

Review

# Wine Tourism and Sustainability: A Review

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**Abstract:** The literature on tourism and events is endless; a niche in this wide research field is represented by food and wine research. The growing interest shown by wine tourists has nurtured the proliferation of wine events and the growth of the wine tourism business; as a consequence, academicians' interest in this issue has increased. At the same time, research on tourism and events is an evolving field and it has moved from a main economic focus to a broader perspective: some scholars have highlighted how the growing interest towards green and sustainable practices has stimulated academic research and a lot has been done on the management of environmental issues. Given the resonance of wine tourism and the role it has for local and rural development, the interest towards the issue of sustainability in wine is more than warranted. Thus, this paper aims to provide some useful insights about where research has gone and where it is going; a thorough literature review has been performed.

**Keywords:** sustainable wine tourism; wine business; sustainability

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## 1. Introduction

The literature on tourism is endless; a niche within this wide field is represented by food and wine research [1]. Academic studies on wine tourism have rapidly grown over the last decades; the wine tourism business has increased and today it represents a key element to leverage for improving wineries' performances. Wine tourism grew not only because of wineries' direct economic interest, but also because of the availability of local events that are linked to food and wine production; in some cases, events have stimulated tourism flows and have represented the chance for local wineries to get connected with tourists. Academicians are, therefore, motivated to investigate wine tourism, because of the nurturing of food and wine events and the involvement shown by attendees [2]. Events and tourism are strictly connected [3]; thus, research on events is an evolving field and it has moved from a main economic focus to a broader perspective [2]. Some scholars have highlighted how the greening of events [4] has stimulated academic research and a lot has been done on green practice management and environmental issues. Wine events and wine tourism play a key role for local and rural development [1]; thus, given the importance of preserving resources and ensuring the durability of the economic system, the interest towards sustainability in wine tourism and events is more than warranted. Within this general context, this paper wants to highlight some of the questions that academics must face when they approach the issue of sustainability with a specific focus on wine tourism. In particular, the paper aims to highlight where research has gone and where it is going: background research on wine tourism will be explored following emerging insights [2,5]. A thorough literature review has been carried out in order to answer the following research question: What is the state of the art of research on sustainability in wine tourism? The paper will be structured as follows: the methodology will be presented; then the issue of sustainability and wine tourism will be presented in order to provide a clear definition of the observed phenomenon; emerging traits of sustainable wine tourism will be outlined; then the emerging traits of sustainable wine tourism will be explored

and a description of the geographical distribution of research and trends will be provided. The final section of the paper will provide insights for further research. In particular, it emerges that research must focus on a two-fold perspective: on one hand, the motivations behind wine tourists must be further investigated; on the other, scholars must focus on the exploitation and preservation of natural resources related to the wine tourism business.

## 2. Methodology

In recent and evolving research fields, such as the considered one, literature reviews are extremely helpful. Organized reviews have the merit to disentangle the puzzle of scientific studies [5]. Literature reviews help to organize the insights emerging from desk research. Nevertheless some scholars have underlined the limitations that traditional or narrative literature reviews can have [6]. The insights emerging from literature reviews can represent a valid support: on one side they contribute to define research trends and future developments; on the other that can help the development of research fields or scholarship tools [6–8] and the growth of knowledge in specific fields. Boote and Beile (2005) [9] highlight that literature reviews can be considered as the first step for performing significant researches. The scope and the object of this literature review was defined by following the insights emerging from Hart (1998) [10].

The first step of the review was the identification of the purposes of the search. The main research question addressed is: what is the state of the art of research on sustainable wine tourism? The second step was to identifying keywords and sources. In identifying keywords we took into account synonyms, too: after a preliminary test, we have found out that the term sustainability includes in the search results also other terms such as ecotourism, green tourism and environmental tourism (as it will emerge from the detailed results shown in Table 2). Then an analysis has been carried out. Table 1 depicts the combination of keywords chosen.

**Table 1.** Keywords and searches.

	Keywords	Where	Search Engine	Type of Doc	Results
1	Food and wine Events Sustainability	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scopus	All	0
2	Food Wine Events Sustainability	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scopus	All	0
3	Wine events Sustainability	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scopus	All	8
4	Food tourism Sustainability	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scopus	All	223
5	Wine Tourism Sustainability	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scopus	All	23
6	Wine Tourism Sustainability	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scopus	All	23
7	Sustainability Wine Tourism	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scholar	All	15,700
8	Sustainable wine Tourism	Ab, Titl, Keyw	Scholar	All	16,200

As it emerges the number of results of generic search engines such as Scholar is extremely high when compared to Scopus. Therefore, the need to focus on published articles and academic journals has emerged. On the other side, the exiguity of Scopus results has requested the integration of other sources and more specifically wine specific sources. Thus, in addition to Scopus, further academic

sources that focus on wine, such as the international Journal of wine business research, the Journal of Wine Research, Journal of Wine Economics and Policy, AWBR and the AAWE, where selected. Therefore conference proceedings and articles published have been examined. The combination of multiple sources, as suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003) [7] has enlarged the number of sources examined. Then, the articles have been examined and insights have emerged.

The papers collected help in defining the phenomenon of sustainable wine tourism, which can be considered as a niche in the wider field of sustainable tourism.

The number of papers that are examined by this work account for 43; Table 2 shows the main results grouped by geographical coverage. It should be underlined that the selection was made in order to present papers that are specifically addressed to the wine tourism business. The number of papers collected and examined is consistent with what has been outlined in Table 1: after having excluded the results emerging from Google scholar, the higher number of papers were collected in the categories “food tourism”. The field of food festival and food tourism is extremely rich. From a very first look at Table 2 it emerges that most of the paper that are addressed to a specific country or area deal with new world wine producing countries. A considerable percentage of papers has been recently published (nearly 56% of the total was published after 2006); the interest towards sustainable issues in wine tourism has recently emerged at a global level due to the growth of the business.

Another important contribution to research given by the selected literature is to the identification of the dynamics that lead companies to adopt a sustainable orientation: from the analysis of the collected papers it emerges that scholars have posed a particular attention to the representation of the motivations and dynamics that can influence the degree of sustainable orientation in wine tourism.

**Table 2.** Results.

Geographical Coverage	Note	Year	Type of Contribution	Authors/Editors
Australia	Wine tourist	2002	Article	Charters, Ali-Knight
	Biosecurity and wine tourism	2005	Article	Hall
	Sustainable development and wine tourism	2006	Article	Gammack
	Environmental sustainability and competitive advantage in wine tourism clusters	2014	Article	Grimstad, Burges
Canada	Wine tourism Development	2006	Article	Getz, Brown
	Sustainable wine tourism and host community	2006	Article	Poitras, Getz
	Wine tourism and non-residents	2003	Article	Williams, Dossa
	Collaborative wine tourism	1994	Article	Get, Jamal
Europe	A stakeholder’s approach to food and wine events in Europe	2014	Book	Cavicchi, Santini
	Supply chain approach to sustainable tourism	2008	Article	Sigala
	Sustainable development for wine tourism	2012	Article	Alonso, Liu
	Sustainability strategies in wine tourism	2015	Article	Gázquez-Abad
New Zealand	Wine tourism experience	2002	Article	Hall, Mitchell
	Sustainability in the wine industry	2009	Article	Gabzdylova
	Consumer attitude and environmental attitude	2009	Article	Forbes et al.
	Place-based branding, wine tourism and economic sustainability	2011	Article	Dawson et al.

Table 2. Cont.

Geographical Coverage	Note	Year	Type of Contribution	Authors/Editors
Not specified	Emerging trends in event research	2013	Article	Mair; Whitford
	Theory ad research policy in planned events	2007	Article	Getz
	Policy for sustainable and responsible festivals and events	2009	Article	Getz
	A review on sustainable tourism	1999	Article	Butler
	Paradigm for sustainable tourism	1997	Article	Hunter
	Operational approach to ecotourism	1997	Article	Blamey
	Ecotourism	2006	Article	Donohoe, Needham
	Ecotourism and environment	2009	Article	Buckley
	Ecotourism and potential impact	2002	Article	Weaver
	Approaches to sustainable tourism	1997	Article	Clarke
	Sustainable tourism research	1999	Article	Bramwell, Lane
	Rural tourism	1994	Article	Lane
	Sustainable wine business	2015	Book	Gilinsky
	Tourism demand	2010	Book	Fretchling
	Wine tourism and environmental concern	2010	Article	Barber et al.
South Africa	Wine tourism and non-residents	2005	Article	Hall
USA	Success factors in rural tourism development	2001	Article	Wilson et al.
	Environmentalism drivers	2005	Article	Marshall et al.
	Green wine industry and industry association	2007	Article	Silverman et al.
	Agroecological partnership, Sustainability and branding	2006	Article	Warner
Various countries	Place based brand in wine tourism	2012	Article	Orth et al.
	Food and wine festivals	2008	Book	Hall, Sharples
	Wine tourism	2000	Book	Getz, Brown
	Sustainability in the wine industry	2013	Article	Santini et al.
	Sustainability strategy	2015	Article	Gilinsky et al.
	Cultural models and environmental concerns in wine tourism	2010	Article	Ignatow
	Sustainability in the wine industry	2011	Paper in conference proceedings	Szolnoki

### 3. Sustainable Tourism and Sustainable Wine Tourism within the Literature

The first step when approaching sustainable wine tourism is to provide its definition, as it emerges from the literature; background research on sustainable tourism and wine tourism has been examined. The issue of sustainable tourism has been widely investigated in the literature since it has emerged in the 1980s. However, the term “sustainable tourism” has been tremendously varied in its usage within the context [11]. The initial over-simplification of the issue [12] progressively diminished with the evolution of the literature. Sigala (2008) [13] highlights that sustainability in tourism is a “multi-sectoral (hotels, restaurant, transport companies, etc.) and a multi-disciplinary (economic, social and environmental) concept” (p. 1590).

Therefore, sustainable tourism has been investigated in specific industries such as food and wine; the sectorial focalization of research has contributed to solving the ambiguity created, as Butler (1999) [11] observed, by the catch-all of a sustainable approach, or, in other words, by conceiving sustainable tourism in line with sustainable development. Also, ecotourism has attracted scholars’ interest: tourism should preserve the characteristics of local areas ([14,15], United Nations World

Tourism Organization (UNWTO), 1992; Manila Declaration, 1980; Johannesburg Meeting, 2002); thus, the monitoring of the relationships between ecological issues—and more specifically the ecological footprint—and tourism is a key issue for defining the overall sustainability of the tourism business [16]. According to UNWTO (1992), the sustainable development of tourism would jointly consider all the needs emerging at different levels (economic, social, etc.) and it would guarantee the preservation of ecological processes, biologically different resources and the optimal set of conditions for life. Given its definition and peculiarities (UNWTO, 1992), ecotourism is recognized to have positive outcomes on environmental resources and local communities [17–19].

It should be also noted that scholars' theoretical approaches have concurred over the years to the definition of an analytical perspective: those who see in tourism a lever for revitalizing declining areas, cities or rural areas [20] underline its primary role in local economic development. Thus, scholars who embrace the principles of dependency theory are more oriented towards exploring the dynamics occurring between developed and peripheral regions [21]. The works by Clarke (1997) [22], Butler (1999) [11], and Bramwell and Lane (1999) [23], among others, describe how research on sustainable tourism has evolved over the years with the advent of new social and economic concerns and the evolution of the literature in this field.

Before exploring the topic of sustainable wine tourism, a few considerations on wine tourism must be made. Wine tourism has emerged over recent years as a 'special interest' tourism [24,25]. Many studies have explored the motivations behind wine tourist choices (see, among others, [26,27]). The issue of sustainable wine tourism has, then, arisen due to the growing interest of tourists towards "green" issues.

Poitras and Getz (2006) [28] say, "Sustainable wine tourism depends first on a general approach to tourism development that is based on the three pillars of economic, environmental and social sustainability as discussed by Hall (2000) regarding tourism planning, or the four pillars (political, economic, sociocultural and ecological) proposed by Ritchie and Crouch (2003) in the context of competitive destinations" (p. 426). The concept of sustainable wine tourism includes several perspectives, following the concept of sustainable tourism itself.

#### 4. Emerging Traits

From the literature it emerges that sustainable wine tourism is strongly linked to the culture and distinctive traits of the local community and place. As Lane's insights suggest (1994) (in [28]), a viable wine tourism industry should combine ethical and resource conservation concerns with the local community's needs and culture in order to pursue a diversification of the rural economy. The strategies designed for improving sustainability in wine tourism are characterized by a stakeholder approach [29]. Strategies must be shaped upon collaborative networks: Williams and Dossa (2003) [30] underline that "the natural resource base in wine regions is a product development function that requires the collaboration and sound planning of many partners" (p. 426). Thus, as outlined by Getz and Jamal (1994) [31], collaborative networks are a key issue in sustainable tourism models.

Resources employed in wine production shape the tourism product: the identification and management of unique resources are indispensable for defining a sustainable wine tourism offer. Poitras and Getz (2006) [28] outline that "sustainable wine tourism will depend on identification and management of unique issues pertaining to the resources used (i.e., the land and water, labor, capital, and infrastructure inputs necessary for grape growing and wine making), specific forms of wine tourism development (e.g., visitor facilities and events at wineries, wine-themed interpretation and information centers, wine museums, wine-themed villages, wine country tours), and the specific impacts caused by wine-related tourism (such as increased traffic on rural roads, development of services and facilities in agricultural areas, and new and increased spending patterns)" (p. 427).

Thus, there is a deep linkage between resources management and sustainable wine tourism. Hede (2008) [32] underlines that the primary role in food and wine festivals is to enhance sustainability in its stakeholders' industries; the concept of sustainability is linked to the achievement of business goals

from a long-term perspective. As Hede (2008) [32] outlines, stakeholders' priorities shape the overall goals of each event. Yet, if natural resource preservation is part of the stakeholders' concerns, food and wine events will be designed in order to preserve the set of natural resources. The need for a wider perspective that includes not only business management capabilities but also a deep understanding of natural resources is suggested by Getz (2000) [33] when he talks about providing wine tourism with long-term sustainability.

## 5. Motivations and Drivers

There are many reasons why sustainability is gaining importance in the wine industry; pressures arising from the market and consumers should be considered as well as the importance given to sustainable issues by firms, industry and associations. Research carried out in the field of the wine business has shown that a multiplicity of drivers coexist with the aim of promoting a sustainable orientation among wine business stakeholders [34–38].

Tourism demand is shaped by tourists' preferences, since it is considered a measure of the usage of a good or a service [39]. Thus, the priority given to green issues by visitors shapes the demand for green or sustainable tourism. In the wine industry, environmental concerns have shaped the tourism demand [40]. In general, environmental worries influence cultural models and demand [41]. The literature shows that, although the perception of green and sustainable issues in wine differs among countries [42] and some industries are greener than others [35], consumers give importance to environmental attributes when purchasing wine [43]. Yet, it is important to underline that differences among countries depend on the degree of involvement of associations, institutions, policy-makers and the cultural approach to green issues [35,37]; this set of factors influences the entrepreneurial attitude towards green issues [38].

The wine industry, which is experimenting with a greening process [35], influences its related business, wine tourism included. One of the main points in the wine industry is to preserve resources, with particular attention to vineyards and landscapes, which are two key resources for wineries. Many wineries have changed their approach to vineyard exploitation, moving from a performance-oriented productive approach—which aimed to achieve the maximum production with a cost reduction—to a quality and sustainability approach: today most wineries manage their vines in order to improve the overall quality of the produced grapes and to extend the average life of high quality vines.

Therefore, with the booming of wine tourism, wineries have to reflect on how to balance the economic profits emerging from the tourism business with the carrying capacity of their surrounding area [30].

In some wine countries, such in Australia and New Zealand, the issue of biosecurity—which is felt as a general priority at a country level—is proven to influence travelers [44]. New Zealand is widely recognized as the greenest wine-producing country; the wine country development plan follows the regional branding strategy which holds a permanent focus on sustainability [45]. The tourism industry itself needs to adopt a sustainable approach in order to manage its growth [46], so the concept of sustainability in order to preserve resources and manage industry development is a key issue.

Some scholars have investigated the determinants of sustainability in wine tourism with a focus on micro-clusters [47]. Besides the role played by environmental policies in shaping green orientation [47], a key issue in the development of sustainable wine tourism is represented by consumers' expectation and preferences. As has been outlined by some academicians [35,47], a sustainable orientation can be considered as a lever for achieving a competitive advantage. The heterogeneity of cultural paradigms and the set of preferences that characterizes wine tourists [24] motivate and explain the interest in green issues. The literature that explores consumers' preferences in wine purchasing is extremely wide; from the literature the role that country brand has in motivating wine tourists' destination choices has also emerged [27]. As a consequence, the wine regions that promote a green image are more likely to attract visitors with ethical and environmental concerns, as frequently happens for wineries [35].

The role of entrepreneurs in promoting sustainable wine tourism is another interesting aspect to consider; the literature provides useful insights for analyzing this topic. In the wine business entrepreneurs are motivated to pursue sustainable objectives by their personal conviction and their vision of the business; some entrepreneurs have shaped wineries' strategies according to their green orientation [35]. Being green or sustainable can become a strategic lever for differentiating their business. Some wineries are born green while others become green for achieving marketing purposes [35]. However, the role of personal motivations in pursuing the greening of the wine business is extremely relevant. The debate on the influence of local context in shaping entrepreneurs' business visions and the set of personal beliefs is endless. In this specific field of the wine business, some insights have emerged from those works that have investigated the role of associations and institutions for the development of a sustainable attitude among firms [34,37,38]; it can be said that where there is a diffused interest towards sustainable issues, entrepreneurs are facilitated in following their commitment to be sustainable. Thus, research that explores the role of entrepreneurial green orientation in the development of sustainable wine tourism is still limited.

Although there is no doubt about the importance of knowing the characteristics of wine tourists, wineries still dedicate fewer resources to understanding the motivations and intentions of tourists [48]; cross-country studies have been carried in order to highlight what the drivers of wine tourists are [27], but very few have been done for understanding the motivations behind the choice of sustainable wine tourism destinations. An explanation for this lack in research can be found in the profile of the green tourist, who is deeply motivated by his/her set of beliefs when choosing a destination.

## 6. Geographical Distribution and Trends

From background literature, it emerged that academic research on sustainable wine tourism is concentrated in those countries that show a higher involvement in sustainability. Most of the articles reviewed present cases or analysis referred to New World wine-producing countries. Thus, this reflects the general orientation of research on sustainability in the wine industry [35], where the main insights come from outside of the Old World hemisphere. Nevertheless, there are some regions among the Old World producers that are considering sustainability when planning their strategic development [49]. The analysis of the drivers of sustainable orientation [35] contributes to explaining the reasons behind such a geographical distribution: research institutes and organizations and local institutions support academicians' interests in sustainable issues. Some regions have encompassed a sustainable development paradigm within wine tourism since its very initial phases [45]. Given the growth of the wine industry in some new producing countries, the industry was forced to face the problem of pollution and resource management by developing environmental initiatives addressing wine production [50,51]; wine tourism was touched by this approach as well.

Most of the analyzed papers describe cases or best practices; as Poitras and Getz (2006) [28] observe, "Sustainable development and marketing principles are now being applied to tourism in many settings, although there is a need to make them relevant to specific forms of tourism and related niche markets such as wine tourism" (p. 426). However, most of the literature shows how these principles can be applied to wine tourism; in some cases, pursuing a sustainable strategy goes along with the size of the winery [52].

## 7. Conclusions and Discussion

Research on sustainable wine tourism is evolving: academicians' interest towards this issue has increased over the years, following the dynamics of this niche within the wine tourism business. Thus, from the review it emerges that scholars' attention towards sustainable wine tourism flourishes where there is a diffuse—in the industry and community—interest in this subject. Consumers are becoming more aware about the environmental consequences of their choices as the increased attention to sustainable and green issues when purchasing products underlines. Background literature does not provide a precise profile of the sustainable wine tourist: however, research underlines that tourists

who are attracted by green issues when choosing their destinations are, as a consequence, attracted by green or sustainable wine tourism. Thus, it has been shown how green issues can be a strategic lever for achieving a competitive advantage.

More specifically, from the analysis of the collected papers, tourists who seek green wine tourism, in most of cases, are not wine tourists, but they seek a different green tourism experience. However, it is hard to define how many of the tourists who are interested in a sustainable wine tourism offer are wine tourists or not. This has several consequences for wineries: they should be aware of educating visitors who are quite new to wine, and they should promote their business through selected channels in order to reach the right customer. This opens the following research questions: How will wineries market their wine tourism offer? Who are they going to address it to? Wineries need to gain information about green tourists; at the same time, they need to keep on managing “traditional” wine tourists. Do they have to differentiate their offers according to the type of tourist (green or wine tourist)? From the literature, it emerges that wineries are more facilitated in marketing their sustainable wine tourism offers in those countries where sustainability is a widespread and promoted value. Therefore, cases that explore firms’ strategies pursued in sustainable wine tourism would provide a significant contribution to this research issue.

Hopefully further research will be carried out in order to define a profile of the green wine tourist. It would be extremely interesting to understand the main features of this kind of tourist for two reasons: on one side, research could help in defining their motivations and emerging needs; on the other, a deep knowledge of green wine tourists would help firms in planning their marketing strategy.

Evidence highlights the role that consumers’ preferences have in shaping purchasing motivations; from the analysis of the literature it emerges that a demand for sustainable attributes can shape the wine tourism demand. Therefore, further research on the impact of sustainable issues on wine tourism should be carried out.

It also emerges that some countries are including sustainability when planning the strategic development of their wine tourism offers; wine-producing countries are not only seeking a differentiation strategy, but they are also trying to manage tourism flows and natural resources. The growth of wine tourism itself requires a deep attention to resource preservation and exploitation in order to support a wise and reasonable strategic development. There is a wide space for newer research on this issue, since many questions are still open: Why are some wine countries more open to sustainability than others? What facilitates or inhibits the adoption of sustainable practices? What is the role played by associations or institutions in the development of a sustainable wine tourism business? Some studies have already been carried out, but less attention has been given to cross-country analysis. However, the development of scales to be employed in surveys with the aim of defining the degree of sustainability of a wine tourism offer is another interesting research issue.

This paper analyzed 43 articles that focus on sustainability in the wine tourism business; therefore, the literature on sustainability in the wine industry is wide and growing and this general background could provide some good input for exploring new research topics. As it has been outlined in the paper, research should give an emphasis to entrepreneurs who are pursuing a sustainable wine tourism business. Some emerging insights should be further explored in order to answer the following question: What is the role played by location in the development of a sustainable orientation among wine tourism entrepreneurs? Thus, it should also be considered that wineries must manage the issue of sustainability at a corporate level; in particular, an alignment between strategies pursued at an operational level with the other strategies adopted in related businesses, such as tourism, should be ensured. In other words, how will wineries adapt the degree of sustainability of the strategies they pursue among different areas (such as production, distribution, tourism)? This research question opens many considerations at the corporate level. Research on the impact of sustainable wine tourism on firms’ corporate levels is still limited and should be further explored.

The results that arise from this review show that research on sustainability in the wine tourism industry is growing; emerging insights show a geographical concentration of research in some specific



countries. The definition of a set of issues faced by wineries and wine tourists regarding sustainability is another key issue to be developed by further studies: as has been outlined in the paper, wineries have employed the basic principles of sustainable development and marketing to the wine tourism industry, but it would be of high interest to see how they have been specifically applied to this specific business. Furthermore, newer studies on the role of collaboration among various businesses, which is a characteristic of tourism in general, should be carried out due to a lack of research in this specific field.

Therefore, this preliminary literature review shows that the research issue of sustainable wine tourism will grow and that new needs will emerge from policy-makers, institutions and wineries.

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