



## Article

# Romanian Wine Tourism—A Paved Road or a Footpath in Rural Tourism?

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**Abstract:** In the last decades, wine tourism (WT) has been a topic of study, especially for researchers from large producer countries. The relationship between wine tourism and rural tourism (RT) has been approached from many angles in the past. Ranking sixth in Europe in having its surface cultivated with vines, Romania is one of the major players in the Old World of wine producers. In Romania, the scientific literature on wine tourism is scarce and has a limited coverage on the subject. The present paper, by its main purpose, raises the curtain of Romanian wine tourism drawing a consumer profile and analyzes the relationship between WT and RT. Through quantitative research with 850 valid wine tourist respondents and a margin of error of 3.36%, we discovered that people who know what wine tourism means are 1.85 times more confident that it will contribute to the development of rural tourism compared to those who know less about the subject. A high number of visits leads to a decrease in the confidence that rural tourism can be developed through wine tourism due to the poor diversification of leisure activities offered by wine cellars and a weak connection between economic activity and local space. In the end, we draw some practical implications for wine cellars. By developing local-based leisure activities, vineyards can contribute to the sustainable development of the local community. Due to the COVID-19 impact on tourism, there are some limitations to our study. Future studies are needed to cover the changes and evolution of this type of tourism.

**Keywords:** Romania; wine tourism; Old World; consumer profile; rural tourism; COVID-19



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## 1. Introduction

Wine, whose existence has been known since antiquity—closely linked to the deities—played an important role in Eastern religions; it continues to be found in the current religious service of the Christian world. Starting from its status as “liquor of the gods”, wine has made its way into human existence and accompanies us from birth to the end of life—in moments of joy, sorrow, or melancholic/nostalgic moments. However, above all, wine is considered a food and, equally, a medicine [1].

Nowadays, wine has become an important beverage that is increasingly being consumed more frequently all over the world, and its production and marketing has received increasing attention from consumers, specialists, and producers [2–8]. As a result, the growing importance of wine tourism for many destinations and the role of this type of tourism in supporting local economies is now beginning to be understood [2,9,10]. It has also been highlighted that wine tourism can play a significant role in the development of tourism by contributing to the economic and social support of local regions and communities [11]. Wine is one of the ingredients of our journeys, and journeys dedicated to wine-producing areas have led to the tourism product known as wine tourism.

In Romania, wine production has traditions from the time of the Dacians and the Romans, and our country has occupied positions in the first part of the ranking of European, respective world wine producers. At the other pole, Romanian tourism, but especially tourism in rural areas of Romania, has experienced a significant development in the last three decades, and its link with wine tourism could lead to a sustained development of rural communities in areas with wine-growing concerns, to increase their reputation and as a result, to direct new flows of tourists to these areas.

These considerations, as well as the lack of research in the area of wine implications in the activities—but especially in the Romanian tourism offer—led us to conduct the present research, which, when finalized, will be submitted to the attention of the specialists in the field, both producers, destination management organizations, tour operators, and finally political administrators and technocrats.

Our study used a new approach to analyze the published wine tourism research, from both tourism and socio-economic perspectives. In doing so, the results highlight past trends and anticipate future research directions.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Wine Tourism—A Conceptual Approach

Wine tourism has long existed in parts of Europe and North America and has developed in Australia as a distinct tourist product since the early 1980s, and the opportunity to host visitors is an important source of additional income for wine producers [3,7,12]. Formal links between tourism and wine, especially through the creation of wine routes, have existed since the first half of the century, and have expanded considerably in recent times [2].

Tourism can play an important role in the economic development of wine-producing regions, while consolidating them as tourist destinations [13]. There are experts [14] who believe that what food tourism means actually started with wine tourism and later evolved into gastronomy. Wine producers in Australia, Canada, France, South Africa, and the USA have been considered the innovators of wine tourism. They have realized the potential and have evolved from simple vineyards to establishing connections with restaurants and entertainment in rural areas.

Depending on the motifs, wine tourism can be described as “visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of the grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors” [15].

Moreover, wine tourism is defined as “a tour or visit to wineries, wine festivals and events correlated where the most important motivation for the tourist is to directly experience the characteristic, the quality of a wine through a tasting session” [6]. According to previous definitions, wine tourism can be concise as a trip to the vineyards, including what wine-loving tourists experience in these destinations [10].

To create a connection between wine tourism and local area, other elements have to be considered. Specific food with local ingredients, prepared and served by locals [6], information about the production system and local culture [16] help the tourist to fully enjoy and understand the particulars of the area. Seen as a holistic experience, it is clear that, for this type of tourism, we have a fixation in space (geographically) [17].

For wine tourism to be a real success, it must to be organized both at the vineyard level and at the regional level [9]. However, it should be understood that winery visits may be made by those whose main reasons for travel are not necessarily related to wine, but rather to the entertainment options that the area where wineries are located can offer [11].

Viticulture can transform the local landscape into a combination of agriculture, industry, and tourism [16]. These wine regions are called “winescapes”. Wine tourism also facilitates producer–consumer interaction and involves education on specific products, representing an opportunity to promote the (positive) image of the region [2,5,11].

Today, wine tourism is perceived as more than a superficial visit to wineries or vineyards to buy or drink wine [10]. It is also appreciated that the existence of a wide range

of experiences, which can be combined with wine tourism such as: wine tasting, the pleasure of visiting the surroundings, excursions in the area, and many other complementary cultural activities, are possible in the wine regions [18,19].

The vineyard owners have made the wine tour an important holiday destination. This has been achieved by understanding the consumer's needs, by tasting wines [14].

In a globalized economy, wine is traded internationally, and this is associated with the marketing of regional brands and images, which is a particularly important feature of wine promotion [2].

It is assumed that a potential consumer will have a set of beliefs about what attributes make up the likely tourist experience in a wine region [19]. Some studies [10,20] have concluded that many wine-loving tourists want a comprehensive tourist experience that includes opportunities to experience scenic areas, visit wine festivals, and understand and support the local hospitality and culture. Thus, a visit to a vineyard is a complex of experiences that could include elements such as: an aesthetic appreciation of the natural environment, being the vineyard itself; the cultural and historical context of the wine-growing region and its production methods; an exploration of education and diversity; a sense of connection with the winery and a certain sense of authenticity [21]. Furthermore, it has been identified that all these elements of the experience are part of, or are framed by, the landscape (winescape) of the region, which can present an attractive integration of the rural landscape, the industrial process, and tourist activity [21].

These quality experiences can have continuous benefits in the wine regions, emphasizing consumer loyalty to the destination and the product, helping to promote the local brand [22].

Wine is considered a consumer product associated with people's lifestyle. Those interested in wine often explore wines by tasting and by associating them with food [23]. For established wineries, visitors are a way to test new products [2].

Given that tourists are looking for fun and entertainment regardless of the location visited, we can consider that wine may not be the most important factor that attracts someone in the area, so the wine regions and wineries compete with other tourist destinations [16]. The oenotourists are not necessarily the same people who engage in other non-oenological gastronomic activities—which are not related to wine [24].

The wine consumer needs information on the origins of wine and there is a need for strong geographical differentiation between countries and even within countries, and between different producing regions [25]. Wine is becoming more attractive to consumers through its geographical origin, individual stories, and lineage [26]. Wine enthusiasts fall into various categories of sophistication and will therefore be willing to seek additional services [7]. Moreover, for a winery to be successful, the wines produced must find a sustainable and fair market. While larger wineries need to attract customers through the special experiences they can offer, smaller wineries need to demonstrate hospitality and local affiliation [27].

Wine festivals offer a great opportunity to raise awareness and recognize local and regional brands and build customer loyalty [23].

In essence, wine tourism combines elements of a wine region, such as grapes, wine production, wine as a finished product, vineyards and wineries, gastronomic and wine festivals, the region's customs, and its geographical characteristics, so that all these elements are able to meet the expectations of the wine tourist.

## 2.2. The Wine Tourist

Wine is a unique product and different from other foods. Wine consumption has specific characteristics such as association with food, symbolic value, and popularity for gift giving [28]. In addition, more than with other types of food, the tradition and socio-cultural characteristics influence the consumption of wine. Those who practice wine tourism seek to gain a global tourism experience, which offers a variety of regional benefits [20].

Regarding the relationship between consumer behavior and wine tourism, no pre-1995 study has been identified to explore this topic. Many of the studies published subsequently focused on two areas of research: 1. understanding the socio-demographic characteristics of the wine tourist; and 2. understanding the psychography of the wine tourist [29]. It is important to note that “Wine tourism is, simultaneously, a form of consumer behavior, a strategy by which destinations develop and market wine-related attractions and imagery, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to educate and sell their products directly to consumers” [20] (p. 147). Many studies of wine tourists have only referred to vineyard visitors and not to wine consumers in general. There is a limited understanding of the potential of wine tourism among wine consumers [20].

Thus, as wine tourism develops, there is a growing need to understand wine consumers and the factors that contribute to their overall experience when practicing this type of tourism. Wine tourists can be either local hikers or overnight visitors from outside the area. They demonstrate a mix of demographic characteristics but are often a mix of domestic and out-of-state travelers representing a relatively high socioeconomic level in terms of education, income, and profession.

What is the profile of a tourist who practices wine tourism? A comprehensive study [30] conducted in 2011 presents interesting conclusions. There are gender differences between wine tourists. Thus, women are more attracted to the labels on the bottles, sharing the wines from the winery with others, and making post-purchase visits. Many studies support the hypothesis that wine tourists are young and have a high level of education and income. Other studies [31,32] have found that women are more inclined to use more sources of information than men when making the decision to buy wine. A study conducted in British Columbia [33], Canada, showed that wine tourists in general (those who visit vineyards) were more active and engaged than other tourists. Thus, a group called “cultural wine tourists” was identified, more interested in luxury [33].

A study of wine tourism in South Africa found that wine tourists did not travel with the group of tourists [34], and a study in Australia found that wine tourists were not homogeneous in terms of generation and developed diverse expectations regarding the “cellar door” experience [35]. Experience and service were important to young visitors, while viticulture was important to the elderly.

It is also appreciated that the motivations of the wine tourist refer to having the opportunity to taste the wine, experience the attributes of a wine region, to tour the vineyard, to have the opportunity to meet the producer, buy quality wines, dine in the local restaurant, socialize with family or friends, and attend wine festivals or events [36].

The reasons for travel are one of the most important criteria for segmenting the tourist demand. The importance derives from the complexity of the reasons, in the sense that they can be very numerous and diverse. Furthermore, the basis of practicing one form or another of tourism may be common reasons for all forms of tourism or there may be specific reasons. Moreover, the reasons for travel are subjective, which means that they can characterize individuals, groups of individuals, or even an entire nation.

A study conducted in Greece [37] showed that “visiting the winery” was the most important motivating factor for wine tourists, followed by “learning about wines and how they are produced”, and then “buying wine”. However, the rural setting, gastronomy, or visits were not considered reasons to visit the wine region.

The existence of wineries in a wine region is in itself a reason to visit that region. The attributes of the winery, which determine the visit to the region and, implicitly, to the winery, are the quality of the services offered to the tourists, the knowledge of the wine that the winery workers have, and the diversity of wine assortment [10]. As a result, in order to attract as many tourists as possible, wineries need to continuously improve their characteristics, as previous studies [38–40] have shown that visits by tourists to wine-growing regions generate revenue for the latter.

According to the motifs for visiting a vineyard, tourists can be divided into five categories (Figure 1).

- **Tourists who are learning about wines** – the reasons why they visit a winery, listed in order of importance, are: tastings, learning new things about wines, atmosphere/ambience, buying wines, relaxing;
- **Tourists who are passionate about food** – the reasons why they visit a winery, listed in order of importance, are: dining at the winery, atmosphere/ambience, visiting a rural setting;
- **Wine-buying tourists** – the reasons why they visit a winery, listed in order of importance, are: tastings, wine purchase;
- **Wine enthusiasts** – the reasons why they visit a winery, listed in order of importance, are: tastings, learning new things about wines, relaxing;
- **Wine connoisseurs** – the reasons why they visit a winery, listed in order of importance, are: tastings, buying wines, finding a unique wine.

**Figure 1.** Tourist classification according to the motifs for visiting a vineyard. Source: Adapted from Bruwer, Prayag, and Disegna [41].

It should be noted that the reasons do not differ much from one category of tourists to another. Moreover, the reason found in all categories of tourists is the wine tasting. This indicates that visiting a winery and implicitly tasting wine represent the essence of wine tourism.

Depending on the influence of the wine landscape (region) on tourists, namely, the organization/arrangement of the wine region, wine quality, value/notoriety of the wine region, winery workers, and depending on experience motivation and bonding motivation, tourists practicing wine tourism can be classified as [42]:

- Inspired tourists—the attraction towards wine tourism is influenced both by your own motivation to experiment and by the offerings of wineries;
- Self-motivated tourists—the attraction towards wine tourism is influenced both by one’s own motivation to experiment and by the wineries’ offers;
- Market-motivated tourists—the attraction to wine tourism is influenced more by the wineries’ offers and less by their own motivation to experiment;
- Inert tourists—neither their own motivation to experiment nor the winery’s offerings make them feel attracted to wine tourism.

In other words, this classification highlights the way in which wine tourists respond to intrinsic factors (internal motivations and their own experience) and extrinsic factors (winery offers). Naturally, due to the fact that the influence of factors is felt subjectively, the situations described above appear in which tourists can be influenced by one of the categories of factors, by both categories, or by none.

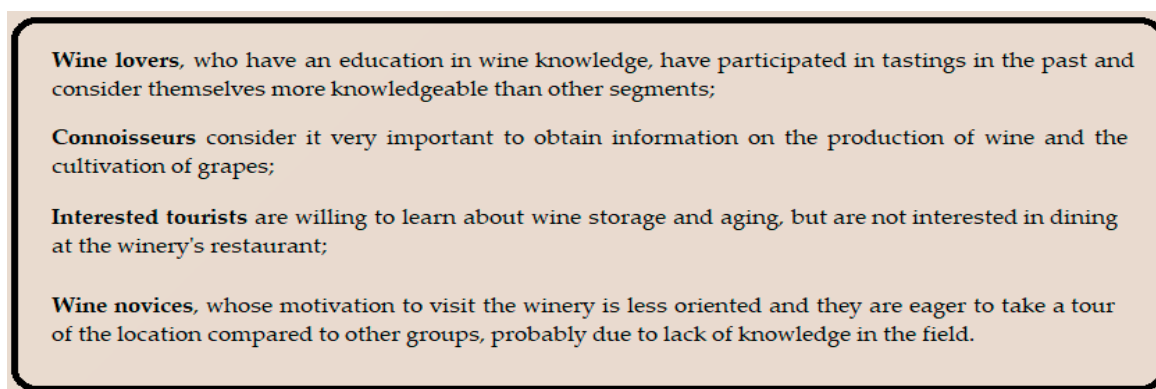
Wine tourists can also be characterized by comparison with non-wine tourists. Two of the variables that differentiate between wine tourists and non-wine tourists are income and consumption habits [43]. As a result, wine tourists have a much higher income than non-wine tourists, wine tourists consume much more wine, and much more often than non-wine tourists [43]. Given the variable income, it can be deduced that the tariffs charged by wineries do not have a very large impact on wine tourists.

Additionally, wine tourists can be divided into active wine tourists and potential wine tourists [44]. Thus, active wine tourists are characterized by the fact that they are wine consumers and have visited a winery at least once, and potential wine tourists are characterized by the fact that they are wine consumers, but have never visited a winery. Furthermore, two other differences between these categories of wine tourists refer to: the fact that active wine tourists are much more likely to visit a vineyard where they can find their favorite wines and where they can carry out other activities specific to wine tourism, compared to potential wine tourists, and the fact that for active wine tourists, the time to

and distance to where the vineyard is located are insignificant elements, while for potential wine tourists, they are significant elements [44].

Another typology of tourists who practice wine tourism is the typology based on the origin of the tourists, more precisely, the tourists can be from the country where the visit occurs, but they can also be international tourists. Thus, it was found that there are some differences between the profiles and expectations of domestic and international tourists, and as a result, wineries have the responsibility to know these profiles and expectations, to increase the return rate, which in the case of international tourists, is lower than that of national tourists [45].

A study based on a questionnaire in two wine regions in Australia identified four groups of tourists based on their knowledge about wine and wine tourism (Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Types of wine tourist. Source: Adapted from Charters and Ali-Knight [46].

The four profiles were studied in another paper [47], finding that an emotional experience was more important for wine lovers, interested tourists, and curious tourists, than for uninterested tourists. If the wine-growing experience was rated as the most important attribute of all four profiles, the environment of the wine-growing region was the next most important attribute for the interested and curious tourists, more so than for wine lovers and disinterested tourists.

### 2.3. The Profile of Wine Tourists from the “Old World” of Wine

The profile of tourists who practice wine tourism and the reasons why they practice this form of tourism, could also be influenced by the “world of wine” from which they come. Following an analysis of the largest wine production and exports, among the countries with an older or more recent wine tradition, it was discovered that there is the “Old World” and the “New World” of wine [48]. The “Old World” of wine includes countries such as Bulgaria, France, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Portugal, Romania, and Spain, and the “New World” of wine includes countries such as Argentina, Chile, New Zealand, South Africa, and the United States [48]. Given that all the countries of the Old World of wine are from Europe, it can be admitted that Europe has the supremacy of the world wine market, which is why studying the profiles of wine tourists from European countries with a tradition in viticulture has proved imperative.

Thus, the Greek vineyard visitor is characterized by the fact that he is a man, is between 26 and 36 years old, is employed, has higher education, has a monthly income of between EUR 1501 and 2000, and comes from a rural area [37]. He has as reason for travel, obtaining information about wines and wine production [37]. As a result, it can be inferred that visitors to Greek wineries may fall into the category of wine connoisseurs.

The German vineyard visitor is characterized by being a woman, is between 50 and 59 years old, and can also be over 60 years old, has a university degree, a high income, and is employed, and among the main reasons for travel are the consumption of traditional food and drink, the acquisition of wine information, and wine tastings [13].

The Spanish vineyard visitor is characterized by the fact that she is a woman, is between 40 and 49 years old, has a university degree, a high income and is employed, and among the main reasons for travel are the acquisition of information about wines, entertainment/relaxation, and the consumption of traditional food and drink [13].

The visitor to the Italian vineyard falls into the category of tourists who love wine, treats the vineyard as a pilgrimage site, being characterized by the fact that he is a man, he is between 26 and 45 years old, has a medium to high income, uses the car as a means of transportation, and has information on wines [49]. Given that he falls into the category of wine-loving tourists, it can be deduced that the reasons why he visits a winery are due to tastings and the desire to learn about wines.

The Bulgarian vineyard visitor is characterized by the fact that she is a woman, is between 41 and 60 years old, visits wineries 2–3 times a year, and the reasons behind the visit are tastings, vineyard tours, general experience, food, and association with wine from wineries, and the history and production of wine [50].

The Portuguese vineyard visitor is characterized by being a man, being employed, between 18 and 45 years old, having a high school or undergraduate degree and an average income of between EUR 1251 and 3500, and among the reasons behind the practice of wine tourism and, implicitly, the visit to the wineries, are the attractiveness of the wine-growing area's physical and historical characteristics, the desire to find information about wines [51].

The French tourist who practices wine tourism is characterized by the fact that he does not prefer trips, but stays for an average of five nights, spends more than other categories of tourists, makes the visits together with his partner, prefers to practice wine tourism in the spring and summer seasons, prefers to use the car as a means of transport, and the main reason for practicing wine tourism is the discovery of vineyards and wines [52].

It is noted that all tourists who prefer to practice wine tourism and, implicitly, to visit wineries, have a common reason, namely, to find information about wines, especially information about the history and mode of production. As a result, they can be included in the category of tourists who love wine or in the category of tourists who are interested in wine.

It was also concluded that tourists who practice wine tourism and come from the Old World of wine are predominantly male, and tourists who come from the New World of wine are predominantly female [30]. In other words, European tourists who practice wine tourism are mostly men.

#### *2.4. Wine Tourism Experience and Sustainable Local Development*

Some studies [20,21] highlight the fact that wine tourism is widely recognized as having a strong connection with the rural element, and the idea that the wine country, where both natural and cultural characteristics are important, is a rural paradise, was passed on to wine consumers. Wine tourism is an important factor in sustainable rural development, especially through the creation of jobs and the sale of local products [2].

In addition, it has been recognized as part of agricultural tourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism, industrial tourism, and tourism of special interest [3]. Wine tourism can also be seen as a means to combat the effects of rural restructuring [2].

Mainly, wine tourism is a type of rural tourism. The connection between WT and rural communities has been explored in many studies. Being connected to rural space for most of the business activities of wine producers, wine tourism is also connected with traditions, folklore, customs, and architecture [53].

It can create opportunities to diversify and stimulate rural development [54]. It is noted that “tourist professionals could support their offer's competitive differentiation with a greater variety of visiting packages, including activities such as concerts, grape harvesting time, exhibitions, festivals, cooking workshops, typical accommodation, hiking or cycling in vineyards, ballooning over vineyards, horseback riding, and carriage tours in vineyards” [55].

The development of diverse activities has several advantages for the local community: local employment, reduced seasonality, and favorable perception.

Vineyards can be involved in the community by employing local residents and participating in local events [56]. Other benefits involved by the development of WT are related to seasonality and tourist flows [57]. It has been shown that residents also have a favorable perception about wine tourism especially related to economic impact, socio-cultural impact, and environmental impact [58]. Wine, identity, and tourism create values and are fundamental for rural development [59]. A visit to the vineyard can generate a competitive advantage for both the tourist destination and local wines, creating profit for producers, but also opportunities for the development of the regional wine sector [30].

For some areas, the development of wine tourism can lead to negative transformations of rural landscapes that requires a higher level of protection—a national heritage site [60]. Other negative impacts of overdevelopment of wine tourism in a rural area are: increase in land cost, overcrowding, lack of workforce in the vineyards due to changes in local economy, etc.

Wine tourism can be approached as a system oriented towards specific experiences and activities that occur in a specific framework called “winescape”. Thus, “experiences are enjoyable, engaging and memorable encounters for those consuming these events from a consumer’s perspective” [61]. Increasingly, wine tourism is creating unique and authentic experiences that need to be more personalized and differentiated [62].

Consumption experiences need to be analyzed over time and can be divided into four stages: 1. pre-consumption experiences (search and planning); 2. shopping experiences (choice and contact with the environment); 3. essential consumer experiences (sensation); and 4. nostalgic experience [63].

The “total wine experience” is characterized by ten features: 1. wine tasting and purchase; 2. socializing with friends; 3. the joy of the day spent outdoors; 4. the joy given by the rural and living environment; 5. becoming familiar with wine production; 6. learning about wine; 7. wine tasting in restaurants; 8. the vineyard tour; 9. the visitor’s experience with other attractions and activities; and 10. relaxation [64].

In a study of wine tourism in the United States, it was found that American tourists had travel experience and relatively high socioeconomic status. During the trip, they tend to participate in various activities, especially visits to wineries, wine festivals and events, and associated tours, thus manifesting the need for variety and the search for new sensations [65].

A study conducted in Greece showed that the key motivating factors of wine tourism are associated with the vineyard experience, rather than the social context of the visit or the general regional characteristics. The authors placed first the “winery aesthetics”, and then in order “the basic viticultural product” and the “educational experience”, identifying two new motivational dimensions, “familiarity”, and, respectively, “reputation and novelty”. A less explored research area can also be considered, namely the attitudes and perceptions of tourists in the vineyard [29]. Therefore, it was studied whether wine tourists feel the desire to buy wine in the tasting rooms due to a feeling of offering something in return for the services received [5]. In this regard, it was found that the more grateful the consumer was to the winery for the time he/she spent, the higher the expenses incurred. This feeling of gratitude was stronger if tourists were traveling in small groups [5].

Exploratory research [66] based on observation and the use of semi-structured interviews with wine farm managers created an early framework for understanding the relationship between wine tourism experiences and wine brands (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The relationship between consumer experience in wine tourism and wine brands.

Experience	Brand Enhancement
Farm atmosphere: combining the culture of the region and the surrounding landscape with the places where wine tourism occurs, to add value to the experience.	Sales volume: all producers mentioned the existence of a positive and growing relationship between the evolution of wine sales volume and wine tourism.
The interface of the services provided: the technology that supports the interface is not very efficient, but farmers make significant improvements and adaptations to market needs.	Market expansion: wine tourism has developed within the company, both in terms of the number of visitors and their geographical distribution.
Services offered: the services vary depending on the level of development of the wine tourism practiced by the company.	Product diversification: there has been identified an evolution and adaptation over time, which is the result of constant market changes and the desire to obtain more income.
Dissemination strategies: they depend on the target audience to be informed.	“Word-of-mouth” communication: considered an effective means of disseminating information on wine.
Pricing strategies: the prices of the visits are variable, from free (which is the exception) to a small value of about EUR 10 for a visit and tasting.	
Networks: Competition is considered a positive aspect for the sector. Some farms said that if there were more producers in the area to practice wine tourism, the market would be wider.	

Source: adapted from Correia, Menses and David [67].

As we have seen, tourists are no longer interested in wine tasting and purchasing. Several activities can be developed starting from a higher sophistication of tourist demand. In conclusion, it can be appreciated that wine tourism can create truly authentic experiences based on the local environment. By its assets, it can contribute to local development (employment, economic diversification). By having a fixation in space (geographically), wine tourism is strongly linked to the environment depending on it (food, drink, history and traditions, architecture, landscape, and atmosphere). Several negative effects can occur but only in areas with higher demand. Usually, wine tourism is not a form of mass tourism and negative effects over the environment are scarce and present a low intensity. In the majority of cases, the advantages are spread over the entire area: vineyards, other local businesses, local community, environment, and cultural heritage. In doing this, wine tourism has a great contribution to overall sustainable development.

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. Research Context: Romanian Vineyards and Wine Tourism

With more than 182 thousand hectares cultivated with vines, Romania ranks 6th in Europe and 12th worldwide among wine producing countries. Thus, Romania is one of the main players in Europe. With an eligible market of more than 15 million potential customers, a number of almost 600 producers, a market estimated at EUR 400 million, and a production growth of 37% in 2021, Romania represents one of the most dynamic European markets in terms of grape and wine production [68].

However, wine tourism is a novelty in Romania compared to the popularity it has gained in other European countries. Although wine tourism is in continuous development in Romania, it remains a type of tourism that addresses only a niche of tourists. The political and economic conditions in the past 30 years contributed to this current state of affairs.

Consequently, several articles have been written on Romanian wine tourism in the past decade, but not that many, considering the importance of wine production in our country. Wine tourism is closely related to wine production and is a very popular type of tourism on the international level. Soare et al. [69] analyzed the viticultural potential and wine tourism in Romania concluding that wine tourism is in an incipient phase but has real chances of development. A similar result was obtained by Olaru [70]. Wine tourism was especially for foreign tourists and wine lovers. The main obstacles identified were: transportation infrastructure, lack of promotion and brand identity, and few accommodation units. Manilă [71] concluded that wine tourism develops in close connection with other types of tourism such as: agritourism, cycling, gastronomic tourism, and different activities that can be practiced in a vineyard. Analyses of wine tourism at the county level were carried out by several researchers in Romania. Ungureanu [72], Coros, Pop, and Popa [73] evoked the connection between wine roads and wine tourism in Alba county; Ciopi [74] and Nedelcu et al. [75] for Prahova county; and Manilă [76] for Vrancea county. Other national studies associate wine tourism with gastronomy [75,77,78].

A recent marketing study [79] on 2700 respondents of which 74% were men and 26% women revealed that 62.7% usually consume dry wine and 59.6% red. It found that 61% of the respondents had at least one visit to a Romanian vineyard and 45% at least one visit to a vineyard when travelling abroad.

Our research enriches the national and international literature by its main purposes. The first objective is to draw a demographic profile of the Romanian wine tourist. We also wanted to find out their reasons for wanting to visit a winery, how often they have done so in the last two years, and the type of group they were part of. Finally, we want to determine if wine tourism is a known subject for Romanian tourists, and how this type of tourism helps to the development of rural tourism.

When establishing the working assumptions, we took into consideration several elements:

- In the Old World of wine, the majority of wine tourists are men [30], and it is well known that men prefer dry red wine;
- The marketing study presented before was conducted on wine-lovers and wine specialists—due to the profile of the website;
- Wine tourism has strong connections to rural areas and contributes to sustainable rural development (as we have shown before) [2,3,20,21,53–59];
- Romanian wine tourism characteristics: incipient phase, few accommodation units, a lesser-known subject for average Romanian tourist.

In the light of previous considerations, we established the following hypothesis:

**Hypothesis 1 (H1).** *Romanian wine tourism consumers drink dry red wine.*

**Hypothesis 2 (H2).** *Vineyards in Romania have poorly diversified leisure offerings.*

**Hypothesis 3 (H3).** *Wine tourists believe that wine tourism helps develop rural tourism.*

### 3.2. Data Collection

We designed a structured questionnaire containing closed-ended questions, which was self-applied in the spring of 2021 due to the COVID-19 restrictions and limitations that were in place in Romania at that time. For Romania at that time, it meant: closing bars, limited physical contact, and restricted opening hours of supermarkets. In the light of these restrictions, we decided to use an Exponential Non-Discriminative Snowball Sampling method. The questionnaire was applied via an online survey. Recruitment was generated by posting the URL for the survey on social media network pages and by announcing the study in the universities where the researchers worked. In addition, we included a preamble in the questionnaire stating that “All data collected is CONFIDENTIAL and will be used strictly for academic purposes”.

Questionnaire design included 3 main parts: (1) current wine consumption frequencies and preferences, (2) wine tourism consumption, and (3) consumer characteristics and demographic profiles. One of the questions was introduced as a filter question to identify the percentage of Romanians that had at least one trip to a vineyard. We had a total number of 2081 valid responses. Considering that Romania has an eligible (more than 18 years old) population of approx. 15.5 million of adult inhabitants [80], at a confidence level of 95%, we have a margin of error of 2.15%. Convenience sampling method was used, which is a non-probability sampling technique [81]. From this group we selected only people who had made at least one visit, and obtained a group of 850 respondents. As the main objective of the research is to study the wine tourist behavior, we thought it would be better to evaluate only their responses. For this group we have a margin of error of 3.36%. To analyze the collected data, three methods were applied: frequencies to draw a demographic profile of the Romanian wine tourist, crosstabs to evaluate the frequency and reasons for participation in events organized at the winery, and binary logistic regression to determine if wine tourism contributes to the development of rural tourism, performed by using SPSS 23 (IBM) software.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Wine Consumer Profile

Wine tourism refers to tourism whose purpose is or includes tasting, drinking, or buying wine, often at or near its source. Wine tourism can consist of visits to wineries, wine tasting, vineyard tours, or even active participation in the harvest.

Starting from this definition, which we have inserted in the questionnaire, we propose to analyze how Romanian consumers perceive wine tourism and how they practice it.

For the analysis of the consumer profile, we considered four variables. These are Gender, Age, Education, and Income. Respondents were grouped into four Age categories (18–25, 26–35, 36–45, and over 45). For Income we considered five ranges (under RON 3000, RON 3001–4500, RON 4501–6000, RON 6001–7500, and over RON 7500). The last demographic variable used to establish the consumer profile was the last level of education completed. We proposed seven possible variants (gymnasium studies, high school studies, post-secondary education, university studies, master studies, postgraduate studies, and PhD).

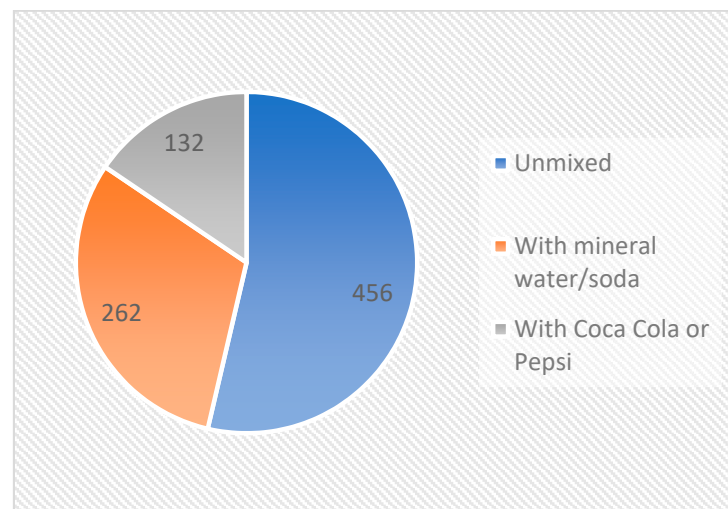
The gender distribution is 46% female and 54% male (Table A1). Out of the total investigated individuals, 48% fell into age group between 18 and 25 years, 27.1% were 26–35 years, 23.8% were 36–45 years, and 1.2% were 46–55 years (Table A2). A total of 38.7% of the study participants have an income under RON 3000 (approx. EUR 600), 28.6% have an income between RON 3001 and 4500 (EUR 601–900), 17.6% have an income between RON 4501 and 6000 (EUR 901–1250), 7.6% have an income over RON 7500 (EUR 1500), and 7.4% have an income between RON 6001 and 7500 (EUR 1251–1500). (Table A3). Regarding the sample structure by level of education, 35.8% of the respondents had graduate higher studies, 35.6% had graduate high-school studies, 15.2% had post-graduate education, 6.4% had post-secondary education, those with master's degrees and PhDs comprised 3.2% of respondents, and 0.7% had graduate gymnasium (Table A4).

To have a clearer picture of wine tourists we have also analyzed their preferences. Thus, we considered five variables. First, we need to establish how much wine they consume. Using a Likert scale with 10 levels (1—do not drink at all, 10—drink frequently) we defined the variable Consumption. In terms of the type of wine they consume we have considered two characteristics of the wine, Color (White, Rose, Red, or Sparkling) and Taste (Dry, Off-dry, Medium-sweet, or Sweet). Regarding the wine color (Table A5) consumed by the respondents, 36.6% prefer red wine, 34.8% prefer rose wine, 21.9% prefer white wine, and 6.7% prefer sparkling wine. According to their responses, in terms of taste (Table A6), 37.2% drink mostly medium-sweet wine, 34.7% drink mostly off-dry wine, 16.8% drink mostly dry wine, and 11.3% drink mostly sweet wine.

Another aspect that we felt should be checked was the way they consume wine. Thus, we defined two other variables: the way of bottling (Table A7) and whether or not they combine it with other drinks (Table A8). For bottling (Packing) we wanted to make a distinction between wines produced in Romania and imported wines so we proposed the following variants: Romanian bottled wine, Romanian bag-in-box wine, Bulk Romanian wine, Imported bottled wine, and Imported bag-in-box wine (Figure 3). Regarding the way they consume wine (Comb\_cons), we wanted to determine if they consume it plain, combined with water, or combined with Coke or Pepsi (Figure 4).



**Figure 3.** Preference by Packing. Source: Own determination based on Table A7.



**Figure 4.** Preferences according to how they consume wine. Source: Own determination based on Table A8.

If we consider the four demographics variables, we can consider that the wine tourism consumer is male, age 26–35, with higher education and with an income under RON 3000 (approx. EUR 600). For 2021, the year in which we conducted our research, the net average income in Romania was RON 3051 (EUR 610) [82]. Analyzing the results, we can say that those who made at least one visit to the winery prefer Romanian bottled wine, rose or red, and medium-sweet or off-dry. Regarding the consumption behavior, we can say that they consume moderately, both the average and the median have values close to six, and that they prefer not to combine it with anything else.

Our results show a shift from medium-sweet to rose off-dry. This is an important aspect that needs to be considered by wine producers. Considering that, internationally, rose wine will gain the interest of consumers.

#### 4.2. Wine Tourism Activities

The profile of the wine tourist cannot be complete without knowing their behavior when they spend their free time at a winery. At the same time, it is necessary to determine what is the main purpose, how much they want to spend, and what types of events they attend during these visits. For this, a section of the questionnaire went on to ask about the composition of the group they were part of (With family, Couple without children, Couple with children, With a group of friends, or In groups of women or men only), how much they are willing to pay for a tasting of four wines accompanied by a cheese/grape/fruit platter (under RON 50, RON 51–75, RON 76–100, and over RON 100), and what kind of activities they participated in.

More than half of those who said they had practiced wine tourism declared they were part of a group of friends (51.6%). We wanted to distinguish between the different types of groups that included family, so that most people who formed a group that included only family members were those who said they were in a couple without children (28.47%), followed by couple with children (12.82%), and those who participated with extended family were the fewest (3.53%). The remaining respondents (4.12%) were in a group of women or men only.

In our perception, the main reason why a tourist would participate in such an activity is to participate in a wine tasting, which was confirmed. For this reason, we wanted to determine how much they would be willing to pay for such a service. The distribution of the answers was around RON 75, the median answer being three. Thus, 29.50% would pay between RON 51 and 75, and 27.30% would pay between RON 76 and 100. It should be noted that almost 5% would not want to do such a tasting. They probably went just for relaxation, not for tasting.

An analysis of the phenomenon could not be made without finding out the reasons why they went on such a trip. The results are presented in Table 2. In this table the columns list the types of activities they might have participated in, and the columns show the frequency of participation in each of these and what other related activities they participated in.

**Table 2.** Frequency of participation in events organized at the winery.

Other Activities Main Activity	Frequency	Visiting the Winery	Wine Purchase	Tour and Tasting	Accommodation, Wine Tour and Tasting	Rest and Relaxation	Participation in Activities Related to Grape Growing and Wine Making	Other Reasons
Visiting the winery	21.1%	119	268	136	39	67	54	22
Wine purchase	22.4%	285	119	121	35	51	46	15
Tour and tasting	24.7%	121	136	314	44	68	62	19
Accommodation, wine tour, and tasting	8.6%	35	39	44	109	57	31	6
Rest and relaxation	11.2%	51	67	68	57	142	37	15
Participation in activities related to grape growing and wine making	7.5%	46	54	62	31	37	95	11
Other reasons	4.6%	15	22	19	6	15	11	59

Source: Own determination based on the results of the survey.

#### 4.3. Wine Tourism Forerunner of Rural Tourism

To determine if wine tourism contributes to the development of rural tourism, we have developed a binary logistic model. Three independent variables were used to test their impact on the dependent variable (Table 3) Rural—does wine tourism contribute to the development of rural tourism. Since we are talking about wine tourists, the first variable we considered was Consumption. It is important to know how familiar they are with the term wine tourism, for this we have introduced in the model the variable WT. The number of visits they have undertaken in the last two years can give us a clearer picture of how much they practice this type of tourism, but can also show us whether or not an increased number of visits can contribute to the development of rural tourism (No\_visits).

**Table 3.** Variables used in the model.

Variable	Description	Nature of Variable
Rural	does wine tourism contribute to the development of rural tourism	Dichotomous, nominal
Consumption	how much wine tourists consume/how big wine consumers are	Polytomous, scale
WT	how familiar they are with the term wine tourism	Polytomous, scale
No_visits	how many visits they had undertaken	Continuous

Source: Own determination based on the results of the survey.

The variable Rural takes the value 1 if respondents consider that wine tourism does contribute to the development of rural tourism and takes the value 0 otherwise. In order to determine whether or not the respondents know what wine tourism means, we used the scaled variable WT, which can take values from 1 to 5 (1—total unknown, and 5—total known). At the same time, the number of visits they made to the wineries (No\_visits), allows us to better understand the phenomenon.

We used a logistic regression model presented by Wilson and Lorenz [83] aiming to investigate how the independent variables (Consumption, WT, No\_visits) influence the dependent variable (Rural).

Table 4 shows the prediction of rural tourism development (Rural) using three independent variables with an acceptable level of significance.

**Table 4.** Logistic regression predicting the contribution of to the development of wine tourism.

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% C.I. for EXP(B)	
							Lower	Upper
Consumption	0.074	0.031	5.603	1	0.018	1.077	1.013	1.145
WT	0.62	0.072	73.589	1	0	1.859	1.613	2.142
Nr_visits	−0.293	0.117	6.255	1	0.012	0.746	0.593	0.939
Constant	−0.762	0.348	4.801	1	0.028	0.467		

Source: Own determination based on the results of the survey.

As we observe, all three variables are statistically significant for the proposed model (Sig. between 0.000 and 0.018) and the confidence interval is entirely above or below one, so there is a significant association with these variables. At the same time the predicted probability is of membership for Yes, this means that the odds ratio (Exp(B)) obtained shows us what are the chances that there is an influence between variables. As we saw above, when we highlighted the profile of wine tourism consumers, they do not consume much wine. This is confirmed by the results of our model, where we see that wine consumption has almost no influence on the development of rural tourism. We can only say that it has a small positive influence. According to the results presented in Table 4, we see that a high number of visits leads to a decrease in confidence that rural tourism can be developed through wine tourism. In this case we, have a negative relationship between the two variables (B-0.293). The most important result is that people who know what wine tourism means are 1.85 times more confident that it will contribute to the development of rural tourism, compared to those who know less about the subject. From the data collected, we identify possible implications (see Table 5) of the three independent variables mentioned earlier. The implications concern wine producers and could have an important economic impact on the long term.

**Table 5.** General factors that influence Wine tourism.

Factor	Mean	Possible Implications
Consumption	5.82	Grows interest in wine producers; Urge to look for additional information; Has a small positive influence on wine tourism.
WT	3.1976	Positive image of wine tourism; Differentiation from other forms of tourism.
No_visits	2.4059	Increase demand and sustainability of other leisure activities; Increase wine cellar sales; Increase income for wine producers.

Source: Own determination based on the results of the survey.

The amount of variation in the dependent variable (the Cox and Snell R Square and the Nagelkerke R Square values) found by the model for the logistic regression is included in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Model Summary.

−2 Log Likelihood	Cox & Snell R Square	Nagelkerke R Square
946.761a	0.106	0.15

Note: Estimation terminated at iteration number 4 because parameter estimates changed by less than 0.001. Source: Own determination based on the results of the survey.

Omnibus tests of the coefficients of model  $\chi^2$  Normal (3) = 95.075,  $p < 0.005$ , show that the model containing all independent variables was statistically significant, suggesting that the model allowed us to distinguish between those who saw an improvement in tourism activities carried out in rural areas. Furthermore, the model also has a specificity of 21% and a sensitivity of 92%. The model explained between 10.6% (Cox and Snell R Square [84]) and 15% (Nagelkerke R Square [85]) of the variance of rural tourism development, and correctly classified 71.1% of the cases.

## 5. Discussion

In terms of the results obtained and previous studies from the literature review that we have presented [13,30,37,49–52], we can conclude that the wine tourist is very different from country to country. In this case, it is quite difficult to draw a profile of the wine tourist from the Old World. This result can be explained by the cultural differences, levels of economic development, tourism development, and wine tourism history.

By age, we can include the Romanian typical wine tourist in Generation Y or Millennials. Several studies were carried out to find their preferences regarding wine consumption. Wine Market Council Report for the USA in 2017 revealed that 26% of millennials are high-frequency wine drinkers compared to 42% of baby boomers [86]. For Romania, Chivu-Draghia and Antocea [87] showed that Romanian millennials drink less wine than Generation X consumers. Similar results were obtained for Australia [88].

Our results indicate that the typical Romanian wine tourists prefer medium-sweet red Romanian wine. This result partially invalidates H1 (Romanian WT consumers drink dry red wine). The differences between red/rose and off-dry/medium sweet are 1.8 and 2.5 points. Our results represent the preference of the Romanian wine tourist and not of the Romanian wine consumer.

Worldwide, rose wine production has a growth rate of 18% and has been on a positive trend since 2002 [89]. Rose wine is a trend, for large retail outlets, identified by the International Organization of Vine and Wine in 2015 [90]. The most important markets for rose wine are France, USA, and Italy [91].

In USA, dry red wine is preferred by all generations [92]. Several studies on Millennials preferences revealed different results: Australian Millennials drink mostly white wine [88],

New Zealand Millennials prefer red wine [93], Australian Millennials are more likely to prefer white wines and change to red wine as they age [94], and Romanian Millennials prefer medium-sweet white wine [87].

Completing the profile of the Romanian wine tourist we can add more information from our research. On average, he had visited a winery in a group of friends, had 2.4 visits in the last 2 years, and was willing to spend an average of RON 75 (EUR 15) for a four-wine tasting accompanied with a plate of cheese and fruits. He has higher education and an above average income. The main reasons for visiting a cellar were tour and wine tasting and buying wine from the winery.

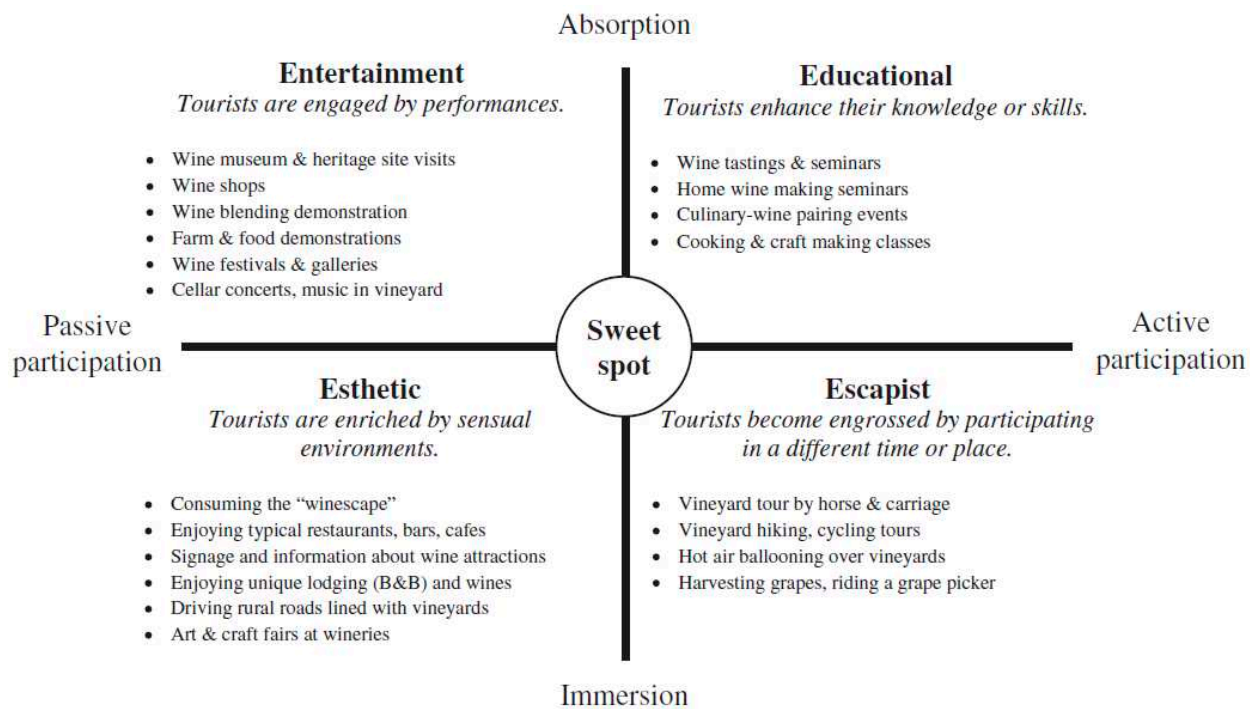
In general, Romanian wine tourists have a favorable perception and understand the connection between wine tourism and rural tourism. As we mentioned earlier, people who know better what wine tourism means have almost twice as favorable an opinion about the positive contribution to the development of rural tourism (validates H2). The general opinion about the positive contribution of wine tourism to rural tourism and local community is in line with other international studies [53,54,56–59,95].

However, more experienced Romanian wine tourists (with more visits) show a divergent opinion. A high number of visits leads to a decrease in confidence that rural tourism can be developed through wine tourism. They notice a rupture in the relationship between the winery and the local community. Tourists who are more experienced could compare Romanian wineries' offer with other international experiences. In many cases, most of the activities that can be performed at Romanian wineries are: tour, wine tasting, buying wine, renting bikes, serving lunch, and sometimes accommodation. With an adaptation from Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [96], Thanh and Kirova [55] suggested a range of activities grouped in four categories created from two categories of opposing items: absorption/immersion and active/passive participation (Figure 5). Our results revealed a prominence of only two activities: tour and wine tasting, and wine purchase. Close to this one, from the frequencies obtained is another activity—visiting the winery. The other items introduced in our research and connected to other types of activities: accommodation, and rest and relaxation, which can be achieved by passive participation and active participation in typical vineyard activities. The latter are less mentioned in the responses. Romanian wineries do not offer opportunities to spend free time in the surroundings or based on local resources. More experienced tourists notice this—poor diversification of tourism services with a negative impact on the perception of the contribution of wine tourism to the development of rural tourism. Based on their opinion, we can say that H3 is confirmed.

As we have shown in the literature review and in Figure 5, there are many activities that can be performed based on local resources. All these activities strengthen the link between wine tourism, rural areas, and communities. We also need to consider that wine tourism in Romania is at the beginning and, for now, the vineyards are offering only the basics. The number of tourists is not necessarily high and seasonality is very pronounced with peaks in some summer and fall weekends. Slowly, the vineyards are developing other services as we have seen from the frequencies obtained. For now, this is the exception and not the general rule in conducting wine tourism at a local level.

Without a close relationship, there are no premises for a substantial contribution of wine tourism to the development of rural tourism. This must be based on the participation of wineries in community life and not just in economic terms. Connecting the entire range of tourism resources can improve the perceived quality of the wine tourism experience and connect more closely the wineries with local communities. In this way, wine tourism can really contribute to rural development.

By identifying the main activities that Romanian wine tourism has carried out at the winery, we can add two more characteristics to his profile. He is interested in the educational aspects (wine tasting) and entertainment (visits and wine shops). The escapist and esthetic activities are almost non-existing in the Romanian wine cellars. This fact strengthens the importance of our research for the future development of activities based on local resources. The practical implications for the business environment are multifaceted.



**Figure 5.** Theoretical framework for understanding the wine tourism experience. Reprinted with permission from Thanh and Kirova (2017) [55], adapted with permission from Quadri-Felitti and Fiore [96].

They can attract other types of tourists by developing activities on the Immersion side. The two areas that address active (escapist) or passive (esthetic) participation present a considerable opportunity to grow with multiple benefits for vineyards, other businesses in the area and local community. In connection with those from entertainment and educational that link local resources (farm and food demonstration, culinary wine pairing events, and cooking and craft classes) vineyards have the opportunity to develop a unique product with long-term wide spread benefits. Developing more elaborate activities, vineyards may involve local artisans (art and craft, music, and folklore) and other small businesses (farm producers, local guides, and other touristic services). In this way, vineyards can contribute to the sustainable development of rural areas and tourism. On the other hand, they will ensure their long-term sustainable development by establishing a well-known wine tourism offer.

In this way, the local community can participate in the offer of the wine cellar, and the wine cellars will become a part of the local community. Wine tourism can follow the right path and increase its contribution to the development of rural tourism. Being at the beginning, the road will be bumpy, but we are confident that the national WT offer will develop and catch-up to countries with a tradition in this type of tourism.

## 6. Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Research

Included in the category of pseudo-geopolitical risks [97], defined as that category, which, although initially not derived from geopolitical factors, but from another nature (natural, economic, social, etc.), the COVID-19 pandemic caused 3 years of uncertainty and had an impact on all levels of tourism. This pandemic has affected tourism more than other industries, and the effects of this pandemic will continue in the coming period, with an impact that will have to be quantified at several levels.

Changes in tourism demand due to the COVID-19 pandemic have overlapped with the emergence of a new tourist profile characterized by a more informed and demanding traveler [98], leading the industry to rethink and build a new market strategy [99]. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, tourists classify their destinations according to their

level of safety in terms of epidemiological risk [100]. In this context, the loyalty of tourists to famous places is decreasing [101], and the restraint of tourists regarding travel and the choice of safe destinations has become a frequent concern. It is possible that in the coming years, this fear of traveling will persist and this phenomenon will lead to the reformulation of tourist offers, to the realization of new strategies to approach the tourist market, which will affect the decision-making processes of macro- and microeconomic management factors [102].

The profile of the Romanian wine tourist can be summarized as: male, 26–35 years old, above average income, and a higher education. Drinks medium-sweet red wine. He had 2.4 visits in the past 2 years, usually traveling with friends for tour and wine tastings (educational) and for buying wine from the winery (entertainment). To the best of our knowledge, this is the first paper to draw such a complex profile of the Romanian wine tourist and contributes to the advancement of knowledge in the field of wine tourism.

Our research has shown that wine tourism is not a completely unknown phenomenon for Romanian tourists. Social distancing recommendations and fear of mass tourism may have helped wine tourism during pandemic times. Due to the lack of previous data, we cannot say if 2.4 visits in the last 2 years represent an increase or decrease in demand. However, this value can be considered a milestone for future studies.

Due to the importance of the vine and wine industry in Romania, wine tourism has the opportunity to become a more visible and attractive type of tourism. At the moment, the Romanian wine tourism segment suffers from a lack of leisure activities that can occur at the winery, and this is also noticed by the more experienced tourists with a negative effect on the wine tourism–rural tourism connection.

The relationship between wine tourism and the development of rural tourism is well established in the international literature and is also recognized by Romanian wine tourists. Rural space is usually associated with sustainability. By developing collaborative relationships between them and the local community, vineyards can have a great contribution to local sustainable development, enriching the tourist experience and overall success in a more and more competitive market. The dynamics of the national market, its volume in terms of supply and demand, and the international perspectives of rural tourism and wine tourism are elements that will reshape the face of wine tourism worldwide.

It is clear that future development of the national industry is necessary. This research represents useful perspectives for the interested parties, especially for the Romanian authorities, specialist associations, and producers and owners of tourist pensions and wineries or vineyards. The study can be useful in identifying current and future potential trends in the field, in raising awareness of the target market, in a better knowledge of potential customers, but especially in creating development models. The results of this analysis indicate the need for new WT research on the short period of time since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected each country/region. This shows that the link between the activity of wine producers and that of tourism service providers could be a real trend in the near future, and suppliers should be ready to adapt their offerings to the needs of the new market.

Being exploratory and non-experimental research, and considering that the national literature on wine tourism is scarce and quite old compared to the enthusiasm shown in the last couple of years [79], future studies are needed. Romania has multiple wine regions, with different characteristics and natural and man-made resources, which can complete the overall experience of wine tourism, without directly competing with each other.

Possible directions for future research may be related to the study of the views of producers of wine products, owners of vineyards, wineries, and tourist facilities in those areas, as well as local and national authorities directly interested in this field. In this way, it will be possible to complete the image of our research in the field of wine tourism with its multiplier effects on the economy and rural communities in these wine-growing areas. By combining the academic approach with the interests of practitioners in the field along with the needs of stakeholders, this may contribute in the future to multiplier results and

a greater impact of wine tourism in the field of rural tourism. At the same time, future studies and comparisons between pre- and post-pandemic conditions are needed, not only for Romania.

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**Informed Consent Statement:** Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

**Data Availability Statement:** Not applicable.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## Appendix A. Data Results

**Table A1.** Gender.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Female	391	46.0	46.0	46.0
Male	459	54.0	54.0	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A2.** Age.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
18–25	408	48.0	48.0	48.0
26–35	230	27.1	27.1	75.1
36–45	202	23.8	23.8	98.8
46–55	10	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A3.** Income.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Under RON 3000	329	38.7	38.7	38.7
RON 3001–4500	243	28.6	28.6	67.3
RON 4501–6000	150	17.6	17.6	84.9
RON 6001–7500	63	7.4	7.4	92.4
Over RON 7500	65	7.6	7.6	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A4.** Education.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Gymnasium studies	6	0.7	0.7	0.7
High school studies	303	35.6	35.6	36.4
Post-secondary education	54	6.4	6.4	42.7
University studies	304	35.8	35.8	78.5
Master studies	27	3.2	3.2	81.6
Postgraduate studies	129	15.2	15.2	96.8
PhD	27	3.2	3.2	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A5.** Preferences according to wine color.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
White	186	21.9	21.9	21.9
Rose	296	34.8	34.8	56.7
Red	311	36.6	36.6	93.3
Sparkling	57	6.7	6.7	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A6.** Preferences according to wine taste.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Dry	143	16.8	16.8	16.8
Off-dry	295	34.7	34.7	51.5
Medium-sweet	316	37.2	37.2	88.7
Sweet	96	11.3	11.3	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A7.** Preferences by packaging.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Romanian bottled wine	482	56.7	56.7	56.7
Romanian bag-in-box wine	101	11.9	11.9	68.6
Bulk Romanian wine	75	8.8	8.8	77.4
Import bottled wine	182	21.4	21.4	98.8
Import bag-in-box wine	10	1.2	1.2	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

**Table A8.** Preferences according to how they consume wine.

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Unmixed	456	53.6	53.6	53.6
With mineral water/soda	262	30.8	30.8	84.5
With Coca Cola or Pepsi	132	15.5	15.5	100.0
Total	850	100.0	100.0	

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