

PRELIMINARY STUDY ABOUT WINE TOURISM IN WESTERN MOLDOVA AND REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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Abstract. Wine tourism is an emerging form of tourism who took birth in crisis due to the development of wine-growing sector in the countries of the New World (New Zealand, Australia, USA). Also, the decline in consumption of wine in the world is another reason for which it is wanted to create a new form of tourism. Wine tourism appeared as a means to revitalize, to preserve and make use of the wine industry. There is a great gap between the existence of a very complex offer and a poor marketing and development of wine products and tourism. Countries like Romania and Republic of Moldova have a great viticulture potential and seek to make better known their vineyards, valuing landscapes and opening their cellars to visitors. This article aims to present the actual situation of wine tourism in Western Moldova and Republic of Moldova, in order to seek possibilities to enhance visibility through a good development and sustainability at the level of European experienced regions. High quality wine, wine-growing landscape, the reputation gained by national and international competitions, facilitate the development of the wine tourism based on a local scale on a complex and competitive offer with other wine-growing regions.

Keywords: *wine tourism, vineyard, Western Moldova, Republic of Moldova.*

1. Wine tourism – genesis and evolution

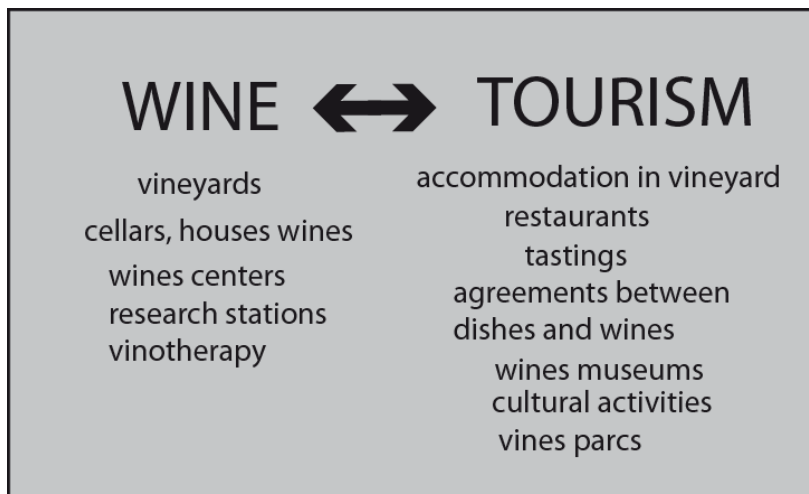
The European vineyards have been valued through the wine and the heritage associated with the wine. We can say that wine tourism has appeared with the designation of the wine routes. The first wine route, the route of *Grands Crus*, was inaugurated in 1934, through the Côte de Nuits and the high hills of Burgundy. In 1935, the first German wine route *Deutsche Weinstrasse* was designed to help the wine growers of the Palatinat. It took a little twenty years to be designed in 1953, on the same model, new wines routes, Champagne and Alsace (Lignon-Darmaillac, 2011).

At that time, no one spoke of wine tourism as a wine route is not sufficient to develop such an activity. It was to help agricultural sectors in crisis, by encouraging visitors to stop in farms, now reported on these directions, to develop the direct sale of the local wine.

California or South African wine routes have appeared later and they were designed as tourist routes in its own right. Wine tourism that they generated was recognized as a harmonious alliance between the wine activity and a specific tourism offer (figure 1).

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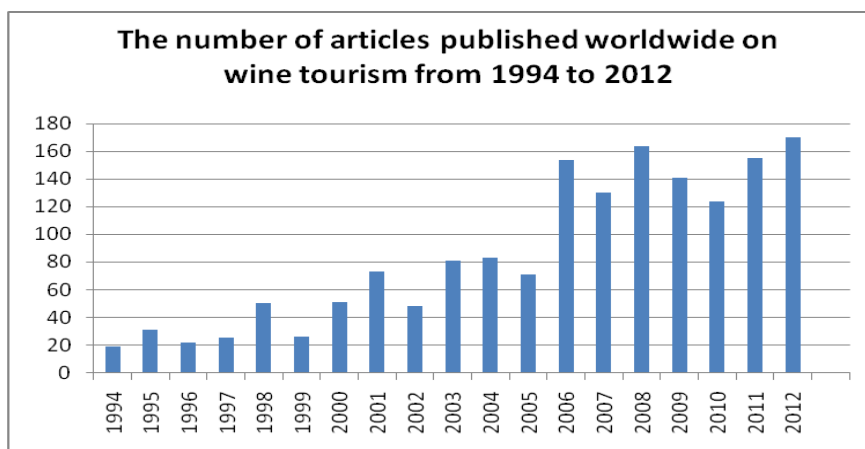
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*Figure 1: The relation between wine and tourism
Data source: Lignon-Darmaillac, S. 2011*

In Europe, the wineries designed for the reception of visitors were rare and rare were those who organized circuit tour or tasting to know their wines and sell them to the property. The first wine roads of Burgundy and Champagne have been forgotten and it was later although at the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century that the wine roads network is further developed and integrated into a real wine offer. The French wine tourism is suitable for older, more diverse wine-growing culture. Thus wine tourism has affected more and more territories by generating competition between traditional country and those in which it has developed more recently, leading to a realization and more accurate delineation of its attributes and its issues. The initiatives have multiplied in recent years, more countries in adopting development strategies and enhancing the wine regions in a different way.

At the international level, there are many published studies, prestige journals that publish a large number of articles in this domain. If we take as an example the "Science Direct" online database it is observed that in the last seven years, the number of published articles on wine tourism has been strongest (figure 2). It shows that attention to this domain has begun to increase.



*Figure 2: The number of articles published worldwide on wine tourism from 1994 to 2012
Data sources : www.sciencedirect.com, 1994-2012*

2. What is wine tourism?

Wine tourism is one of the first methods of valuation of the wine by facilitating the meeting between the producer and the consumer on vacation that is curious, available and receptive; initiated, he becomes the best Ambassador of the vine (Roumegoux report, 2008).

The VINTUR European wine tourism space gives a very vague definition regarding this form of tourism as well: "the wine product is integration under the same thematic concept of the resources and services of interest, existing or potential, in a wine-growing area". So, the definition is more general, there is a lack of details such as are resources and interest tourist services or the motivations of the people interested in this form of tourism, because such a definition must be supported by a rigorous work on field and a survey made around the tourists. This definition is to define the frame of the wine tourism without giving its essence, for which there are (Castaing, 2007).

Dubrulle (2007) defines the wine tourism as the set of services relating to stays of tourists in the wine-growing regions: visits of cellars, tasting, accommodation, catering and activities related to the wine, to local products and regional traditions. This definition brings a list of wine-related products. However the vineyard landscape and the intangible values are left aside. A more comprehensive definition of wine tourism is that this form of tourism is based on four main factors represented by the producers (who care that the product - wine to be of quality and to include all the characteristics of the "terroir"), they have to rely on marketing opportunities; the tourist actors - the travel agencies that have the role in the promotion of the culture of the wine; the consumers who are the wine tourists and which are characterized by the behaviours and motivations; the image of the region of which depends the choice of consumers for a wine-growing region.

3. Quantitative analysis of wine-growing potential

3.1. Romanian and Moldovan area place among the European vine member

With the conquest of the world by the people from the 16th century, the vineyard spreads on almost every continent, except in East Asia, one of the causes being the prohibition of the consumption of alcoholic beverages. In Europe the limit of the vine and the wine tends to settle; the last large vineyards are created, as in the Medoc or Sauternes, the vineyards of Jerez and Porto, or even Cognac (Schirmer, Velasco - Graciet, 2010). The Europeans have looked everywhere to plant vines for the needs of Catholic worship and for their consumption. As it is seen in the following map (figure 3) the vine is present in all countries of Central and South Europe. The Republic of Moldova occupies the highest position regarding the vines area related to the total surface of the country. It is highlight in this way the main profile of this country which leans on the vine cultivation and wine production. Romania does not occupy a privileged position as well as his neighbour or as Italy, Spain or France, but wine-growing areas just play a very important role in the economy. For centuries, in Romania and Republic of Moldova rich traditions of the cultivation of the vine and wine production have been formed. At present, in the Republic of Moldova works 142 wine factories, 23 of them with conditions and experience regarding the reception of visitors.

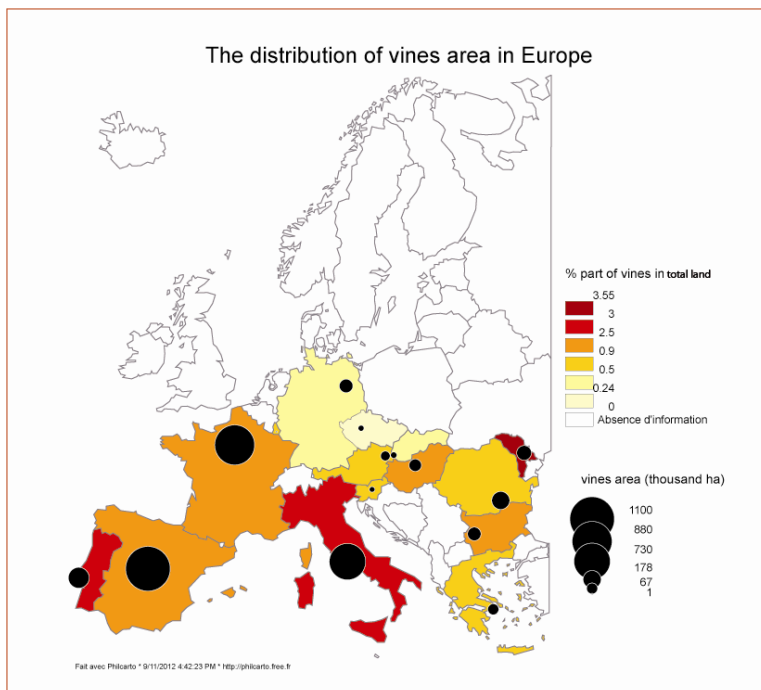


Figure 3: The distribution of vines area in Europe
Data sources: Eurostat

3.2. Segmentation of vineyards in areas of study

The wine-growing region of Moldova is the largest and most renowned region of the country. Until 1989, this region had 94,000 hectares of vines almost wine-growing area of Germany, today the wine-growing area cultivated for wine is 70 000 ha, of a total national of 182 000 ha. Moldova is the region with the largest production of wine and with a third of the total area of vines cultivated in Romania. Moldovan region has a total of 12 vineyards (figure 4), the most important ones is Cotnari, located in the extreme northern conditions vine cultivation, but which benefits of a specific ecoclimat, as demonstrated by wines Cotnari, the most popular and widely consumed in Romania (Cotnari vineyard kept the four-large indigenous grape varieties like Grasa de Cotnari, Feteasca alba, Tamaioasa romaneasca and Francusa); then, the Iasi vineyard that due to the favourable position, developed in proximity of Iasi city, enjoys a reputation of its products increasingly larger, as evidenced by the appearance of typical wine shop (Good Point), introduction of wine tourism offer in travel agencies (Icar Tours), events and exhibitions organized with wine specific (Provino); Husi vineyard as the most famous of the Vaslui county, due to the variety of products like Zghihara de Husi ; and the curve area with the most favourable climate for viticulture because of slopes, of the large number of sunny hours per year (2000-2200 hours/year), the presence of foehn which houses 3 vineyards, among the most famous in the country – Panciu, Cotesti and Odobesti with the local variety of wine Galbena de Odobesti. Favourable areas for development of viticulture are also in Republic of Moldova.

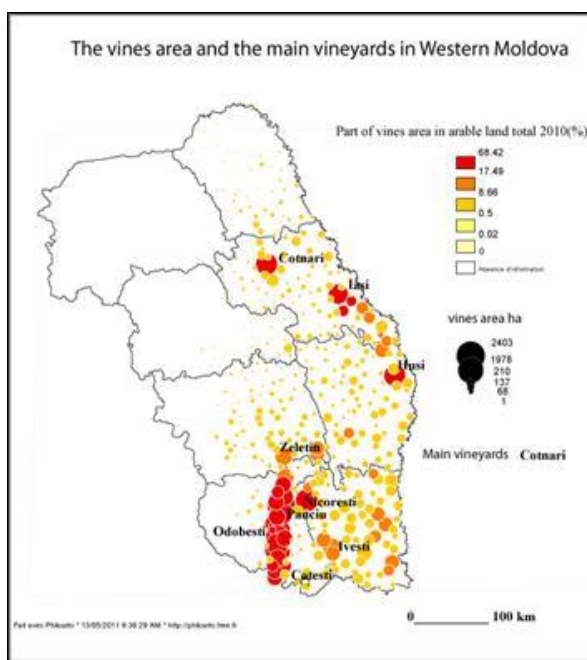


Fig.4 The vines area and the main vineyards in Western Moldova
 Data sources: INSSE

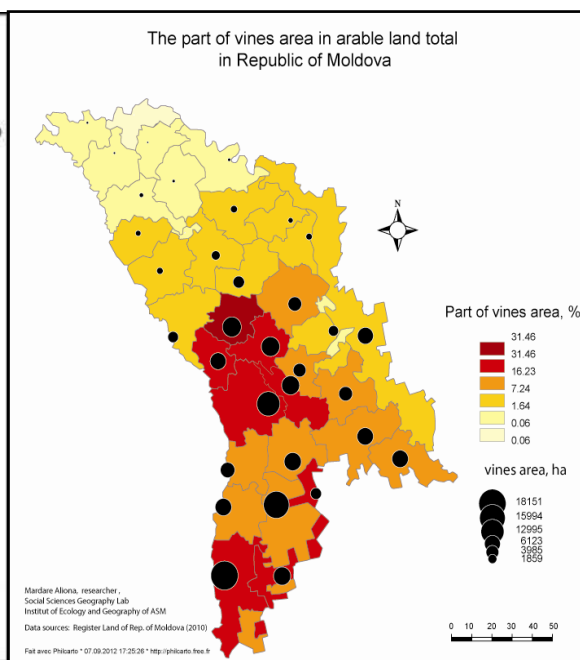


Fig.5 The vines area in arable land total in Rep. of Moldova
 Data sources: Register Land of Rep. of Moldova

The division of the Republic of Moldova in the main areas of grape production has been proposed by a complex study of the teacher P. I. Ivanov in 1954. This study defines four zones based on climatic conditions, which actually led to a specialization in the fields of wine: the Region of Northern (Bălți) - with limits - Sculeni - Soroca - Bălți - Florești (here are grown successfully white grapes like Pinot Gris, Traminer, Aligoté, Feteasca Alba – a local variety of wine); Central region (Codru) - with limits - Cimișlia - Leova - Bender (here is located the main massif of plantations of vines (60%) and most of the companies specialized in primary winemaking and the production and bottling of wine of all varieties). In the area are found also the famous wine cellars of Cricova, Milești, Brănești. They produce some of the best quality wines in the country.

In this area there is the famous plantation Romanești, the famous "cru" - "Romanești", the former estate of the Russian imperial dynasty of the Romanovs. The southern region (Cahul) includes all of the territory between the Prut, Nistru and Danube and Southeast region (Nistrea) - between the Camenca and Slobozia. In this last region are planted red grape varieties because of favourability climate: Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Rara Neagra "(a local variety of grapes wine). Here is the Purcari wine centre, famous for its wines "Roșu de Purcari" and "Negru de Purcari". The Purcari area was a German wine-growing colony which made the fame of some rare, fine, famous wines like the type of Languedoc-Roussillon wines. A few districts in the North of the Republic do not have the necessary conditions for the development of wine-growing branch (figure 5), as it is the case of Suceava County of Moldovan region.

3.3. The wine – a cultural marker of Moldovan identity

The wines represent a true wealth for these two regions. This is why many tourists travel large distances to savour the taste of wine where it is produced. An important premise of the quality and originality of Romanian and Moldovan wines are the grape varieties that are at the base of their production, in characteristic assortment for each vineyard (Macici, 1996). In both Moldavias, there are important indigenous varieties, valuables, kept in culture after phylloxera invasion and of course, foreign varieties, with oenological qualities well known. Thus in both Moldavias we meet the next varieties (table 1 and table 2):

Table 1 The local and foreign wines in Western Moldova

Local white wines	<i>Fetească albă, Fetească regală, Grasă de Cotnari, Galbenă d'Odobești, Frâncușă, Zghihara de Huși, Șarbă</i>
Local red wines	<i>Fetească neagră, Băbească neagră</i>
Local aromatic wines	<i>Tămâioasă românească, Busuioacă de Bohotin</i>
Foreign white wines	<i>Riesling italian, Sauvignon, Pinot gris, Chardonnay, Traminer roz, Aligoté</i>
Foreign red wines	<i>Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot noir, Merlot</i>
Foreign aromatic wines	<i>Muscat Ottonel</i>

Table 2 The local and foreign wines in Republic of Moldova

Local white wines	<i>Fetească albă</i>
Local red wines	<i>Rara neagră</i>
Foreign white wines (French wines)	<i>Aligoté, Chardonnay, Sauvignon, Riesling, Pinot Blanc</i>
Foreign red wines (French wines)	<i>Malbec, Pinot Gris, Pinot Noir, Cabernet-Sauvignon, Muscat Ottonel</i>
Foreign white wines (Georgian wines)	<i>Saperavi</i>
Foreign red wines (Georgian wines)	<i>Rkatsiteli</i>

4. Quantitative analysis of the wine tourism potential

4.1. Wine tourism heritage of Moldavian territory

Wine tourism potential includes all attractions in a wine region, attractions related by the oenological part, it means wineries, wine centres, research stations and of course the attractions strictly related by tourism infrastructure, namely, natural resources, human resources, accommodations and restaurants.

In Western Moldova region, was reviewed a number of 110 officials of wine producers, potential wine tourism products developers. It must mention that already some of them began to open its doors to visitors and to understand the value and the importance of tourism activity integrated in that of viticulture because in this way they make more well-known their wines and rich the income.

As it can be seen in map below (figure 6) the tourism potential of the Moldova region is concentrated in the mountain area, due to the natural potential of the mountains, rivers, valleys, and all forms of relief related.

This further strengthened human resources development represented in most of the places of worship, including mention monasteries in northern Moldavia and Neamt county, registered in UNESCO as well as resorts and tourist villages Slanic Moldova, Vatra Dornei, Gura Humorului, Lepsa, Soveja etc. The eastern side dominated by a monotonous landscape consisted of plateaus and plains just do not have such a large interest for tourists, but nonetheless the wine potential through a sustainable development could balance the deficit of tourism resources in this region. The history of viticulture, the fame and the authenticity of the varieties of wine, the wine culture are some arguments that can support the development of wine tourism as in the established countries in this direction.

In the Moldova region there are a number of wineries that have in their offer and wine tourism packages composed of tastings, visits to wine cellars and wine centres, accommodations with dining. Among these we mention the Cotnari cellar that enjoys the highest reputation, a wine cellar with a length of more than 600 years which Grasa de Cotnari wine is compared often with Tokay wine in Hungary. Icar Tours Travel Agency is the only agency in Moldova, which has a special interest in this form of tourism, in particular for Iasi County, being aware of the oenological potential of this territory. So it organizes tours of wineries under the name "Tastings wines of Iasi" from the Cotnari wine cellar, Bilius House, Wine Museum in Harlau and ending with wine cellars of Iasi – Olteanu House wine cellar, Bucium wine cellar, Copou wine cellar and Vinia society. Through other wineries that were associated with this trend is Panciu House that is, we could say, Moldova's Western etiquette regarding wine tourism. Great architecture and the entire range of services offered to tourists (playground for children, accommodation inside and in the immediate vicinity of the cellar, wine tastings and visits of the domain) make this place of delight from Tifesti common to be among the most attractive in the region.

Vrancea County enjoys the largest number of producers across the country, many of them offering good services to tourists that step in their properties. A number of festivals are also held annually in both Moldavias, such as Vine and Wine Festival in the city of Focsani, Provino Festival in Iasi or National Wine Festival in Republic of Moldova.

In Republic of Moldova there are almost 150 official wine producers and most are strictly commercial guiding. Some of them try to give a cultural and local value to their enterprises and their products. Most have a foreign capital centred on export production. Many wine producers refuse to develop a tourist line motivated by the bad conditions of infrastructure, low accessibility and low income at the beginning of such business.

A very small number of wine cellars have a wine tourism offer. The map below (figure 7) illustrates wine distribution objectives, the potential wine tourism attractions. Except for the northern region, the distribution of the wine objectives are somewhat uniform, with a significant number in the centre of the country districts (Nisporeni, Straseni, Calarasi Ialoveni, Orhei etc.) and southern Moldova (Cahul, Gagauzia, Cantemir, Stefan Voda etc.)

The companies which provide its wine tourism services and offer its products a cultural value are in particular, those in the centre, where there are better development conditions in terms of tourism: accessibility, accommodation infrastructure, proximity to the capital.

The best examples are the wineries of Cricova and Milestii Mici, owning extensive tourist packages based on tasting and excursions in the huge wine cellars with a length

exceeding 50 km. In this domain register success also the Branesti, Romanești, Orhei (Chateaux Vartely) enterprises.

Because it is located at the periphery, the Purcari winery has developed a tourist resort beside the enterprise, right in the heart of the wine-growing plantations. This complex consists of a hotel with a restaurant and a number of items.

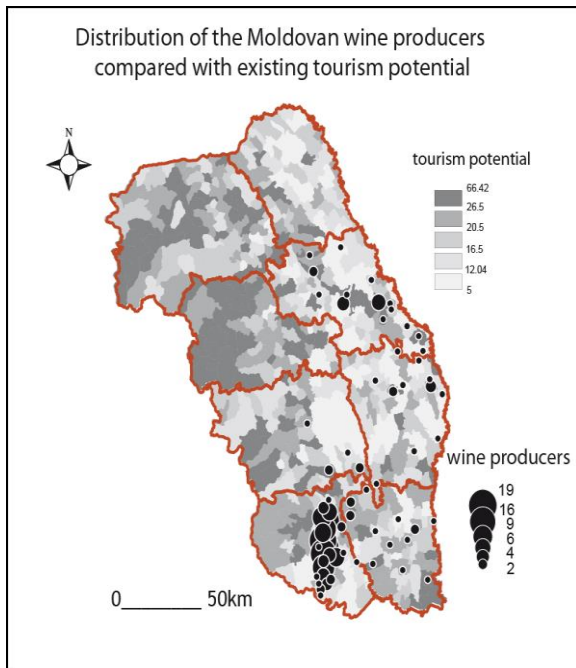


Fig. 6 Distribution of the Moldovan wine producers compared with existing tourism potential
Dara sources: PATN

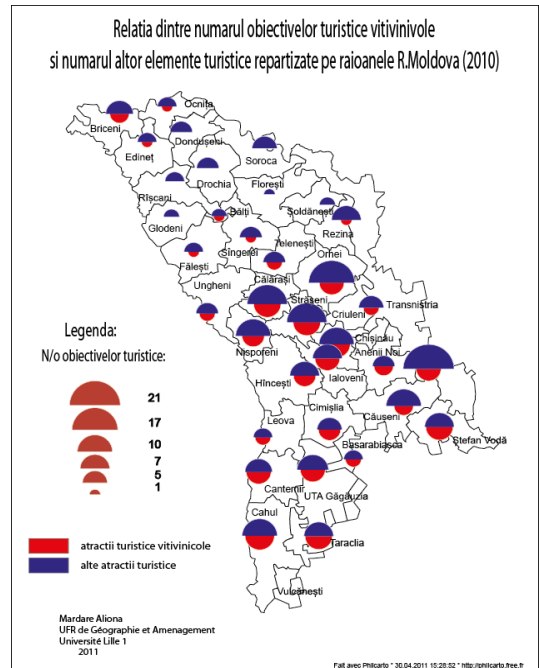


Fig.7 The relation between wine sights and other tourism elements in Rep. of Moldova
Data sources: Tourism Agency of Rep. of Moldova

4.2. Accommodation in vineyards – a must for developing wine tourism?

The development of wine tourism leans on specific tourist infrastructure, which consists of high accessibility, accommodation because wine tourism in itself means spending at least 24 hours out of the residence, but, in this case in a vineyard, so accommodation units are a *sine qua non* condition for this form of tourism rise and be sustainable.

Deficiency of the accommodation in the wine-growing areas is the main cause of the low level of existing development if we report to Western European countries. So, in recent years on the basis of the development of rural tourism, in the Moldovan vineyards began appearing and rural guesthouses and some wineries have started to offer accommodation for the wine tourist, the offer being more complex.

Cotnari Company has planned to build a guesthouse in the near future, in the vineyards that surround the city of Iasi. However, some wineries already established in the art of tasting and reception of visitors (such as Olteanu House, Copou cellars) through favourable position they have in the middle of vineyards may develop some rooms for those who wish to extend the wine tourism experience. Vrancea County is leading position in the construction of rural guesthouses especially in growing areas, as specialization of this space of many centuries gave rise to the project Wine Road, a road that comprises only wine vineyards of Vrancea. So

take large hostels or develop spaces for accommodation of tourists and some wineries like Panciu House, guesthouses that are built in the villages like Tamboiesti, Jaristea, Cotesti. The city of Focsani, also represents a pole of attraction in terms of accommodation for the surrounding vineyards. It is noticed the major role that it plays by the cities in development of Moldavian wine tourism: Focsani and Iasi city - cultural cities of Moldovan wine. Both cartographic representations (figure 8 and figure 9) demonstrate that there are rare situations when accommodation units overlap areas with a concentration of vine-growing.

In both areas there are places in the vineyards that have no tourism accommodation (for exemple Romanesti, Ciumai, Taraclia in Republic of Moldova or localities of Ivesti, Dealul Bujorului, Nicoresti, Zeletin vineyards). In the Republic of Moldova it can be affirmed that the capital of Chisinau itself is the pillar of the development of wine tourism as over 60% of the total number of accommodation units are located in the capital and Chisinau represents the point of departure and arrival for circular roads of wine. So it is still early the application of foreign models of wine tourism development which includes in same space the cellar, the accommodation and the restaurant (Californian or French model).

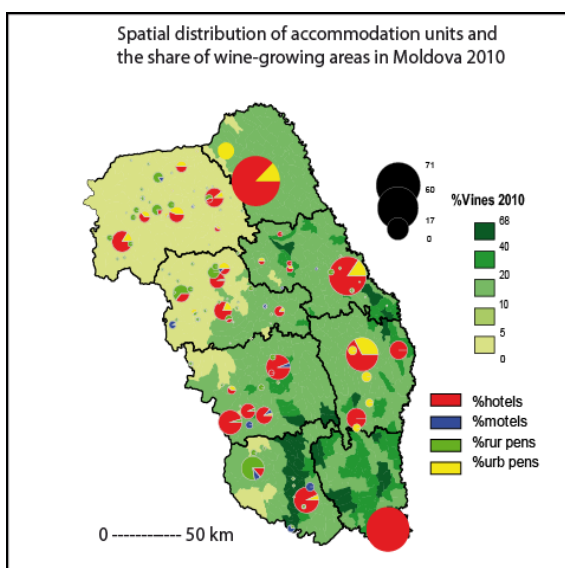


Fig.8 Distribution of accommodation units and share of wine-growing areas in Moldova, 2010
Data sources: INSSE, 2010

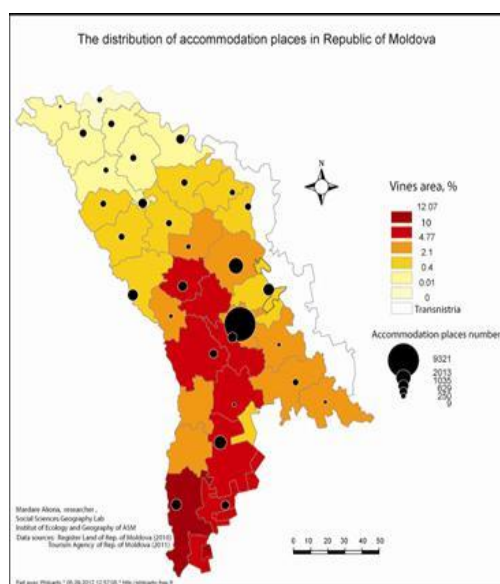


Fig.9 Distribution of accommodation places in Republic of moldova, 2010
Data sources: Tourism Agency of Rep. of Moldova, 2010

4.3. Wine tourists – are they interested by Moldovan vineyards?

The simple difference between a tourist and a wine tourist is that the "tourist is a visitor who spends a night outside of home; a wine tourist passes in a wine region"(Bloch, 2011). According to the French example, the study carried out by France ATOUT, the average portrait of the wine tourist is:

- the wine tourist is predominantly male;
- the average age is 46 years;
- he visited the vineyards of user-friendly, as a couple, with friends or family.
- he is up to a CSP + (upper socio-professional category);

- average home incomes are quite high;
- they regularly consume wine;
- he frequently visits the wine producing regions;
- he uses mainly to the automobile to move through the vineyards;

As a result of personal studies undertaken in the vineyards, it was noted that for the most part of wine tourist profile it is similar for studied spaces. Moreover, in the Moldovan vineyards we could affirm that it is practiced more an education of taste tourism as the wine tourism is currently in an early stage, it is wanted the culturalization of tourists for quality, originality of wines, for the association between wine and food. So among the Romanian and Moldavian tourists, we can synthesize some features, namely the potential wine tourist is part of the intellectuals, has an average age of less than the French model, 35-40 years, is eager to acquire knowledge of the wine, they are novice tourists at the stage of experimentation.

Foreign tourists are more educated on what means the wine culture, coming not only from developed countries on this branch, but also from countries where wine is not a priority for the economy and the cult of wine is still unknown. We mention countries such as Poland, Russia, North Korea, Japan, China, especially the Asian countries, for which Eastern Europe is actually the "West". But follow the Moldovan wineries also the Americans, the Germans, the French, the Italians (the latter especially due to similarities in wine technology) especially because of the significant number of imported French varieties after phylloxera. Moldovan wine cellars are visited by groups of tourists, between 10 and 30 people, making schedules in advance. The number of tourists grows from year to year but a statistic situation is not yet planned, given the fact that many of the wineries barely develop a taste for wine tourism.

Conclusions

Conclusions were chosen as a summary of strengths and unfavourable points and the threats and opportunities that can embrace wine and wine tourism default in this space. The SWOT analysis shows that both Moldovan territories have a specialization of centuries of meaning vine growing and wine making and due to its natural heritage, cultural, gastronomic, folkloric, Moldavian region and Republic of Moldova can rival through the authenticity with the old world and the new world wines but with a sales market oriented more towards the East.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low cost of labour and favourable tax regime - The territorial specialization - Tradition in the manufacture and use of technical capacities in the field of wine - The introduction of e-commerce - Low cost of vines to the countries of the European Union - High Potential of wine - The increasing demand of Romanian wines on international markets - Possibilities for other forms of tourism amid the wine tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Poor knowledge of Romanian wines in Western markets - The low purchasing power of consumers: - The lack of diffusion of knowledge about wine - Insufficient investment in marketing - Increased taxes and excise duties on imported wine - Peripheral geographical position to major European centres - The culture of wine consumption «fait à

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The existence of genuine products - The diversity of vineyards – a historic tradition around wine - Favourable position of countries regarding the oenoclimat 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> la maison» - Poor transport infrastructure by vineyards - Deficiency of accommodation units
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing domestic demand of wine - The opportunity to develop new technologies in winemaking - The potential market of 22 million and 4 million inhabitants - Improvement of infrastructure - Attracting foreign investment in the development of modern cellars - Cultural integration of cellars in international tours - Specialization of wine producers in wine and tourism branch 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased competition from Bulgarian, Greek, Hungarian wines - Departure of specialized workers abroad - Lack of investment for training in wine branch - The orientation of foreign tourists to New World wine countries

Aknowledgements

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