

Wine tourism in the Canary Islands: An exploratory study

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Resumen: Mientras el turismo del vino está desarrollándose en varias regiones vinícolas europeas, la evolución del mismo, o su potencial, en las Islas Canarias son poco conocidos. Este estudio exploratorio examina estas áreas entre 23 bodegas insulares. Los resultados revelan el potencial de desarrollo del turismo del vino en las islas, con bodegas que, o bien ya forman parte de este concepto, o planean acrecentar su participación. Los bodegueros entrevistados reconocen impedimentos que están frenando el desarrollo de la industria vinícola y del turismo del vino en las islas, incluyendo la competición de vino foráneos y leyes del control de alcoholemia que inhiben el consumo del vino en bodegas entre los visitantes. Asimismo, los bodegueros perciben la necesidad de encontrar un balance entre el turismo en masa y el nicho del producto vinícola. Finalmente, el estudio propone áreas de futura investigación sobre el desarrollo del turismo del vino en Canarias.

Palabras clave: Vino; Turismo; Turismo del vino; Islas Canarias; Operadores de bodegas.

Abstract: Wine tourism is experiencing significant development in both new and old European wine regions. In the case of the Canary Islands, wine has been produced and traded for centuries; however, little is known about the current state or potential for wine tourism development in this archipelago, despite the fact that millions of tourists, including many potential wine tourists, visit the islands each year. In this exploratory study, the perspectives of winery owners and managers on wine tourism are examined. In-depth face-to-face interviews among 23 small winery operators reveal that the scope for exploiting wine tourism on the islands has been recognized and that many wineries are either already involved in wine tourism, including as part of a wine trail, or plan to be more involved in the future. Issues that challenge the development of operations' wine and wine tourism industry, including competition from non-Canary Island wines and anti-drink-drive laws that inhibit passers by to consume wine at the cellar door were noticed. Operators stressed the need to find a balance between mass tourism and the niche produce of wine. Moreover, the findings identify avenues for future research on wine tourism development in the Canary Islands.

Keywords: Wine; Tourism; Wine tourism; Canary Islands; Wine operators.

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Introduction and literature review

Wine tourism within the broader context

In recent decades, the concept of wine tourism (Hall, Sharples, Cambourne, Macionis, Mitchell & Johnson, 2000) has gained adeptness in many parts of the world, providing an alternative attraction in rural areas, the home of most wineries and vineyards. Wine tourism has contributed to expanding the dimensions of the wine product, that is, from merely being a consumption item, or a luxury item, to increasingly becoming a synonym for food, entertainment and hedonic experiences. In this regard, Dodd and Gustafson (1997, in Mitchell, Hall, & McIntosh, 2000) underline the importance of the experiential view that recognises the nature of products and services with hedonic components such as wine. Also important are the links between wine, socialising, relaxation and hospitality (Dodd, 1995), as are wine's potential health benefits (Dodd & Morse, 1994; Klatsky, 1997; Maxwell, 1997).

The essence of wine tourism is visitation of cellar doors (Cambourne, 1998), wineries, and vineyards to taste wines (O'Neill, Palmer, Charters & Fitz, 2001). Visiting wine shows and festivals are also closely linked to wine tourism, not only in the form of tasting wines but also in motivating travellers to experience the characteristics of wine regions (Hall & Macionis, 1998; Macionis, 1996, in Hall et al., 2000). However, the implications of wine tourism go beyond consumption and experience. For example, the combination between wine and food can act as catalysts in creating awareness and emphasising a region's culture; in this process, rural regions can attract travellers and potentially benefit from their expenditures (Jago, Issaverdis & Graham (2007).

Not surprisingly, interest to tap on the wine tourism phenomenon has grown among many wine producing regions; such development is currently taking place in many distant geographical areas scattered throughout the world. Interest in wine tourism from an academic perspective has also grown considerably. Mitchell (1999; 2002) and Mitchell and Hall (2001) conducted pioneering studies in New Zealand exploring consumption and post-visit behaviour among different age groups of winery visitors. Mitchell, Hall and McIntosh (2000) and Mitchell and Hall (2001) also studied winery visitors' 'wine lifestyle,' a dimension that comprises wine interest, wine

cellaring behaviour, and wine club participation.

The visitor dimension, that is, the study of winery visitors demographic and consumption characteristics, has also been examined among winery visitors in Australia (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002) and South Africa (Tassiopoulos, Nuntsu & Haydam, 2004). Groundbreaking research has also been conducted to examine the recent development and potential of new wine tourism destinations in Chile (Sharples, 2002), Canada (Telfer, 2001; Getz & Brown, 2006), Michigan (Wargenau & Che, 2006) and Texas (Dodd, 1995). The potential gains that rural areas may obtain from wine tourism are also addressed in studies from Portugal (Correia & Ascencao, 2004), Israel (Jaffe & Pasternak, 2004), and Italy (Scottini, Menghini & Scozzafava, 2005; Di Gregorio & Licari, 2006). In contrast, some researchers also caution against high expectations of wine tourism's alleged benefits, illustrating several challenges that might limit the potential of wine tourism as a strategy for wineries. Beames' (2003, p. 205) comments, for instance, emphasise infrastructural issues, such as lack of development of attractions outside gateway cities, including rural areas where grapes are grown. Additional hurdles many wineries face are the geographical distance to main roads and lack of winery infrastructure to host visitors (Taylor & Warren, 1998). However, even if wineries manage to attract visitors, in some cases only about one in three visitors will make post-visit purchases from the same winery (Jolley, 2002), suggesting that visitation alone may not suffice to 'convert' visitors into loyal customers.

While much interest on wine tourism has resulted in a rapidly growing body of literature, still today a large number of wine tourism related areas have been researched to a very limited extent, not only regarding wine tourists (Jarvis & Lockshin, 2005), or about "wine tourism in general" (Beames, 2003, p. 210), but also from a theoretical / conceptual nature. In fact, researchers are only beginning to make discoveries in some of the numerous newly developing wine regions around the globe, each of them with its unique demographic, environmental, production and entrepreneurial factors, thus rendering the study of wine tourists, wine regions, or winery entrepreneurs a very complex undertaking.

This study complements the growing body

of research on the wine tourism concept by exploring wine tourism within the context of a popular tourist destination where wine, a traditional product with centuries of history, has lived in the shadow of the tourism industry: the Canary Islands in Spain.

Canary Islands' tourism, wine, and wine tourism

For decades, the Canary Island archipelago has been a synonym for - and a destination of - mass tourism and low budget package tours (McLane, 2000). Recent figures from the Canary Institute of Statistics (2007a) note that in recent years the number of tourist arrivals has been close to ten million, a stark contrast when compared to the islands' 2.03 million inhabitants (Canary Institute of Statistics, 2007b). Many reasons prevail in tourists' minds to travel to the archipelago, often erroneously glorified among outside visitors as a party place, an image that is far from what renowned party destinations such as some Balearic or Aegean Islands may have in offer.

Despite the fact that low budget tourism continues to prevail as a very important economic activity (Canary Institute of Statistics, 2007a), the Canary Islands provide a safe heaven for visitors in a number of ways. For example, the islands' all-year-round benign temperatures with lots of sunlight, beaches (Garín-Muñoz, 2006), and spectacularly varied forms of natural landscape are among the most attractive elements that the 'Canaries' offer to outside visitors and locals. Different microclimates also allow for the production of crops that, as the vineyards in the Tacoronte-Acentejo area or the banana plantations in the Orotava Valley, have over time become tourist attractions. The advent of agrotourism, a concept that involves leisure activities farmers organise to cater for visitors to rural areas (Spanish Ministry of Agriculture, 1992) suggests the potential of rural based tourism as an alternative to sun and beach (Parra López & Calero García, 2006). The combination of wine and tourism also appears to fit in this category.

Canary Islands' wine production is very marginal in comparison to mainland Spain's (García Fernández, 1999; Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries and Food Council, 2004). However, grape growing occupies 10% of cultivatable soil in the archipelago (García Fernández, 1999; Agriculture, Farming, Fisheries and Food Council, 2004). The wine product has a long tradition and is well in-

grained in the islands' folklore, its landscape, and agricultural heritage (García Fernández, 1999; El Día, 2001). Wine's tradition as accompaniment of meals, and as part of the local culture, for instance, consumed in festivals across the seven inhabited Canary Islands, is also very long. Clear demonstrations of wine's long history as part of Canary Islands cultural and gastronomic heritage are the historical facts that vines already existed in the 'Canaries' in the 15th century, and that a wine trade was established between the archipelago and the United Kingdom (García Fernández, 1999). Later events saw disease and a general decline that brought the local winery industry to the brink of extinction; however, after a long period of decline (García Fernández, 1999), the industry recovered. In recent decades, the introduction of quality controls and the development of industry structures have been welcome initiatives to support local wines. The assigning of 'Designation of Origin' status to wineries that adhere to prescribed quality standards (Godenu, Suárez Sosa, Gil Díaz, & Fernández López, 2000; Sainz, 2002; Martínez-Carrasco, Brugarolas & Martínez-Poveda, 2005) illustrates these developments. In this regard, the role of regulatory councils is fundamental, as they can monitor the implementation of more efficient production methods (Godenu & Suárez Sosa, 2002). At the same time, the 'informal' side of the wine industry, with its 'guachinches' or casual eateries often located in houses' garages (Jolonch, 2007), represents a local tradition of no-label, home-made wines sold in combination with local dishes continues. Other than simply surviving, this informal wine producing sector has thrived in the Canary Islands and is part of the archipelago's informal culinary heritage; the role of guachinches in preserving such heritage has been fundamental.

However, while the guachinche culture is still alive and well after many decades, pressures that include compliance with quality and hygiene regulations to adhere to European Union standards are indirectly contributing to the preservation of the islands' rich wine and culinary heritage in more formal ways. Regarding local foods, for example, Canary cheeses have now Designation of Origin label (Sainz, 2002), and have gained international recognition in recent years (El Día, 2003). These developments suggest potential commercial opportunities that, in spite of low volumes of production that are unlikely to satisfy large outside gourmet markets, may

serve the purpose to create awareness about the critical need to preserve this part of Canary culinary heritage.

Along the lines of maintaining the islands' culinary, cultural and historical heritage, wine is also taking a more formal approach, with quality assurance methods and strategies in place that are gaining recognition among local grape growers keen to thrive in a very competitive market. A recent success story, whereby the local Malvasía wines gained accolades at the 2007 International Wine and Spirit Competition (IWSC) in London (Feo, 2007; IWSC, 2007) demonstrates that opportunities exist for the small Canary Island niche market of premium wines. At the present time, however, formalised wine tourism products are largely unavailable. A demonstration of this situation is that only one wine trail is already operating on the island of Gran Canaria (La Ruta del Vino, 2007), a second was just developing on La Palma Island in 2007 (Enoturismo La Palma, n.d), and a third was to be started in 2007 in the Tacoronte-Acentejo region of Tenerife (Designation of Origin Tacoronte-Acentejo, 2006). No information was available on potential wine trail development on other islands in 2007. Godenau et al. (2000) also acknowledge that consumption and knowledge of local designation of origin wines is very limited, an issue that appears to be preventing the local wine industry from capitalising on the many millions of visitors travelling to the islands each year. Clearly, wine tourism could also provide benefits in other ways, including aiding in conservation efforts of the islands' vineyards, particularly in view of rapid urbanisation in many areas where vines are planted, an issue that is currently taking place in many of the islands' rural communities. Several additional issues add to the existing constraints the islands' vineyards face at the present time. The 2007 harvest, for example, was almost systematically lost due to the weather conditions prior to the harvest weeks (El Día, 2007a, El Día, 2007b). In addition, Spain's wine industry is experiencing saturation (Angulo, Gil, Gracia & Sanchez, 2000), and wine consumption is decreasing.

While an increasing number of studies focussing on Canary Islands' wine industry is being published, to date very limited information exists on the archipelago's wine tourism industry, particularly from an academic perspective. Moreover, little is known about the islands' wine industry that might help to answer questions that include the following:

- What is the background / history of the local wineries?
- Are wineries open to the public?
- What, if any, is wineries' relationship with tourism?
- What challenges do wineries face at the present time?

The limited knowledge of these dimensions might be preventing wineries and the developing wine tourism industry in the Canary Islands from benefiting from potential commercial opportunities. Lack of knowledge might also be preventing visitor segments interested in wine tourism as an additional attraction in rural areas from fully exploiting such pleasurable activity. The objective of this study is to close some of these knowledge gaps and examine the Canary Islands' wine tourism industry from winery operators' points of views.

Methodology

An initial consultation of different database searches, including Tacoronte-Acentejo's designation of origin website (www.tacovin.com) identified 61 wineries, 45 on the island of Tenerife and 16 on the island of La Palma. These operations, all of which have already gained designation of origin status, were approached during May 2007 via a letter that presented the objectives of the study and formally invited each winery to participate in the study. While a total of six of the seven islands of the archipelago currently have wineries with designation of origin, the selection of Tenerife and La Palma obeys to several reasons. First, the Tacoronte-Acentejo wine region provided several positive aspects, including its large number of wineries within a very small geographical area. In addition, this wine region is the first to have gained designation of origin status as compared to all other islands' wine regions. These characteristics are thus fundamental in choosing wineries from the Tacoronte-Acentejo region. Second, one of the researchers' knowledge of La Palma Island, and this island's current wine tourism development in the form of establishing a wine trail provided both convenience and an opportunity to explore current wine tourism related developments. Third, the contact established with wineries in only two islands serves as a first step to investigate wine tourism development in the entire Canary Island archipelago in the future, using a longitudinal approach.

The travel of one of the researchers to the

Canary Islands in late May 2007 allowed for a follow up on the letters sent previously. Phone calls were made to each winery to formally invite owners, operators and / or wine-makers to a face-to-face interview during June 2007. This time of the year was chosen as it did not clash with major winery related activities such as harvests or pruning. However, work and other commitments prevented several operators from taking part in the study. Overall, from the 61 operations approached, 23 accepted to participate in the study, a 37.7% response rate. The geographical split of participants was 15 wineries from Tenerife and eight from La Palma Island. Semi-structured in-depth interviews were designed to explore the background of the operations, relationship with hospitality in the form of being open to the public through a cellar door, café, restaurant, etc., relationship with tourism, for instance, in the form of hosting formal visits, and challenges operations faced at the time of the interviews. In all cases, operators were called in advance to allow them to choose a convenient day and time; the researcher then met with operators at the wineries. The time of the interviews ranged between 10 and 20 minutes. At the end of the interview process, two of the researchers who are bilingual in Spanish-English translated and transcribed the previously recorded interviews.

Contact established with the autonomous Canary Island government office identified the existence of some 200 mostly micro/family wineries in the archipelago. Thus, it is acknowledged that the rather small number of wineries participating in this study might not be representative of all wineries in the Canary Islands, and for this reason, the findings are taken cautiously as to any generalisations made from them.

Findings and discussion

Background of the wineries

Asked about the background of their operations, varied responses were elicited as to how wineries became established. One respondent for example stated that *"We are very new; the winery was established in 1999 and we sold our first harvest in 2000... The main reason for existence is to find outlets for local producers' grapes."*

However, the central theme among operations appears to be the preservation of tradition, with several responses suggesting this motive as a reason for embarking in the wine

industry: *"Our winery is tradition in our family; my grandfather was a wine producer. He was very passionate about wine and produced wine in a very traditional way. My father also planted wines, and we (his sons) took over in 1995."* *"We started this business because my father traded wines; he purchased them and re-sold them [middleman]. My older brother studied oenology and from 1997 we were accredited denomination of origin..."* *"This winery has existed for 5 generations."* One respondent stated that *"Our family is the oldest in the Canary Islands; we have produced wines since the 16th century. In fact, in 1615 we exported Malvasía wines. Our family was also one of the first that exported Canary wines."* Not only do these comments suggest the intention and desire to cling to a long family tradition but also the importance of preserving the islands' very important wine heritage. That several families have been involved in wine production for centuries further illustrates the potential of wine as an ancient tradition that could be utilised as an additional attraction, educating outside visitors of local heritage in the process. In addition, wineries also combined tradition with education as tools to run their businesses: *"Started in 1997, as a privately / family owned business. Our parents used to produce wine before... We are in the wine industry because we finished a degree in oenology. We want to live from this activity."* *"We are a family business composed of 5 people. One of my sons is oenologist, the other is technical agricultural engineer, and the other one is finishing his chemical engineer career. We created our own history, my wife and my three sons."*

Some of the participants had formed cooperatives incorporating many micro growers. One of these, currently regulated by the local council had been established for non-economic reasons: *"The main reason for having the winery was the council's intention to preserve the natural landscape through the conservation of a traditional crop."* Non economic reasons were also suggested by a small family winery: *"We started this activity not for business purposes but because we like wine. We could not make money out of this; it is not worth it except in those larger wineries that are known."* Another respondent's comment suggests that the winery business started to fight fake wines in the local market: *"This winery was created in 1986 to protect local wine production against outside wines that were being sold as local."*

A first step towards wine tourism involvement

Asked whether their operations are open to the public or not, it was noticed that 16 out of the 23 wineries are open to the public, either in a formal way during business hours or by appointment, suggesting wineries' approach towards wine tourism and gradual integration into this concept. For example, a winemaker, whose enterprise has been an iconic figure of the islands' wine history and heritage, with involvement in wine production for several generations indicated: *"we have always been open to the public. We have a tasting room only for groups and a shop will be open next week. In addition, we are preparing a trail for people to walk in and out of the winery. The main reason to be open to the public is for people to know our brand and benefit from word of mouth. Wine tourism has existed for a long time but officially is a new development."* In the case of this winemaker, such an objective was based on a solid business foundation; for instance, this winemaker acknowledged making time and financial investments to experience wine tourism first-hand in international wine tourism settings, including those of California and South Africa.

Some wineries are also providing hospitality facilities in an effort to integrate to wine and tourism: *"We have facilities that include a restaurant, banqueting rooms and tasting room. We have had success so far with it. Word of mouth is particularly successful..."* Other operations are currently looking for ways to build a rapport with tourism: *"Yes, we are open on an appointment basis. These visits often depend on the winery's availability to receive such visitors and also on the winery's activities..."* At the same time, growing demand for wine tourism appears to exist: *"Although we have not set up our winery to welcome tourists we do receive them. We have cellar door sales at the winery and on weekends we also have a stand in the local municipal market."* Such rapport is also being made between wineries and outsiders: *"we also have foreign visitors who come visiting the near-by rural trails and stop by to purchase our wines."* Despite the economic incentive, educating visitors might provide future opportunities: *"we have cellar door sales. We like people to visit us; we like to speak to them to create demand [for wine] in them. Here we open to sell and to inform people; we provide a service."* Another comment demon-

strates the relevance of education among winery operators: *"We have welcomed visitors for a long time and we try to explain to them the wine making process, bottling, etc. We believe that being open to the public provides an attraction that might help the sale of our wines."* Food offerings might also help to stimulate wine demand: *"We are open to the public with our restaurant serving as a channel to sell our wines."* The respondent from this winery also acknowledged that the establishment regularly receives tourist groups. To cater for these customers, the winery's restaurant provides a direct view to the vineyards and visitors have exposure to educational experiences in the form of an in-house section with ancient wine making tools, photographs and written materials informing visitors of wine's historical background and significance for the region.

A clearly defined strategy also suggests opportunities for the establishment of wine tourism: *"we have a project to offer visitor facilities to assist visitors to know about wine and about oenology on this island. Basically, we want to spread the word about the wine product. Our main objective is to offer a tasting room starting in 2008."* Even among operations currently not open to the public, *"We try to be; in fact, when people call us we welcome them. We have this space to offer tastings. We have a project to build an underground winery; for the moment we need to work on other areas."* Also, some wineries have an intention to 'connect' with tourism: *"If someone calls us to arrange a visit, or just visits us we try to fulfil their request."* These comments also denote an initial phase of understanding and awareness among some operators that market dynamics also play an important role in the islands, resulting in potential future opportunities. In order to materialise such opportunities, many operators may have to go through a long process of educating visitors and creating links with tourism and hospitality stakeholders. From some of respondents' comments, this development is already taking place, if not uniformly; however, those already engaged in this process may serve as pioneers and inspiration to other winery operators to follow their footsteps.

Challenges Wineries Face

Winery operators voiced a wide range of areas that are currently posing challenges to both winery management and wine tourism development. In some cases, current visitor demographics and lack of infrastructure are barriers limiting wine tourism development: *"Most tourists here are coming to enjoy the sun and drink beer. However, there are oth-*

ers, who are increasingly more and are concerned of the ecology and willing to learn. These tourists travel in rented cars and visit places in small groups. The problem is that you have very few wineries that are well organised to host visitors." Lack of knowledge of Canary wines poses further challenges: "Obviously, the quality of the tourism coming to the Canaries is clearly not the best but our wines are not been advertised, and therefore few outsiders know about us." Increasing international recognition gained from the wine product, as has for instance been the case of Californian and Australian wines, might help Canary Islands' wineries to benefit from both local and outsider visitors with a thirst for local quality wines and an interest in the background and educational aspect of this industry.

Despite the potential for attracting visitors, some wineries are also struggling to develop in a way that matches interest and demand: "Yes, we are open to visitors; however right now because we are in the process of growing, we have not conditioned the vineyards to accommodate tours, and we do not have one person taking care of this area. Often I do make bookings for smaller bus tours; we have had the local wine club in the last two months." Another comment further indicates infrastructure limitations: "We don't have buses or anything like that and because we don't have the facilities we don't think we are fully suited to be open to the public at the moment." Despite these issues, some businesses want to 'get it right' the first time around: "we are on a trial period (only two days per week at the moment). Some tour operators are keen to bring people here but we are starting very tentatively, with small groups. To have tour operators bring lots of people we will have to improve our facilities." While tour operators might be an option to link hospitality businesses and wineries, three respondents who had recent negative experiences with tour operators completely ruled out this alternative.

However, other problems that are beyond wineries' budgets, and / or other forms of control are currently limiting their ability to fully exploit from the numerous opportunities that might be found in some segments of the millions of visitors the islands receive every year: "Starting from the fact that the laws are punishing the sector more and more, for example, transportation laws banning the carrying of wines [as hand luggage on airplanes], laws against drink-driving [taking points off offenders' driver's license], that in my opinion are necessary but... all these issues are contributing to discouraging the youth from drinking wine." Competition from outside wines poses further threats to Canary wines: "Another problem is that our wines here are expensive in comparison to other Spanish

'young' wines." Another respondent echoed this comment, further suggesting marketing and competition issues: "We are facing a marketing problem: how to market the wine product. We are facing stiff competition. The means of transportation are so sophisticated nowadays and we can easily get wines from anywhere at very low prices." One of the main problems related to competition is the uniqueness of the geographic nature of Canary Islands' vineyards, with its hilly terrain that in many cases makes mechanisation impossible: "The geographic nature of the vine plantations does not allow for mechanisation; here much of the work is manual." Thus, production costs play against the price competitiveness of Canary wines: "Our production (islands) is expensive... the cost of grapes is high; we are paying the kilogram of grapes at a high price. What happens then? When we bring the wine to the market we are bringing a more expensive product, while products from other regions are very cheap with a low cost." In view of high costs, including exporting wines outside the archipelago, the wine tourism concept may provide local wine makers with a tool to sell their wines. The challenge, as echoed in some comments, is and will continue to be marketing local wines to an apparently uninterested, low-budget tourism market.

A final potential problem one respondent noted is related to weather issues: "The most difficult aspect at the moment is the unpredictability of the weather. Suddenly, you think that the vineyard is doing well and that his week is not raining, then you fumigate and the following week it then rains. Every year the weather is different and this is quite obvious, quite obvious." Such an unfortunate event recently became reality, as weather conditions resulted in a very warm and dry 2007 autumn season, causing extensive damage in many of the islands' grape crops (El Día, 2007a, El Día, 2007b).

Conclusion

While the wine product has been a common feature in people's lifestyle and culinary heritage in the Canary Islands for centuries, and while tourism is the islands' main industry, limited information exists on Canary Islands' wine industry and wine tourism, including from an academic perspective. The main objective of this study was to close knowledge gaps in those areas using in-depth interviews among a small group of winery operators. Such an effort also constituted a first attempt to study the development of the islands' wine and wine tourism industries longitudinally.

The findings illustrate a number of very contradicting areas in the entire wine tourism equation. The first issue is that the Canaries

attract almost ten million outside visitors every year, mainly from countries other than Spain. However, most of these visitors are currently travelling on a low budget, often with an all-inclusive package. Such an event might result in visitors' lack of interest, or budget, to venture and explore the islands on their own, including exploring the local wineries and wine trails. In addition, a low budget, all-inclusive vacation might also result in consumption of cheaper wines at the local hotels among tourists. A second issue is that Canary Islands' wines are being internationally recognised for their quality; this event is taking place in an extremely competitive market. However, respondents point out that Canary wines are more expensive to produce than many wines produced outside the archipelago mainly due to terrain conditions and resulting need for manual labour. This issue is creating a disadvantageous situation for the successful positioning of the local wines, with impacts on wine tourism consumption and marketing. Finally, current transportation laws limiting travellers' hand luggage and carrying wine bottles on the airplanes and anti-drink-drive laws that are inhibiting or, as one respondent noted, discouraging wine purchases, consumption, and winery visitation among would-be customers.

Despite the severity of these issues, the potential for a successful development of wine tourism in the Canaries continues to exist. However, it is essential that wineries see benefits of the wine and tourism relationship. While, some operators' involvement might primarily obey to such 'philanthropic' reasons as passion and love for wines, or preserving their ancestors' heritage, if no economic incentives exist, operators will continue to sell their properties, as it is currently the case. As a result, entire areas where vineyards have formed the landscape for a great many years will be lost forever. In view of these and other developments, the local wine and wine tourism industries deserve much attention from researchers in future studies. In particular, the marketing of wine trails, the relationship between marketing and current mass tourism, the identification of tourist segments favouring local wines, and visitors' views on their wine, winery, and / or wine trail experience are critical areas that, if studied, might provide very useful insights into a relatively young and proud industry.

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