

Vineyard tourist routes as a factor of regional development: the case of Sicily in a path methodology

Giovanni Messina¹, Enrico Nicosia^{2*}, Carmelo Maria Porto²

¹ Department of Ancient and Modern Civilizations, University of Messina, Italy.

² Department of Cognitive Sciences, Psychology, Education and Cultural Studies, University of Messina, Italy.

*Corresponding Author: enicosia@unime.it

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Abstract

A tourist route encompasses the experience of discovering the identity of places, lifestyles, and landscapes of the past and present as well as future prospects. In this study, wine, food, land use and sustainability are the characteristic elements through which food and wine tourism, and its implications for the economic development of the Mediterranean, especially Sicily, emerge. Such route provides tourists with an overview of a region and its cultural values. A rigorous analysis of the phenomenon embraces an approach that is based upon the quality of supply, the local knowledge of authentic products and cultures, and the involvement of all actors upon whom depend on the success or lack of success of a process for developing sustainable and competitive wine and gastronomy tourism. Denominations of origin for the protection of typical local products, wine roads and gustatory paths which are capable of revealing the values of an area, and therefore of putting them in the framework of rural tourism, and new communication technologies and new industrial associations, are all tools to be used with the scope of transforming the productive culture of places and culinary traditions into tourist products that are capable of constructing a territorial brand, to win an economic and cultural gamble that is of extraordinary importance for an island like Sicily, which sees in tourism a strategic sector that can trigger mechanisms for enduring and sustainable development.

Keywords: wine tourism route, winescapes, Sicily, sustainable development.

Introduction

Wine tourism is now considered an important segment of the tourism market that is closely linked to the territory and the local community (Carlsen, Charters, 2006) and "it is only in recent years that wine tourism has become an important component of rural development and regional promotion" (Hall, Mitchell, 2002, p. 69).

Wine tourism encompasses visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals, and wine shows, where wine tasting and experiencing the unique attributes of a grape wine region serve as the primary motivations for visitors. Peters (1997) also links the concept of wine tourism to the land and suggests that when viticulture is successful, it transforms the local landscape into a combination of agriculture, industry and tourism. Peters refers to wine regions as "winescapes." Hall (2002) argues that wine, food, and tourism industries rely on regional branding for market leverage and promotion and thus the appellation, or the regional "brands" become an important source of differentiation and value added for rural regions (Macionis, 1996; Peters, 1997; King, 2000; Hall, 2002). Getz and Brown (2006) consider wine tourism simultaneously as a form of consumer behaviour, a strategy by which destinations achieve local development and market local wines, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to sell their products directly to consumers.



According to Shor and Mansfeld (2009), wine tourism is a type of special interest tourism conducted in wine districts where vineyards and wineries abound. Tomljenović (2009) points out – in the context of wine tourism development in the Mediterranean – that wine tourism is one of the more lucrative products and of extreme importance for many Mediterranean destinations (Getz, Brown, 2006; Shor, Mansfeld, 2009; Tomljenović, 2009).

Fundamental for wine tourism is the desire to know, the “curiosity” of the tourists who are increasingly motivated by the quest for cultural identity, understood as a set of established values in time and place, a community united by habits which radiate a sense of belonging (Charters, Ali-Knight, 2002).

The culture of the place where the sphere best expresses the local identity with its history and resources and its distinctive features, is what may enable the development, maturation, and evolution of a community. Cultural values, aesthetics, and imagination are important to quality of life and should be given priority to prevent the loss of local identity and preserve the spirit, the *genius loci*, to protect and promote local traditions. These values should be considered real goods either from the standpoint of maintaining them (protecting and conserving) and by action that they, with their meanings, vision and presence have for the promotion of the site (Nicosia, Porto, 2011). Wine tourism, which continues to show positive trends, offers many advantages and opportunities, as it is a useful tool to raise the level of not only cultural but also economic and social communities for both residents and visitors and may develop in any part of the territory, affecting all age groups, and is not tied to the seasons.

Many argue that Champagne and Port, or other wine routes in France and Australia, come before Italy in the race to attract tourist-consumers. Phenomena such as hot air balloons in the Napa Valley of California, a leading area of wine production, were invented many years before the events made in Italy to attract interest in their products (Charters, 2010). All true, but the wine tourism in Italy is now a very important economic reality: the number of visitors that attend Wine Day is impressive and in continuous growth (Gade, 2004; Paolini, 2009, pp. 239-240).

To foster a better understanding, local cultural heritage is an increasingly used tool that is a central element for tourism development and its planning. The development of a tourist route as an instrument aims to enhance information resources by supplying a common denominator and belonging to areas not too far apart geographically (Cooper et alia, 1993). It can grow fast but intuition must be built up carefully over the medium term. Its design is complex and arises from a network of relationships and contacts between individuals and local government (municipal and provincial) to achieve regional and supranational scales while considering needs and proposals from the private sector. The constitution of a group of experts in the promotion of the territory and in the preparation of different paths is desirable also. In particular, attention to the role played by the Sicilian territory with regard to food supply and the presence of resources related to the rural environment (historical, architectural, natural) as elements of tourist attraction, and conversely, its effects on farming and rural tourism, seems meritorious. The symbolic value and cultural importance of food is not a new phenomenon; in fact, even in distant epochs, eating habits and behaviour have always played a central role in defining social and individual identity, so a site may become a tourist resort in what is called cultural tourism, addressed to take advantage of the essence of a place and community that resides there, with its customs, its traditions and its history.



Methodology

This project aims to investigate the reevaluation of offers in the tourism sector by maturing visitors who, feeling attacked by the effects of globalization, want to reclaim their identity by rebelling against the growing homogenization. Wine offers many benefits and opportunities, as it allows local communities to promote and improve not only their cultural aspects but also their economic and social activities. The use of tourist routes as a tool for long-term development aims to exploit closely linked resources and that belonging to areas that are not too far apart geographically. Examples of routes constructed on the relation between wine and territory in Italy, and especially in Sicily, have unlimited potential.

The first phase of the project included a selection and evaluation of national and international literature. Simultaneous with this review we have identified a case study which we analyzed during our research (Agosta, Chironi, 2001). The project involved a comparative analysis of the various wine routes in Sicily, which illuminate the contradictions and potential of tourism and economic development.

The selected method is based on the deepening theoretical and epistemological study of the geography of tourism, especially those of wine tourism.

To this end, we propose a path-analytic methodology on two levels with the aim of restoring a picture of wine tourism in Sicily and the territories concerned and their potential.

Wine tourism routes as a tool for sustainable development

The tourist route is a tool that is geared towards recent strategies of tourism competitiveness. It is understood as a path of travel and as a central element for tourism development of an area and its territorial development. Raffestin (1984) defined the tourist route as an experience of discovery and knowledge of the identity of places, its *genres de vie*, its landscapes, and its past, present, and prospects.

In addition, an itinerary includes several proven or probable components, such as those belonging to the spatial, temporal, and economic management, as well as those that are characterized by a strong subjectivity. Planning a route is thus a complex process that may be based upon the application of tools that can be used in an integrated manner. Resources and local traditions such as those pertaining to craft, food, religion, festival, and wine, that are typical of a territory are a function of tourist attraction that can be considered as micro-regional. Hence the reason to create a path or route, a perceptual map which, for the visitor becomes a perceptual map, a unique resource with strong appeal.

Over the past decades technological development has contributed to the growth of a methodology for designing itineraries, adding to traditional tools computer systems that are able to collect, organize and process information in an automated way.

Among the tools most used and developed are GIS (Geographical Information Systems), even if they are of a simpler kind, such as computer packages identification of road routes that are low in cost and directly available online (e.g., Google map).

It is possible to distinguish tourist routes by type theme, and duration to meet the needs of users.



Wine routes have become important tourism products worldwide, as well as acting as a tourism promotional tool (Getz, 2000; Williams, 2001; Hashimoto, Telfer, 2003). In general, a wine route consists of one or more designated itineraries through the wine region. The route provides information on sites of natural and cultural interest. Additionally, pictographic road signs are created using a common logo to guide travelers, and these should be both readily visible and easily read (Frochot, 2000; Getz, 2000). The route must be integrated into any national and regional framework, and must have easy vehicular access and navigation, as well as the ability to cope with the numbers of vehicles and visitors using it (Getz, 2000).

The wine routes can be a powerful instrument for developing long-term relationships with customers by utilizing customer databases. In addition, wine routes may create new jobs and generate commercial investment, at the same time as increasing winery sales and the prestige and image of the region's wine (Cambourne et al., 2000).

In the Americas, the Niagara Region is not only home to the famous waterfalls but also the home of an emerging wine route with more than 50 wineries. The Niagara wine route has two distinct clusters. The wineries in the east are in the tourist town of Niagara-on-the-Lake, which receives many international visitors while the wineries in the west are not typically on a tourist route and receive more domestic tourists (Hashimoto, Telfer, 2003).

In Europe (1), there are several examples of wine tourism routes among which we can highlight the *Vias Verdes* in Spain, which are greenways arising from the conversion of old disused railway lines in bicycle and hiking trails, the Vienna-Prague greenway that is nothing more than a network of hundreds of miles of trails and rural roads, including the wine routes, that connect the two historic capitals, and finally *le tour de Bourgogne à vélo* (Croce, Perri, 2010, pp. 22-23).

“In Portugal, several wine routes were developed based on an independent structure, for example that under the aegis of the Port Wine Route Members Association. Other wine routes decided to become integrated into an existing institution, for example the Bairrada Wine Route is managed by the Bairrada Wine Commission, the local Wine Tourism in Portugal 243 wine producers' organization” (Correia, Passos Ascensão, 2006, pp. 243-244).

In Italy, however, the examples of routes built on the relation wine to territory include Chianti, Brunello, Valpolicella, Montefeltro, Appennino Romagnolo, Ragusa and Val Camonica, all places that have a pattern of ideological history, nature and tradition, which have the power to reshape the needs of culture and nature (Mc Cannell, 1992, p.1).

“In Italy, wine tourism business generated a total turnover of 2.5 billion Euros in 2007 (Somoza, 2007) representing half of the total turnover from food and wine tourism. Furthermore, 50 million tourists (30 million Italian and 20 million foreign tourists) have visited, at least once a year, a site enjoying its food or wines” (Cavicchi et al., 2012, p. 148). The Osservatorio Turismo del Vino conducted a census of wine routes in Italy in 2010, identifying a total of 154 routes, with 12 located in Sicily. Additionally, the census identified 569 wine cities and other eco-gastronomic organizations actively engaged in promoting wine and food tourism.

Food and wine, as well as land and sustainability, are the characterizing elements within which food and wine tourism move and its implications for economic development in the Mediterranean, especially Sicily, are notable.



Sicily is an integral part of the Mediterranean geographical and cultural area with a long and rich tradition of viticulture as well as of well-developed tourism attractions.

A “gourmet trail” would allow the tourist to receive an overview of the region and its cultural values. This means of promotion and enhancement of an area can be defined as a process of knowledge prepared for the tourist and driven not only by professional competence but also by interest in the sites by the tour operator (Pollice, Rinaldi, 2002). The identity of places is understood not as passive and static, but as a continuous recreation of the *genius loci* of the community. This implies a territorial development approach in which the property is valued, considered both in the sense attributed by UNESCO of exceptional value to humanity and as an historical persistence that has governed the decisions of the community at critical times in its history. From this perspective, a knowledge process founded this way, especially in a particular landscape, reveals the specific abilities of a population and the scientific and technical skills they used. The rigorous analysis of positive phenomena, in view of the full development of a remarkable heritage of the typicality and diversity of wine, food, and environment in the broadest sense, embraces an approach based on their qualities and an awareness by those who look for authentic products and cultures. The success or failure of the development of sustainable and competitive gourmet tourism depends upon involvement of all actors. Designations of origin for the protection of local products, wine routes and pathways of taste capable of revealing the values of an area and thereby placed in rural tourism, events and specialized publishing products, new technology communities, and associations and movements in the sector, are all tools used in order to transform the culture of production sites and gastronomic traditions into tourism products can be the brand of the territories, to seize an opportunity for extraordinary economic and cultural importance for an island like Sicily, which sees tourism as a strategic sector that can trigger mechanisms for sustainable development (Nicosia, Porto, 2011).

Segmentation of Wine tourist

The traditional approach has been to identify wine tourists by their activities (e.g., visiting wineries and farms, restaurants, food festivals, shopping for food), then segmenting them based on individual characteristics (lifestyle, attitudes, demographics, etc.) (Antonioli Corigliano, Viganò, 2004).

Croce and Perri (2010) segmented the wine tourist into three clusters. They suggest one of the clusters is the ‘expert’ and they provide several examples of this profile although it is unclear whether these classifications were arrived at by empirical work. Several of these categories are interesting, for example ‘(food)specialists’, ‘connoisseurs’, ‘(food)technicians’ and ‘aware consumers’ (Getz-Robinson, 2012, p.71).

Alternatively, Colombini (2007) and Croce and Perri (2008) propose to define the target of wine tourism as belonging to a medium-high social and economic level that is identified by consumer-connoisseur-quality products and interest in a natural and cultural heritage of the area visited. But the market of wine tourists is divided into: ‘by-chance wine tourists’, 35 to 45-year-olds who attracted to wine themes and ancillary activities and who make group visits that are short in duration; ‘wine tourists’, who are well read on the subject and like to shop, to visit the cellars and travel alone for more moderate periods; ‘opinion leaders’ with high spending power, who are knowledgeable and attracted to innovative products, and who travel alone for lengthier periods; ‘talent scouts’, who are always looking for new and excellent wines, discover new destinations in wine tourism and play a



key role in a developing production area. We can also add wine tourists who travel in organized bus tours who usually are not very knowledgeable in the field and make quick visits, and wine lovers who carry out in-depth visits with expert guides and professional tastings (Colombini, 2007; Croce, Perri, 2008).

Wine tourism and typical products between globalization and local roots

“Food and beverages constitute essential aspects of material and cultural life in human societies. Their present geographical distribution is a good illustration of these contradictory tendencies. [...] However, even in ancient times, certain foods and drink have been diffused first on a continental and then intercontinental scale. These phenomena generally occurred slowly, with a few rare exceptions. Then the acceleration of globalization occurred, from which a large part of humanity is presently benefiting, willingly or by force, with pleasure or reluctance” (Pitte, 2002, p. 11). Hall and Mitchell defined wine and food as “expressive of a regional culture as well as a regional environment. Such a relationship is extremely significant for tourism because of the possibilities of utilizing wine and associated vineyard landscape as a means of establishing strong regional identity in the tourism marketplace” (Hall and Mitchell, 2002, p. 72).

Typical products, especially food, have an important economic and social value that has always differentiated the various geographical regions. The modes of distribution, preparation and use of products not only depend upon geographical factors, but they also form part of a set of rules, habits and customs which, while conditioned by the natural environment, pass through a complex web of requirements, preferences and excesses, imbuing cultural and symbolic meanings of man’s relationship with the territory of belonging. It is a link distant in time, born when a community of men was able to create, store and pass on procedures to improve the use of raw materials, which could be wild fruits, hunted prey or a product of sheep-breeding. Therefore, the gastronomic traditions and typical products of a territory are the result of a long work experience, attempts, inventions, experiments, successes and failures, assimilation and adaptation of new and unknown elements and methods. In all this, the local cuisine, bound to territory, its traditions, its typical products, expresses very deep those ties that unite every individual to his environment. It is also an instrument of socialization, sharing the same food brings people into a community, making them members of the same culture, connects (Claval, 2002). The traditional foods, today, become the emblem of a community, where there emerges a relentless process of approval. It was the famous anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss who noted that eating habits are the strongest part of a culture. The communities hit by the process of mass homogenization lose more easily their linguistic codes than their food ways. It is through these that even after generations and profound transformations individuals identify and recognize all this can happen only if there is a precise and strong cultural identity and as in any culture, even in the gastronomic field. Given changing lifestyles and customs and the globalization of markets, the diffusion of modern production systems, and the processing and marketing of foods, along with considerable benefits, food traditions are changing (Featherstone, 1991).

Culinary uses are closely related to economic and social situations, are marked by change, and are involved in the general process of globalization. A process that in food was also determined by the spread of fast-food chains, Coca Cola, and the cuisines of various ethnicities. Greenhouses, forced crops, hydroponics, imports, frozen goods, vacuum packaging and so forth have caused people to



forget seasonal and local tastes, and the freezer and the microwave have changed our relationship with food, with time and with the seasons (Pitte, 2002).

Moreover, a significant contribution to changes in the habits of individuals is attributable to developments in urban life. The various changes in urban sociality and spatiality, as the lengthening of the commutes from home to work and the resulting time spent in them, the increasing involvement of women in activities outside the home, the short week, and the growing demand for recreation, have forced individuals to revolutionize the distribution of time between the various activities of daily life. This revolution in the organization of the workday has certainly levied penalties by minimizing the time for lunch and contributing to changing traditional eating habits. In reaction to these changes, people have generally recognized of the value of their identity as reflected in the protection of the “taste of place” and the pleasure of food. Responsible pleasure is based on research and the protection of tradition, quality, and diversity, without losing sight of the complexity of the world (Petrini, 2001). A request for localism must be seen as personal and group identification and, therefore, as an irreplaceable element of psychological security.

The process of globalization, despite the tensions produced and the enhancement of localism, is unstoppable and visible in so many manifestations of modern life. Thus, old, and new, local and global, in a strange combination, have created the word “glocalism”.

Within this new perspective emerges a gastronomic meaning that is not only social, but also ethical and political, the objective of sustainability is to know the world we live in, to promote a new agriculture that is fair and inclusive. Typical products add economic value to the area by attracting new entrepreneurship and tourism. New kinds of tourists have emerged, for example, the “foodtrotter” who visits the agricultural, environmental, and architectural heritages of a place (Paolini, 2000, pp.12-13).

The culture of hospitality and the role of Sicilian wine tourism routes. Results of research in Sicily

The growing interest in farm and rural tourism, the *Strade del Vino e Olio* (wine and oil routes), the many festivals and celebrations, and the routes of flavours, testifies to the emergence of the need of the “naturalness” of the search of the flavour of the place and tradition (Antonioli Corigliano, 1999).

In this context, particular importance is the role of wine, a typical product par excellence of Sicily, an island that due to its geographical position, the nature of its soil, and especially its particularly benevolent climate, has always been one of the Italian regions that has produced much wine. Unfortunately, for a long time, the vineyards in Sicily have produced only limited quantities. Today, thanks to a greater development of processing techniques and greater legislative protection (in addition to more investment), production is reaching the optimal levels, as confirmed by the increasing demand for wines “Made in Sicily”.

“The mediation of wine between the island and the world of the diehard fans is tended to not only by so-called gourmets. who will find here some ideas and reasons to expand their horizons, but also by the reportage of writers and journalists who regularly enter wines into the annals of civilized life and important daily news” (Cusimano, 2000, 2003; Ferruzza, 2005).



Furthermore, to become the subject of poetry, as with other typical products, is the result of an old romantic tradition, which saw Sicily become the subject of the writings of many authors of European literature, including noted names such as Goethe and Stendhal.

Wanting also to attribute this phenomenon to a classic of the geography of tourism, we could readjust the Plog model (1974), which as you know is built by identifying the type of tourist. In our case we can imagine four types of wine lovers who, as in the original model, are distributed along a Bell curve and through their positioning along the curve reflect the degree of maturity of a wine region or destination. More precisely, we split wine tourists into the following categories:

- fringe: the traditional sites are the key destinations of their journey, and they seek the convenience of their mission; they do not have free time at their disposal and so will want to move quickly and easily;
- polytheists are becoming more numerous and have very different tastes; the common feature of their mode of travel is the relentless focus on opportunities and proposals of low cost;
- tributaries are constantly looking for products, services and places of excellence in order to meet the interests and expectations of higher quality, supported by a more substantial economic capacity;
- exclusivist: small groups of luxury consumers who choose routes for the best and most fashionable and trendy locations with paid attendance and premium costs.

While the first and last category are on the extremes of the curve, indicating destinations in the first case and youths and young couples in the second case, the two central categories represent a reality still expanding where it can be more profitable to invest.

Already the post-war combination of wine-tourism has been the subject of attention in designing Sicilian tourist offers but it was still searching for solutions and proposals that are proportionate to the value that the island is able of manifesting in the wine sector. In addition to the wealth of variety that it can offer, are the structures and production environments that affect the most demanding visitors.

Although this is still a tourism niche, there are more and more tourists who want to know the culture of the region through the techniques of production, from raw material to finished product, taste the products locally, buying souvenirs to consume at home or give to relatives and friends (Di Meo, Ogrizek, 2002).

The vineyards of the gardens and groves, the characteristic surroundings, the restored castle, and the farm with its typical dishes that seem infinitely varied and reconstruct the pieces of a mosaic that represents the very rich and diverse culture of Sicily. Yet only in the last decade, following the establishment of the *Strade del Vino* legislation (Law n. 164 of 10.02.1992), born to exploit the routes through magnificent wine regions characterized not only by the presence of vineyards and wineries, but also natural, cultural, and historical attractions that are particularly relevant for integrated tourist package, seems to have triggered a reversal of trend can turn all these resources into potential tourism products.

These routes have been equipped with appropriate signs with the aim to help identify the companies participating in this initiative, which offers tastings of their products and guided tours of



the vineyards and production facilities. At the same time, they can be considered the high road along the landscape of history whose usability is designed for all types of tourists: the educated and curious and those seeking recreation. With the *strade del vino* we wanted to increase the farm hospitality that one sees in Sicily, now operated more than two hundred companies, with a trend still growing (Agosta, Chironi, 2001).

The Wine routes are a type of specialized tourist offer, which seeks to interpret and meet the new demands of the so-called "tourist-travelers" in response to increasingly segmented tourist demand, with a model that represents an important opportunity for development of wineries (because it produces supplementary income and alternatives to the usual principal activity), proposing at the same time, as its primary objective the development, use and conservation of heritage assets and rural "diversity".

From the economic point of view the "route" is configured as a real market where the actors on the demand side are the tourists that travel along pathways, involving multi-sensory experiences such as emotions and discoveries, while on the supply side, the figures consist of those who live and work along that path, and who are interested in engaging visitors in new experiences as well as in building relationships with other actors in the system in order to broaden the wine tourism potential: wineries, wine shops, wine bars, farms, restaurants, travel agencies, handicraft enterprises, but also local and regional institutions, research centers and cultural associations. That's why the wine routes represent much more than a valuable tool for promoting the product and on the one hand facilitate the processes of aggregation and strong collaboration among the entities that make up the offering, while on the other provide a medium to establish a real link with customers-tourists, created by the confidence and practical experience of the discovery of deposits cultural, artistic, archaeological and agri-food that pass through the streets.

A leading role in promoting regional cities with a strong production of wine is taken in Italy by the City of Wine, which includes among its members the Sicilian city of Menfi, Montevago, Salemi, Sambuca di Sicilia, Santa Margherita di Belice, Butera, Riesi, Castiglione di Sicilia, Linguaglossa, Milo, Piedimonte Etneo, Randazzo, Sant'Alfio, Santa Venerina, Viagrande, Milazzo, Santa Marina Salina, Casteldaccia, Partinico, Victoria, Noto, Pachino, Alcamo, Marsala, Mazara del Vallo, Pantelleria, e Poggioreale.

In the vaster region there are three geographic sub-systems of major wine production: the first and perhaps most important is that corresponding to the province of Trapani, Marsala, historically known for the production of a wine of the same name, which is complemented by the production of the province of Palermo and Agrigento, always in the western part of the island.

The second is that of Etna, near Catania, which supports production of the province of Messina, and the third is that of the provinces of Siracusa and Ragusa, in the south of Sicily.

Also deserving of mention are the islands of Pantelleria and the Aeolian archipelago, for their production of sweet wines.

The more established wines are Nero d'Avola (today being rediscovered by a large market), Nerello Cappuccio, Nerello Mascalese Carricante, Nocera, the Perricone, Frappato of Vittoria (including red grapes), Catarratto Città Bianca, Cataratto Bianco Lucido, Grecanico Dorato, Il Grillo, Ansonica, locally known as Inzolia, Malvasia di Lipari and Zibibbo or Moscato di Alessandria. In

addition, a wide range of international varieties such as Cabernet-Sauvignon, Syrah, Sangiovese, and Merlot (including those from red grapes), and Chardonnay and Sauvignon (among those white berries).

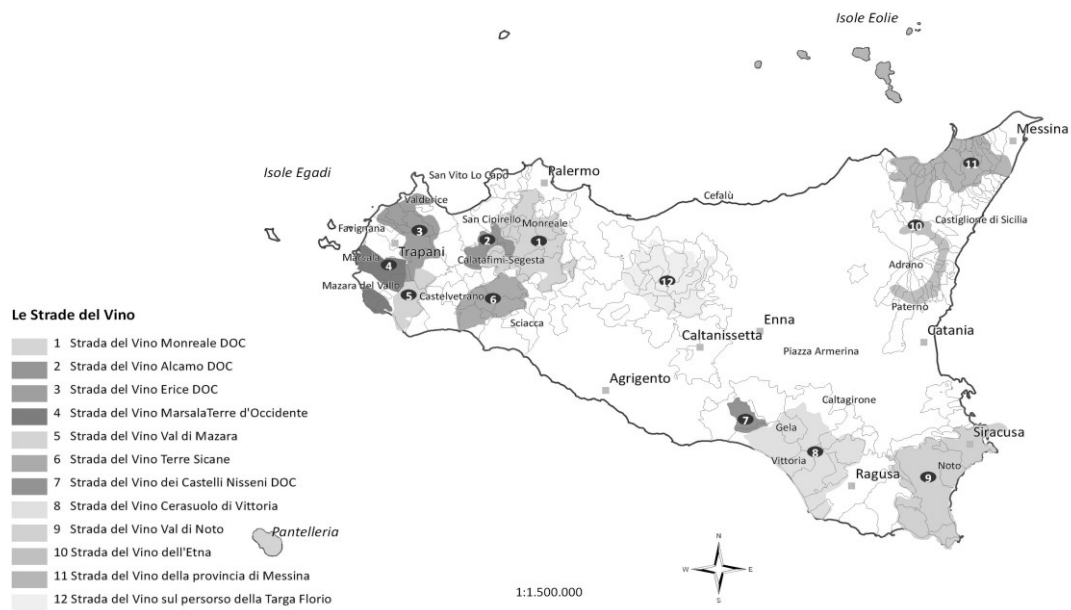


Fig. 1 - “Strade del Vino” in Sicily, 2012. *Fonte:* ns preparation, 2024.

DOCG:
Cerasuolo di Vittoria DOCG
DOC:
Alcamo, Contea di Sclafani, Contessa Entellina, Delia Nivolelli, Eloro, Eloro-Pachino, Erice, Etna, Faro, Malvasia delle Lipari, Mamertino di Milazzo, Marsala, Menfi, Monreale, Noto, Pantelleria, Riesi, Salaparuta, Sambuca di Sicilia, Santa Margherita di Belice, Sciacca, Siracusa. To these is added DOC Sicilia.
IGT:
Avola, Salina, Fontanarossa di Cerda, Camarro, Salemi, Salina, Valle del Belice and Terre siciliane.

Table 1 - Designations of Origin and Typical Geographic Indication in Sicily.
Source: Author’s compilation based on survey.

From the information above the phenomenon of Sicilian wine that has been shaped by humans via the features that have been etched into the isle and through the culture of its proud people, but at the same time still expresses many contradictions. As stated by Cusimano “We used to think that the



landscape is a natural fact, with its colours and scents. Nature certainly plays its role, but the identity of a landscaped area is always a cultural thing. It is the result of the economic choices of the community that lives there, their social arrangements, and even their eating habits. The landscape is the culture of a society made visible. This island is now deeply modified by the progressive orientation of agriculture towards the wine sector. It now has mutated flavours and colours. It has reduced the persistent whiff of stubble that marked the seasons of our childhood. When the grapes begin to ripen and then are harvested and processed, the estates, fields, farms, factories, and villages are flooded with intense and shimmering aromas. And day after day offers colours and fragrances, sunlight and soft gray autumn. With the return of the old creep and are binding on the suggestions and hopes the new. And Sicily with its strengths and anxieties, its alleged violence and secret sweetness. In the landscape of the soul of those who now run the fields of our continent that have not yet been fully explored, despite the dead ends of its history, emerges each year the sacred miracle sacred wine, by virtue of the ancient God, the lord of love and of dream, memory, and oblivion” (Cusimano, 2005, p. 91).

Conclusions

Following the example of the all-Italian experience of the *Strade del Vino*, European institutions and the major wine producing countries aimed at enhancing the increasingly close ties with the regions of tourism, wine, and typical products.

To read the most recent *Food and Wine Tourism and Sustainability Report* (Garibaldi, 2023a), food and wine tourism has solidly positioned itself in the tourism and destination market over the past decade. In its rooting practice it has transformed itself into an experiential key. It is no longer, or only, the purchase of food and wine products or the tasting of local cuisines that are the main motivations that move this type of tourist, but a true experiential immersion in the territorial and cultural contexts from which the geographies of taste emanate (Spadaro, Toldo, Dansero, 2022).

Food and wine tourism is expressed through a plurality of products, services and experiences in which the involvement of the senses is central. Destinations, therefore, if they want to be competitive, must necessarily demonstrate a great aptitude for change and diversification of offerings. Nowadays, tourists no longer demand goods and services, but emotional experiences that involve them personally: for this reason, new tourism market strategies focus attention on selling no more experiential destinations where to get in tune with the territory, with the people who inhabit it, allowing themselves to be emotionally involved to feel an integral part of a community (Rinella, 2019).

With a 37% increase in total travelers since 2016, there are an estimated 9.6 million food and wine tourists in Italy, i.e., those who travel with food and wine as their primary motivation; a figure that increases if those who meet food and wine attractiveness episodically during travel are also counted (Garibaldi, 2023). In 2023, even 58 percent of tourists in Italy had a food and wine profile. The top-performing Italian destinations in terms of food and wine are: Sicily (indicated by 46%), Emilia-Romagna (44%), Campania (40%). The same destinations, but in a different order (Emilia-Romagna, Campania, and Sicily), are also those whose products and culinary specialties are the best known to Italian tourists (Garibaldi, 2023b).



Thirty-five percent of Italians surveyed for the *Trends and Scenarios* Report (Winery Tasting Sicily, 2023) said they would like to visit Sicily on an upcoming trip to discover local flavors. Sicily's success as a food and wine destination is due to several factors, including: a) The richness of its agri-food heritage-Sicily is a region with a long agricultural and peasant tradition, which has given rise to the production of high quality typical products, b) The variety of landscapes-Sicily is a region with a great variety of landscapes, ranging from the beaches of the Tyrrhenian and Ionian seas to the mountains of Mount Etna. This variety offers tourists the opportunity to combine food and wine experiences with outdoor activities; c) Culture: Sicily is a region with a millennial history, which is reflected in its culture and traditions. This culture is an important attraction for tourists.

Wine (Buttitta, Cusimano, 2005) represents a historically crucial production for the transformation dynamics of the Sicilian agricultural landscape and for the specification, both cultural and cultural, of territories (Messina, 2016; Gabellieri, Gallia, Guadagno, 2023). It represents a pivotal vector for conveying local geographies of taste and opening to increasingly segmented and profiled markets. In this sense, neuromarketing has also shown a strong interest in wine. Vincenzo Russo (2014, s.p.) writes:

“Through increasingly sophisticated technologies, a winery today can have an accurate assessment of the emotion provoked by its sales strategies: by the label's ability to be attractive, the functionality of the website, the emotional effect provoked by the images, or the story used to tell. To analyze these elements in IULM University's neuromarketing laboratory, Behavior and Brain Lab, we measure indicators of psychophysiological activation related to an affective state or cognitive activation related to communication stimulations. In fact, the neurophysiological techniques on which neuromarketing is based make it possible to more accurately verify the change in emotional condition brought about by marketing stimulations through the analysis of the following indicators: (a) eye movement, with an Eye Tracker capable of tracking eye movement and measuring where the visual focus and thus the consumer's attention is concentrated; (b) Pupillary Dilation, which tells us the degree of activation (uncontrollable) at the sight of a product, brand or label; (c) the Electroencephalographic signal of the brain, commonly known as EEG, by which brain waves are measured by measuring the degree of cognitive activation, memorization, and type of emotion-positive-negative, low-high); (d) skin sweating also called electrodermal activity, or psycho-galvanic skin resistance. In general, when sweat increases, skin (electrical) resistance decreases, but we will see more about the mechanisms of acquisition later; e) cardiac variability, comprising measures of heart rate per minute; f) oxygen consumption (generally in the blood, although the sites in the body at which to perform the detection may vary); g) the level of tension/relaxation of muscle tone, or, generally, electromyography (EMG)”.

Between tourist attractiveness and commercial expansion of markets, food and wine has a responsibility to lead the transition to sustainable development of territories and their heritages.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed to the conception and design of the studies. E. Nicosia wrote paragraphs 1, 2, 3,4, 5; C.M. Porto wrote paragraph 6; G. Messina wrote the paragraph 7. G. Messina was also responsible for the drafting and finalization of the manuscript. All authors contributed to the manuscript revision and approved the submitted version.



Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

Note

(1) “With almost half of the world’s total vine-growing area and 60 percent of wine production, the European Union (EU) is the world leader in wine production. Of that, 80% of wine production comes from the Mediterranean countries – France, Italy, and Spain (Baldi, 2011). These countries are, at the same time, among first five destinations of the world in terms of tourist arrivals (UN-WTO 2012).

Other countries of northern Mediterranean, such as Portugal and Greece are also established wine producers, while Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, and Turkey are also emerging wine producers. They are all well-established tourist destinations” (Tomljenović, 2012, p. 9).

(2) “Italy offers 357 quality wines produced in designated regions, 120 wines with a typical geographical indication, as well as 183 protected designations of origin (PDO) and protected geographical indications (PGI) for food products” (Cavicchi et al., 2012, p. 150).



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