

TRENDS AND WINE TOURIST PROFILES IN THE REGION OF EASTERN MACEDONIA AND THRACE IN GREECE

Efstathios VELISSARIOU

University of Thessaly, Greece, belissar@uth.gr

Christos AMOIRADIS

University of Thessaly, Greece, amic@uth.gr

Abstract

Wine tourism constitutes a dynamic form of alternative tourism that integrates viticulture and winemaking with cultural, gastronomic, and tourism activities, contributing to sustainable regional development and the promotion of local identity. This paper examines the development and current state of wine tourism in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Greece, an area with significant viticultural tradition but uneven tourism development. The study aims to analyze the characteristics of wineries and winemakers, the profile and motivations of wine tourists, the infrastructure and services offered, as well as the factors that facilitate or inhibit the growth of wine tourism in the region. A mixed-methods research design was adopted, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches. Quantitative data was collected through a census survey of all 39 wineries operating in the region, with a response rate of 71% (28 wineries), while qualitative insights were obtained through semi-structured interviews with 12 winery managers conducted in two phases (2020 and 2025). Data analysis focused on winery infrastructure, services, promotion practices, visitor trends, and development constraints.

The findings reveal a generally upward trend in wine tourism, particularly in the regional units of Drama and Kavala, where proximity to major tourist destinations, cruise tourism, and coordinated local initiatives significantly enhance visitor flows. Wineries are predominantly small, first-generation enterprises with adequate basic infrastructure for visits and tastings, but limited provision of accommodation, restaurants, and specialized experiential services. Promotion relies heavily on digital media, wine events, and exhibitions, while collaboration with travel agencies proves crucial for attracting organized tourist groups. Key inhibiting factors include insufficient infrastructure, limited financial resources, weak interregional cooperation, and uneven local wine culture awareness. Overall, the study concludes that Eastern Macedonia and Thrace possess strong natural, cultural, and gastronomic assets to support a sustainable wine tourism model. Strategic coordination among wineries, local authorities, and tourism stakeholders, alongside targeted investments in infrastructure, promotion, and experiential offerings, is essential for consolidating wine tourism as a key driver of regional economic and tourism development.

Key words: *Wine tourism; Wineries; Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace; Greece*

JEL Classification: *L83, Q13, R58, O18*

I. INTRODUCTION

Tourism is one of the most dynamic sectors of the global economy, with significant social, cultural and economic implications. The trend towards diversification of tourist experiences and the increasing search for authenticity have contributed to the development of alternative forms of tourism, such as wine tourism (Hall et al., 2000). Wine tourism connects the local wine tradition with tourism, creating an integrated cultural product that meets modern market demands. Wine tourism is defined as the set of tourist activities related to the production, consumption and culture of wine. It includes visits to wineries and vineyards, participation in tastings, educational programs and cultural events related to wine (Getz & Brown, 2006). It is a multidimensional activity that

combines the gastronomic, cultural and agro-tourism character, while contributing to the promotion of local identity and sustainable tourism development (Mitchell & Hall, 2006). The development of wine tourism depends on many factors, which can be categorized into natural, cultural, organizational and economic. In particular (Mitchell & Hall, 2006):

- The existence of extensive vineyards and historic wineries.
- Investments in hospitality, access and information infrastructure.
- Effective promotion and marketing strategies that highlight local identity.
- The development of synergies between producers, tourism businesses and public bodies.
- The exploitation of the international trend for sustainable and authentic experiences. Prospective authors are invited to submit papers that fit within the

scope of the journal. Papers should be written in English and submitted in final camera-ready form (for Romanian authors we ask to submit also the Romanian translation of the paper). All text has to be edited by using the styles defined in this document.

Literature review indicates that wine tourists constitute a special audience, with an increased educational and economic level (Bruwer & Alant, 2009). Their main motivations include (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002):

- The search for gastronomic experiences through tasting local wines.
- The acquisition of knowledge about the production process and the history of wine.
- Contact with local culture and traditions associated with viticulture.
- Entertainment and socialization through events and festivals.

Also, many surveys try to outline the profile of wine tourists, and categorize them based on Involvement, such as the study by Charters and Ali-Knight (2002), in which wine tourists are divided into four main groups. The same grouping is presented also by Pratt, (2014), in his article “Four wine tourist profiles” and concerns the following four categories:

Wine Lovers: They have deep knowledge and high interest. They visit wineries to learn technical details and purchase specific labels. They actively participate in tasting courses, read books, and watch relevant programs. Their motivations are clearly defined, and they seek in-depth experiences.

Wine Interested: They have moderate knowledge and wish to broaden their experiences. They are willing to learn more and enjoy the process of tasting and visiting wineries. They are attracted to the combination of wine, gastronomy and landscape.

Wine Curious/Novices: They have basic or limited knowledge but want to learn and are curious to discover the world of wine. Visiting a wine-producing region may be part of a broader trip and not the main reason. Visiting is an alternative tourist activity for them.

Hangers-on: They have no personal interest in wine but participate because they accompany friends or family. This category includes tourists who visit wine-producing regions mainly for other reasons, such as the scenery, relaxation, food, or socialization, and not primarily for the wine itself or wine tasting.

Recent trends, as recorded in the Global Wine Tourism Report (2025), highlight new profiles of wine tourists, based on psychographic characteristics:

Authentic & Localists: They are looking for authentic experiences and local products. They are interested in the history of the place and the connection with the producer.

Eco-Friendly/Sustainable Seekers: They prioritize sustainability and choose eco-certified

wineries.

Eno-Slow Tourists: They prefer a more relaxed, sensory and emotional approach (hedonistic experience), avoiding mass tourism.

This categorization helps wineries and tourism bodies to tailor the services and experiences they offer, to meet the different needs and expectations of each visitor profile. Despite its potential, wine tourism faces significant challenges. The main inhibiting factors are (Getz & Brown, 2006):

- The lack of integrated development and coordination strategies.
- The limited recognition of wine tourism destinations at an international level.
- Deficiencies in access and hospitality infrastructure.
- The strong seasonality of demand.
- The lack of specialized human resources.

In conclusion, wine tourism is a promising form of alternative tourism, with the potential to contribute to sustainable development and the promotion of local cultural heritage. However, its exploitation requires targeted actions to strengthen infrastructure, improve coordination and enhance visibility. The adoption of strategies that combine culture, gastronomy and sustainability can make wine tourism a key driver of development of regional economies.

II. WINE TOURISM IN GREECE

Greece is home to over 1,200 wineries, distributed across its 13 administrative regions, each leveraging unique microclimates and ancient indigenous grape varieties. These businesses range from large, automated units to small family and cooperative units. There are about 7,500 different wine labels. Domestic production in 2021 amounted to about 1.7 million hectoliters. Greece ranks as the 17th largest wine-producing country in the world, with most vineyards owned by small producers. The area of vineyards in Greece is 1.029.349 acres, and the number of holdings is 193.252 with an average size of 5.3 acres. Production for the 2024/2025 season is recorded at 1.43 million hl, a 3.92% increase over the previous year's record low but still 33% below the five-year average. The Greek wine and cider industry is valued at €553.4 million in 2025. Roughly, 10% of total production is exported, with Germany and France remaining the primary markets (The Greek vineyard today. Wines of Greece. <https://winesofgreece.org/articles/key-production-figures/>).

Table 1. Wine-producing Vineyards in the 13 Regions of Greece

Area Distribution per Region	2020	2020 in %	2015	2015 in %	2020/2015
Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace	22.274	3,5%	21333	3,4%	4,4%
Region of Central Macedonia	47.352	7,4%	45839	7,2%	3,3%
Region of Western Macedonia	26.364	4,1%	24388	3,9%	8,1%
Region of Epirus	8.669	1,3%	7814	1,2%	10,9%
Region of Thessaly	43.382	6,7%	41215	6,5%	5,3%
Region of Central Greece	69.576	10,8%	68023	10,7%	2,3%
Region of Ionian Islands	31.086	4,8%	30075	4,7%	3,4%
Region of Western Greece	88.281	13,7%	86617	13,7%	1,9%
Peloponnese Region	100.087	15,5%	101317	16,0%	-1,2%
Region of Attica	62.113	9,6%	60700	9,6%	2,3%
North Aegean Region	27.977	4,3%	29065	4,6%	-3,7%
South Aegean Region	39.311	6,1%	39574	6,2%	-0,7%
Region of Crete	77.616	12,1%	77503	12,2%	0,1%
Vineyards in Greece	644.088	100,0%	633262	100,0%	1,7%

According to the Greek Law, Act 4582/2018 concerning the Thematic tourism, the Wine Tourism, is part of Rural Tourism. Rural tourism is divided in Greece into Agritourism, Wine tourism, Eco/Green tourism, Geotourism, Fishing tourism and Outdoor activities (Hiking routes). These forms of tourism are defined and described in Greek legislation, as well as the way they are licensed and operated. Rendering to the Greek Law "Wine tourism" is the special form of tourism, that includes services of reception, touring, hospitality and catering, in areas functionally integrated with winemaking and/or winemaking facilities (vineyards). These services are delivered in combination with activities related to viticulture and wine production (Act 4882/2018 Article 4, Paragraph 4).

In the context of the development of wine tourism in Greece, but mainly to ensure the quality of the services provided by wineries, the Label "Winery Open to the public" was established, ranted by the Regional Tourism Services of the Ministry of Tourism. The Label certifies that the company provides total or partial touring, catering, reception and hospitality services. The business has places and facilities of special specifications that ensure attendance.

Forms of Rural tourism in Greece, according to Act 4882/2018**Figure 1 – Designed based on the forms of thematic tourism in Greece****Figure 2 – Label "Winery Open to the public"**

The minimum required specifications, according to the Directorate of quality standards, for the reception and tour services offered in wineries/wine-producing establishments are defined as follows:

- ✓ Individually or in combination, a visitors' area, a multi-purpose room, a tasting area designed for tasting, a place for placing products, presenting and selling products.
- ✓ In particular, the tasting area is at least equipped with: - tasting glasses (glass, column, regardless of dimensions) - spitting jars - refrigerators and/or preservatives that ensure the required temperature of the wines (serving temperature).
- ✓ Marking (sign) at the entrance of the winery with useful information concerning at least the opening hours and days of the winery's visit and contact telephone numbers.
- ✓ Posting in a prominent place in the reception area the price list of wines and the cost (if any)

- of the tasting and other services provided.
- ✓ g) Clearly marking the interior and exterior areas of the winemaking or wine-producing establishment.
- ✓ h) Toilets (WC) for men (men) and women (women), as well as toilets for people with disabilities (disabled).

The Winery Label is valid for five years from the date of issue.

III. Wine routes in Greece

Greece has several well-established wine routes that display its diverse viticulture, from the mountainous terrain of the north to the volcanic soil of its islands. These routes are organized into regional networks, making them ideal for wine tourism. They include those of Northern Greece, Peloponnese, Aegean Islands, Ionian Islands and Attica.

The "Wein Roads of Northern Greece"

There are over 300 active wineries and producers across Northern Greece (Macedonia, Thrace, and Epirus).

Figure 2 and 3: winemakers and wine roads of North Greece



Source: Wine Makers of North Greece Leaders create here (2019).



Source: Wine Makers of North Greece Wine Roads of North Greece (2019).

However, the "Wine Roads of Northern Greece" association, which manages the specific wine tourism routes in the area, includes around 34 member wineries that are specifically set up for tourism and

offer organized visits and tastings along the eight designated routes

The "Wine Roads of Northern Greece" is a network with five distinct routes, which are:

1. Wine Route of Thessaloniki: Features wineries near Greece's second-largest city.
2. Wine Route of the Olympian Gods: Leads through vineyards on the slopes of Mount Olympus.
3. Wine Route of Naoussa: The heartland of the Xinomavro grape, this route is ideal for sampling robust red wines.
4. Wine Route of Halkidiki: Explores wineries in the scenic peninsula.
5. Wine Route of Dionysus: Named for the Greek god of wine, this route traverses vineyards in the regions of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

Map 1: The "Wein Roads of Northern Greece"

The map of the Wine Roads of Northern Greece



Source: Wine tourism experience in Greece: Thrace and Eastern Macedonia (2016).

Wine route Of Dionysus

The Wine Route of Dionysus is the official network in this region, stretching from Serres through Drama and Kavala, eastward to Xanthi, Rodopi, and Evros. Key areas within this route include:

- Drama and Kavala: Known for wines with PGI (Protected Geographical Indication) Drama, Pangeo, and Kavala.
- Abdera (Xanthi region): A coastal area producing PGI Abdera wines.
- Evros and Soufli: The route concludes in the northeastern most part of Greece, an area with a long history of viticulture and distilleries.
- Thassos Island: The nearby island also has its own PGI wines (PGI Thassos).

About 42,9% of the wine makers are member of the wine producers' association "Wines of Northern Greece" and 57,1% are not.

Map 2: Distribution of the 39 wineries, in the Region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace



Source: Designed based on research data

IV. RESEARCH APPROACH

The research study on wine tourism in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace adopts a mixed methodology, combining quantitative and qualitative research. Its main purpose is to investigate the current state of the wine tourism sector, its development prospects and the promotion strategies that can be adopted in the region. Through this approach, an attempt is made to highlight both the potential of wine tourism to strengthen the local economy and entrepreneurship, as well as the limitations that hinder its further development.

The quantitative approach was based on a census survey targeting all 39 wineries in the region, both open to the public and non-open to the public. 28 of them responded, i.e. 71% of the target population. The questionnaire, which was sent electronically via Google Forms, included 15 closed-ended questions divided into nine thematic sections, covering characteristics of that responsible, participation in wine tourism, infrastructure, benefits, inhibiting and critical factors, promotion media and collaborations. The coding and analysis of the data were carried out using MS Excel, allowing the extraction of indicators and useful conclusions for the development of the sector. The use of closed questions contributed to the statistical processing of the data, while open questions provided a more complete picture of attitudes and perceptions. The qualitative dimension of the research was implemented by conducting semi-structured interviews with 12 wineries managers. The choice of the method is justified by the need to delve into the attitudes, perceptions and experiences of the participants, an element that the quantitative method could not fully cover.

Data collection was carried out in two phases, due to the pandemic covid 19, in 2020 and in 2025.

In the year 2020, a quantitative survey was carried out in 28 wineries with a closed-type structured

questionnaire. The questionnaire included a total of 15 closed-ended questions. At the same time, qualitative research was carried out with interviews, to deepen the questions of the research.

In 2025, only qualitative research was repeatedly carried out with personal interviews with 12 Winery managers, in order to explore the changes and trends of the market over the last five years, after the covid pandemic.

Despite the important findings, the research faced limitations. These included the difficulty of collecting primary data, the limited time available to conduct more interviews, and the lower response rate due to Covid-19. These limitations highlight the need to interpret the results with caution and in the context of the research conditions.

The main objectives of the research were:

- ✓ Outline the trends of the development of wine tourism in Eastern Macedonia and Thrace
- ✓ The recording of the organization, infrastructure and services offered by the wineries
- ✓ The Recognition of the profile of wine tourists
- ✓ The means of promoting wine tourism and business partnerships
- ✓ The Factors influencing the development of wine tourism in the region

V. RESEARCH APPROACH

A key research question was the outline of the profile of winemakers and wineries. Based on the results of the survey, the average of winemakers is Entrepreneurial Men (64.3%), Middle-aged, with a Medium to high educational level, and the wine production is the main occupation.

As far as the Wineries are concerned, most of them are Small Businesses, which have been operating only for the last decades. Mainly they are first generation winemakers, which means that there is not a great tradition in the art of winemaking, except of course for a few exceptions. The enterprises are very small businesses, with a very small number of employees. Most wineries participate in networks and corporations, as well as participate in national and international wine exhibitions. Wine exports are mainly directed to England, Germany, America but also Belgium, the Netherlands, Austria and Poland at percentages of 25 – 30% of sales.

As far as the infrastructure of the wineries is concerned, apart from the cellars and wine tasting rooms, the wineries do not have any additional infrastructure, except for a department for the sale of advertising and winery products. None of the wineries in the survey had a restaurant, accommodation offer or

museum space, which demonstrates the limited range of facilities.

Table 2: Winery Infrastructure

1. Special wine tasting room	2. 100%
3. Cellar – wine sales area	4. 100%
5. Sales department (books, wine accessories, etc.)	6. 57%
7. Museum or exhibition of old equipment, tools, bottles, etc.	8. No
9. Restaurant	10. No
11. Accommodation	12. No

According to the results of the survey, all Wineries offer Guided tour of the winery, Offering printed advertising materials and Sale of wines. Also, a large percentage of Wineries offer Tour of the vineyards Tasting and Oenology Course in specially designed areas. Many few Wineries offer additional specialized services, such as Organization of social events (weddings, conferences, etc.) Provision of outdoor activities (horseback riding, mountain biking, etc.) Expert guide or Presentation of audiovisual material.

Table 3: Winery services offered

13. Guided tour of the winery	14. 100,0%
15. Sale of wines	16. 100,0%
17. Offering printed advertising materials	18. 100,0%
19. Tour of the vineyards	20. 85,7%
21. Tasting and Oenology Course	22. 71,4%
23. Provision of outdoor activities (horseback riding, mountain biking, etc.)	24. 28,6%
25. Organization of social events (weddings, conferences, etc.)	26. 28,6%
27. Expert guide	28. 14,3%
29. Presentation of audiovisual material	30. 14,3%

Wineries in Northern Greece are trying to promote their services through various means, and they all have a website and a presence on social media, such as Instagram, Facebook, while through their links they participate in trade fairs in groups or autonomously.

Table 4: Means of promotion and promotion of wine tourism products

31. Winery website	32. 100,00%
33. Facebook	34. 100,00%
35. Instagram	36. 100,00%
37. Participation in exhibitions	38. 100,00%
39. Enology journals (PRINTED)	40. 85,70%
41. Wine events – Festivals	42. 85,70%

43. Enology journals (ONLINE)	44. 71,40%
45. Professional tour guides	46. 57,10%
47. Road signage of the wine Routes	48. 57,10%
49. Newsletters	50. 42,90%

To the question of what the main inhibiting factors for the development of wine tourism are, in first place is the answer "The economic crisis – decrease in tourist income". Interpreting this statement is that many tourists, due to limited income, are not willing to spend a lot of money during their holidays, enriching their holidays with special activities. This reason in combination with the Absence of wine culture of residents / tourists of the area lead to the low demand for Wine Tourism.

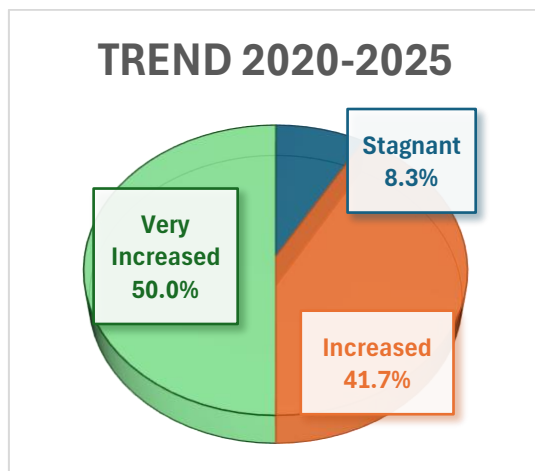
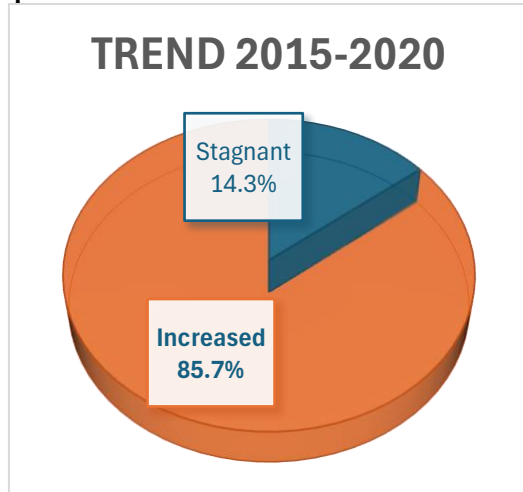
They also blame the local government for the reduced traffic, such as not taking many measures or implementing actions to promote wine tourism in the area. Other important reasons can be added to these reasons, such as Lack of cooperation with travel agencies, Competition from other regions but also the Lack of financial resources to create the required infrastructure and facilities.

Table 5: Inhibitors for the development of wine tourism (1 to 5 for max)

Economic crisis – decrease in tourist income	4
Inadequate promotion of wineries by local authorities	4
Lack of cooperation with travel agencies	3,7
Lack of financial resources to create the required infrastructure and facilities	3,6
Competition from other regions	3,6
Absence of wine culture of residents / tourists of the area	3,4
Low level of wine tourism infrastructure	3,3
Lack of cooperation with tour operators	3,3
Accessibility to the winery	2,4

Among the most interesting results of the survey was the recording of trends for Wine Tourism, between the periods 2015-20 and 2020-25. In 2020, the survey showed that for the period 2015-20, 85.7% of respondents answered that there was an increase, while 14.3% of respondents answered that there was stagnation. On the contrary, in the 2025 survey, 50% of respondents answered that in the five-year period 2020-25 there was a particularly large increase, 41.7% answered that there was an increase and only 8.3% answered that there was stagnation.

Diagram 1: Trends of wine tourism in the five-year periods of 2015-2020 and 2020-2025



Source: Own processing

These results show that in the last five years 2020-25 there was a much greater increase in wine tourism, compared to the five years 2015-20. This is also evident from the results of the next question, where a significant increase in the number of visitors to wineries is recorded.

For the 2020-25 period, the development of wine tourism was diversified, depending on the prefecture. The wineries of Kavala all replied that the traffic (2020-25) was "Very increased", The wineries of Drama responded divided into the options "Increased" and "Very Increased", while the responses of the wineries of Thrace were divided into all three options.

Table 6. Number of visitors in the seasons 2019-20 and 2024-25

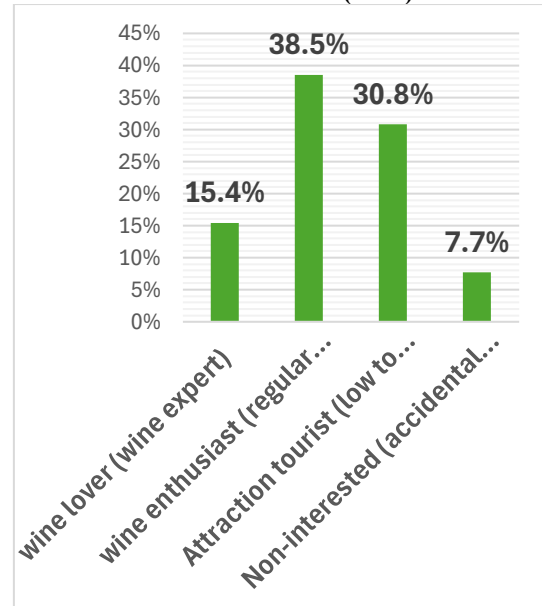
Number of visitors	Saison 2019-20	Saison 2024-25
Up to 300 visitors	70%	-
Up to 500 visitors	15%	25%

Approximately 1500 visitors	15%	-
Aprox. 2500	-	25%
Between 3000 – 4000	-	42%
Between 8000-10000	-	17%
Total	100%	100%

Origin of wine tourists

They are Greeks and Foreigners. Foreigners mainly in the summer. The countries of origin depend on the tourists visiting the Region. Mainly from Balkan countries, Turkey, Germany. They visit both organized and individual. Visitors also depend on the cruise ships that come. Average age of visitors is 31-50 years old. The above data remained the same in the 2025 survey.

Diagram 2: Profile of wine tourists in the region Eastern Macedonia and Thrace (2025)



Source: Own processing

According to the research results, the profile of the Wine Tourist depends on two main parameters. Firstly, from the knowledge he has about wines, the production and winemaking process and secondly from his interest in visiting wineries and vineyards, regardless of the level of knowledge he has. This interest also includes taking gastronomic experiences or getting in contact with the local culture, participating in various festivals or events. Based on these two dimensions, four profiles can be identified:

An **Ignorant Wine Tourist**, he has no knowledge about vines and wine, but he is also not interested in Wine Tourism either. This visitor visited the winery following friends or the group and sees the visit as a waste of time and is in a hurry to complete the visit. His interest is more focused on free wine tastings, or even

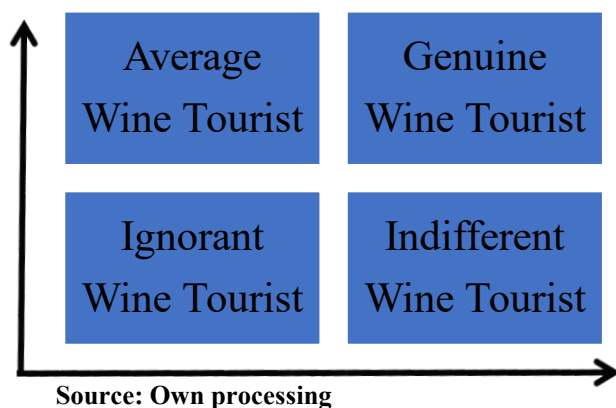
delicacy. This type of wine tourist likes the "**Hangers-on**" profile of Charters and Ali-Knight (2002).

Indifferent Wine Tourist: Unlike the Ignorant Wine Tourist, this type of tourist possesses a good level of knowledge about wine and viticulture but does not have a particular interest in wine tourism itself. They may even be involved in grape or wine production. Their motivation for participating may stem from curiosity, or simply from accompanying friends or following the group they are traveling with.

The **Average or Typical Wine Tourist**, characterized by a high interest in wine tourism, includes visiting wineries in his program, although his knowledge of wines and wine is limited, but he is interested in learning and tasting new wines.

The **Genuine Wine Tourist** is the tourist who, according to Charters and Ali-Knight (2002) is a "Wine lover", who not only has an interest in Wine Tourism, but also has very good knowledge. Unfortunately, people with a lot of knowledge about wine often engage in long conversations with the guide, trying to show off their knowledge.

Graphic 1: Tourist profile in relation to knowledge and interest



Greece has several well-established wine routes that display its diverse viticulture, from the mountainous terrain of the north to the volcanic soil of its islands. These routes are organized into regional networks, making them ideal for wine tourism. They include those of Northern Greece, Peloponnese, Aegean Islands, Ionian Islands and Attica.

VI.DISCUSSION

Highlights of the interviews concerning Regional Unit of Drama

In the Region of Eastern Macedonia – Thrace, in a small region of Greece, there is a great differentiation between the regional units in terms of the development of Wine Tourism. In the Regional Unit of Drama there is a significant number of large winemakers who have been organized at a local level and in collaboration with

the local government create local festivals and actions in relation to wine tourism. These actions have increased the interest and number of local visitors. For example, during the days of the Draminognosia wine festival, the participating wineries receive from 1000 to 2500 visitors, which for the data of wine tourism in Greece are impressive numbers.

At the same time, they try to take advantage of tourism on the coast of Kavala and the arrivals of cruise ships, attracting cruise ship excursionists, who visit the archaeological site of Philippi with the ancient theater and the ancient city, named after the King of Macedonia Philip II (father of Alexander the Great) and at this area in 42 BC the republican Romans with Brutus and Cassius as generals faced the followers of the Monarchy under Mark Antony, Octavian and Lepidus

(<https://www.visitkavala.gr/sightseeing/arxaiologikos-xoros-filippon/>). Consequently, the wineries of Drama receive both Greek and foreign visitors, with the difference that in the summer the number of foreigners is increased.

Highlights of the interviews concerning Regional Unit Kavala

The Regional Unit of Kavala, together with the island of Thassos, is a seaside tourist destination, which gathers a very large number of tourists from the northern and eastern borders of Greece (such as Bulgaria, Serbia, Poland, Romania, Turkey). Also, many tourists arrive at Kavala international airport by charter flights from Norway, Sweden, UK, Germany, Poland, Serbia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria (<https://www.kva-airport.gr/en/flights--more/flights--destinations/tab=destinations>), but also by cruise ships. Local wineries target mainly foreign tourists and are very limited to the local population. There are partnerships with travel agencies that organize visits on a weekly basis even by tourists from the island of Thassos.

The development of wine tourism in the other three regional units (Xanthi, Rodopi and Evros) is minimal and the number of visitors received by the local wineries evidence this. According to the interviews, this is because these areas are far from the tourist destinations of tourists, such as Halkidiki, Kavala or Thassos. This phenomenon becomes more obvious as we move further east.

VII.CONCLUSION

In recent years, there has been a significant growth in wine tourism, which is reflected in the increase in the number of visitors. The nationality of tourists depends on the visitors of the cruise ships, but also on the composition of tourism in the region, which can vary greatly and can include tourists from America, Canada, Cyprus and elsewhere. Most visitors (69%) are wine enthusiasts (regular wine tourist) or Attraction tourist with a low to moderate interest for wine. Visitors come both organized (through travel agencies) and

individually. Within the Region, there are very large differences in the degree of development of wine tourism, while wineries located in tourist areas benefit through the collaboration with travel agencies. The wineries open to the public are satisfactorily organized and offer basic infrastructure for the reception and tour guiding of visitors. However, accommodation facilities, restaurants and the offer of specialized services, such as seminars, organization of social events etc. are at an early stage. According to research and the interviews, it did not emerge that the wine routes functioned to promote wine tourism in combination.

In conclusion, the development of wine tourism in this region is clearly upward and promising, while it has the natural, cultural and gastronomic elements that can support a strong and sustainable course on the international tourism map. Wine tourism also constituting a key strategic pillar for the upgrading of the overall tourism product and the global promotion of the Greek wine tradition.

Critical factors for the development of Wine Tourism

To maximize the potential of wine tourism, strategic development relies on the following pillars:

- **Integrated Local Synergy:** Success stems from the active participation of both the local community and municipal governments. This includes initiatives led by individual winemakers as well as broader collective actions that align private interests with public support.
- **Strategic Cultural Programming:** The design and hosting of specialized festivals and wine-themed activities serve as primary drivers for regional engagement and brand awareness.
- **Proximity and Accessibility:** Leveraging the geographic distance from established "sun and sea" tourist hubs allows vineyards to act as satellite destinations, successfully drawing visitors into the rural interior.
- **Collaborative Tourism Packages:** Collaborating with travel agencies to create curated itineraries significantly enriches the visitor's experience. These packages transform a simple visit into an immersive "tourist product" that adds value to the standard travel market.
- **Public-Private Promotion:** Sustained backing from the business sector and local authorities through high-profile events—such as **Dramoinognosia** or the **Dionysos Wine Route**—is essential for promoting regional wine identities to a global audience.

Proposals for further development and promotion

To further develop and promote the wine tourism sector in Greece, the following strategic proposals are recommended for implementation:

- **Infrastructure and Service Enhancement:** Prioritize the improvement of physical infrastructure within and around wineries, coupled with an enrichment of hospitality services offered to visitors.
- **Targeted Travel Agency Cooperation:** Cultivate strong partnerships with specialized travel agencies to facilitate the arrival of organized tourist groups through structured itineraries and offerings.
- **Calendar Optimization:** Increase the number of local, standalone events rather than relying solely on concurrent activities. For instance, the **Dramoinognosia festival** should be strategically scheduled to avoid overlapping with nationwide celebrations like the "Open Day" in May to maximize visitor impact.
- **Youth Engagement and Education:** Implement programs to encourage visits from schools and educational institutions, fostering an early appreciation and understanding of local wine culture and viticulture.
- **Sustained Local Government Support:** Secure consistent administrative and financial support from both Municipalities and Regional authorities to bolster local wine tourism initiatives.
- **Integrated Route Promotion:** Enhance the marketing of "wine routes" through robust synergies that connect wineries directly with local accommodations and dining establishments, allowing for the creation of seamless, all-inclusive tourism packages.

VIII. REFERENCES

1. Bruwer, J. and Alant, K. (2009). The hedonic nature of wine tourism consumption: An experiential view. *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 21(3), 235–257.
2. Charters, S. and Ali-Knight, J. (2002). Who is the wine tourist? *Tourism Management*, 23(3), 311–319, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177\(01\)00079-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0261-5177(01)00079-6)
3. Getz, D. and Brown, G. (2006). Critical success factors for wine tourism regions: a demand analysis. *Tourism Management*, 27(1), 146–158.
4. Global Wine Tourism Report 2025. Four wine tourist profiles. The findings of the study are available at <http://www.hs-geisenheim.de/gwtreport>

5. Greek Law 4412/2016, (Thematic Tourism), Government Gazette 208/ 11.11.2018.
6. Greek Wine Federation (2023). Statistics of the sector & Greek Vineyard. Available at: https://www.greekwinefederation.gr/seo/statistics?utm_source=chatgpt.com
7. Hall, C. M., Sharples, L., Cambourne, B., & Macionis, N. (2000). *Wine Tourism around the World: Development, Management and Markets*. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.
8. Ministry of Tourism (2021). Directorate of quality standards. Quality control department and setting quality standards. Available at https://mintour.gov.gr/wpcontent/uploads/2021/04/Template_odigos_SEO.pdf
9. Mitchell, R., & Hall, C. M. (2006). Wine tourism research: The state of play. *Tourism Review International*, 9(4), 307–332.
10. Pratt, M., (2014). Four Wine Tourist Profiles, Academy of Wine Business Research, 8th International Conference, 28-30 June Geisenheim, Germany.
11. *The Greek vineyard today*. Wines of Greece. <https://winesofgreece.org/articles/key-production-figures/>
12. Wine Makers of North Greece (2019). Leaders create here. <https://winemakersofnorthgreece.gr/en/>
13. Wine Makers of North Greece (2019). Wine Roads of North Greece. <https://winemakersofnorthgreece.gr/en/wine-roads/>
14. Wine tourism experience in Greece: Thrace and Eastern Macedonia (2016). <https://www.greeknewsagenda.gr/wine-tourism-experience-in-greece-thrace-and-eastern-macedonia/>
15. <https://www.visitkavala.gr/sightseeing/arxaio-logikos-xoros-filippon/>
16. <https://www.kva-airport.gr/en/flights--more/flights--destinations#MCT/tab=destinations>