of the Republic of Moldova to its fair value in the international tourism circuit. The wine industry and the tourism industry contribute to attracting a large number of consumers of wine tourism production, to the improvement and modernization of the territory, to the promotion of the existing tourist facilities in Moldova.

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