

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA
FACULTY OF "MANAGEMENT"
DEPARTMENT OF "ECONOMICS OF TOURISM
MANAGEMENT"

Yanislav Ignatov Markov

MARKET POSITIONING OF A WINE TOURISM
DESTINATION (EXAMPLE OF PAZARDZIK REGION)

A B S T R A C T

of a dissertation

for acquiring of an educational and scientific degree "doctor"
in a professional direction 3.9. Tourism,
scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISOR:
Prof. Stoyan Marinov, PhD

VARNA
2023

The dissertation consists of an introduction (6 pages), an exposition in three chapters (199 pages), a conclusion (5 pages), a reference list (13 pages). The main text contains 27 tables and 19 figures. The reference list consists of 186 literary sources and 12 Internet sites. There are 9 appendices to the dissertation work.

The defense of the dissertation will take place on..... fromh. in hall of the University of Economics-Varna at a meeting of a scientific jury, appointed by Order of the Rector of the University of Varna.

The defense materials are available to the interested parties at the web page of University of Economics – Varna. www.ue-varna.bg

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS - VARNA
FACULTY OF "MANAGEMENT"
DEPARTMENT OF "ECONOMICS OF TOURISM MANAGEMENT"

Yanislav Ignatov Markov

**Market positioning of a wine tourism destination
(following the example of the Pazardzhik region)**

A B S T R A C T

of a dissertation

for acquiring of an educational and scientific degree "doctor" in a professional
direction 3.9. Tourism,
scientific specialty "Economics and Management (Tourism)"

SCIENTIFIC SUPERVISOR:

Prof. Stoyan Marinov, PhD

SCIENTIFIC JURY:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

MEMBERS IN RESERVE:

REVIEWERS:

- 1.
- 2.

Varna
2023

Author: Yanislav Ignatov Markov

Title: Market positioning of a wine tourism destination (following the example of the Pazardzhik region)/

Print run:

I. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Relevance of the researched topic

The tourism industry is facing global competition where business rivalry is constantly increasing. A clearly differentiated and strong market positioning is one of the most important tools for businesses and destinations to achieve sustainable success and competitive advantages in the tourism industry (Bieger, 2008; Hooley et al., 2004; Hudson et al., 2004; Ritchie & Crouch, 2000).

The concept of positioning has a potential link with the destination, as a tourist destination is the basis of the formation of a complex tourism product with brand image and loyalty. Destination positioning is the central and most critical element of all future tourism and economic development efforts for an area.

Wine tourism as a separate sub-sector of the tourism industry is constantly developing and changing in terms of its structure. New market trends, as well as the experience gained by wine producers in the implementation of projects for the development of wine tourism, business initiatives and investments by local and state authorities, European and international institutions, contribute to a more dynamic nature of this type of tourism compared to its initial stage of development in the 90s of the 20th century in Bulgaria and Europe. Wine tourism meets the needs of modern people for a short escape - breaking away from the daily rhythm of city life, contact with nature, getting to know the cultural characteristics of a given region, entertainment and recreation in areas that have not changed in appearance from the negative consequences of mass tourism. The significant increase in the number of tourists interested in wine has motivated many communities to develop wine tourism. In some destinations, wineries and wine trails serve as major attractions (Dodd, 1995; Getz, 2000; Mitchell & Hall, 2004).

Wine tourism involves more than visiting wineries and vineyards. Rather, it is the culmination of a number of unique experiences: the atmosphere, the landscape, the surrounding social environment, the regional culture and cuisine, the local wine styles, and the variety of unique recreational activities that make wine tourism popular with a growing number of travelers. However, as the number of wine regions competing for wine tourists continues to increase, so does the need to clearly and uniquely position wine destinations in the mind of the potential visitor. The wine industry and wine tourism destinations share many common product and market positioning challenges. Winemakers strive to create wines that combine the most favorable elements of the best vintages while differing in unique ways from each other. Managers of wine tourism destinations develop market images that are based on a common base of preferred attributes while being clearly distinctive from others. Just as with successful wine positioning, these destination images that distinguish one region or product from others must be based on an appreciation of distinct natural and cultural elements that cannot be replicated elsewhere. By adding additional visitor-oriented services, the wine business builds brand loyalty, improves consumer awareness, creates a positive image of the wine product, and develops strong consumer relationships through on-site experiences (Asero & Patti, 2011; Bruwer & Alant, 2009).

2. Subject and object of the study

The **subject** of study in the dissertation are the peculiarities of the market positioning of a wine tourism destination.

The **object** of this dissertation is the research of the market positions of Pazardzhik administrative district as a destination for wine tourism

3. Purpose and tasks of the study

This study aims to build on the theory of wine tourism destination positioning and on the basis of best practices in the field of wine tourism to outline guidelines for sustainable market positioning of a wine tourism destination on the example of Pazardzhik region.

The adopted purpose of the study defines the solution of the following **specific research tasks**:

Task 1: Clarification of the specific concepts of wine tourism.

Task 2: Systematization of the theoretical aspects of the market positioning of a wine tourism destination in the context of wine tourism development trends.

Task 3: Development of a conceptual model for market positioning of a wine tourism destination with a priority to the "revival" and preservation of traditions in grape and wine production.

Task 4: Validation of the proposed conceptual model by conducting own research (quantitative and qualitative) regarding the market positions of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for wine tourism.

Task 5: Outlining guidelines for competitive positioning of Pazardzhik as a destination for sustainable wine tourism.

4. Research thesis and hypotheses

The study **thesis** is that the proper market positioning of a wine tourism destination is based on an original marketing mix, orientation towards appropriate target segments and stakeholder engagement.

To prove the main thesis of the dissertation the following **hypotheses** are tested:

Hypothesis 1: Pazardzhik region is not present with an original marketing mix on the wine tourism market..

1.1 Pazardzhik region is not present with an original product on the wine tourism market;

1.2 Pazardzhik region is not present with a competitive price on the wine tourism market;

1.3 Pazardzhik region is not present with a diverse distribution system on the wine tourism market;

1.4 Pazardzhik region does not have a good information presence on the wine tourism market;

Hypothesis 2: The motive for visiting wineries is influenced by the specifics of the consumer.

2.1 The motive for visiting wineries is influenced by the gender of the consumer;

2.2 The motive for visiting wineries is influenced by the age of the consumer;

Hypothesis 3: Representatives of the wine industry and other stakeholders in the Pazardzhik region have an attitude for partnerships and investments to improve the market position of the destination in the wine tourism market and this attitude is influenced by the specificity of the winery.

3.1 The attitude for partnership between wineries in Pazardzhik region depends on the period of operation of the winery;

3.2 The attitude to partnership between wineries outside the region of Pazardzhik depends on the operation period of the winery;

3.3 The attitude to partnership between wineries in the Pazardzhik region depends on the market segment of the winery;

3.4 The attitude to partnerships between wineries outside the Pazardzhik region depends on the market segment of the winery;

5. Research approaches and limitations

The realization of the scientific goal and tasks defined in the study is achieved by using a set of **research methods**.

The theoretical and methodological aspect included: historical and systematic approach, method of analysis and synthesis, comparative method, method of induction and deduction, analogy and comparison. From the empirical research methods, survey research and statistical and descriptive methods of analysis are used, taking into account the specifics of the issues under consideration. The data collected from the survey are processed using descriptive statistics methods to calculate arithmetic means and standard deviations in their empirical distributions. From the tests of comparative and associative statistics, we apply correlation and regression analysis to extract information about statistically significant relationships between the empirical data and scientifically present the results of the statistical study.

The following main **limitations** were introduced in the study:

- Lack of previous scientific and applied-scientific research on the issue in Bulgaria
- Territorial limitation of the study within the administrative district of Pazardzhik

The main **problems** in writing the dissertation relate mainly to gaps and incompleteness in the statistical data, incomplete and inaccurate information in the accommodation register, and in the low level of commitment of winery owners to surveys.

6. Information sources

The informational support of the study was carried out through a systematic research of specialized scientific publications by Bulgarian and foreign authors. A total of 189 literature and information sources were used, including 21 Bulgarian language titles, 14 Bulgarian websites; 165 foreign titles and 12 specialized websites.

II. STRUCTURE AND CONTENT OF THE DISSERTATION

1. Structure of the dissertation

The structure of the thesis is determined by the combination of its subject, object, aims and objectives and reflects the author's approach to the research.

The dissertation consists of an introduction (6 pp.), a statement in three chapters (199 pp.), a conclusion (5 pp.), and a reference list (13 pp.). The main text contains 27 tables and 19 figures. The list of references consists of 186 titles and 12 websites. There are 9 appendices to the dissertation.

2. Content of the dissertation

The content of the dissertation is in accordance with the set tasks and is presented in the following sequence:

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One. Theoretical foundations of market positioning of a wine tourism destination

- 1.1 Concept of tourist destination for wine tourism
 - 1.1.1 Definitions of wine tourism
 - 1.1.2 Development of wine tourism
 - 1.1.3 Motivation of the wine tourist
 - 1.1.4 Essence of wine tourism destination
- 1.2. Essence of market positioning
 - 1.2.1 The outbound tourism market as a prerequisite for positioning
 - 1.2.2 Definition of market positioning
 - 1.2.3 Strategies for market positioning
- 1.3. Methodology of wine tourism destination positioning
 - 1.3.1 Conceptual model for market positioning
 - 1.3.2 Methodology and research instruments of the study

Chapter Two. Analysis of the position of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination

- 2.1. Characteristics of the wine tourism market
 - 2.1.1 Development of wine production and wine tourism worldwide
 - 2.1.2 Development of wine production and wine tourism in Bulgaria
- 2.2. Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination
 - 2.2.1 General characteristics of Pazardzhik region as a tourist destination
 - 2.2.2 Wine tourism supply in Pazardzhik region
- 2.3. Assessment of the competitive position of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination
 - 2.3.1. Competitors and partners of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination
 - 2.3.2 Strengths and weaknesses of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination

Chapter Three. Guidelines for the positioning of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination

- 3.1. Target market segments for wine tourism
- 3.2. Good practices in market positioning of a wine tourism destination

3.3. Strategic marketing mix for market positioning of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination

Conclusion

Reference

Applications

III. BRIEF PRESENTATION OF THE DISSERTATION PAPER

CHAPTER ONE

Theoretical foundations of market positioning of a wine tourism destination

In § 1.1. **Concept of wine tourism destination** - according to the aim set in the thesis, the theoretical aspects of wine tourism destination are discussed.

In paragraph 1.1.1 we make a comparative analysis of the definitions of wine tourism and systematize their essential emphases.

Wine tourism is associated with enology / from Greek oinos - wine /, a science that studies wine from planting the vine to bottling and consumption. The concept of 'wine tourism' encompasses a set of integrative links between wine and human existence, morality and culture, science, literature and art. After reviewing the literature, we can conclude that researchers define wine tourism in many different ways. Summarizing the most frequently cited definitions, we can systematize the motivational emphases contained in them for practicing wine tourism as follows in Table 1.

Table 1 Definitions of wine tourism

Main motive	Author
Visiting vineyards	O'Neill, Palmer, Charters & Fitz, 2001,
Tasting of a tangible product- wine	O'Neill, Palmer & Charters , 2002
Visiting wineries	Hall & Macionis, 1998; Macionis, 1996
As an accompanying motivation	Jago, Issaverdis & Graham (2000)
Travelling with special interest	Donald Getz, 2000; Yordanka Aleksieva, Stamen Stamov, Marinov;
Cultural experience	Cohen & Ben-Nun (2009)
Experimental tourism	Dowling 1998: 78; Saayman & van der Merwe, 2014
Attractions of the area - heritage, landscape and wine production	Carmichael, 2005

Source: Table compiled by the author

In summary, the conclusion is that despite the lack of a generally accepted uniform definition of wine tourism, its essence lies in the provision of a wide range of pleasures during a holiday and the skilful combination of a visit to a winery or wine region with the accumulation of experience through complementary cultural events and viewing of natural features, which in turn contributes to a unique experience.

Next, an overview of wine tourism (§ 1.1.2.) is given, where the emergence of the first wine, the main areas of viticulture and winemaking in the ancient world, and the development of winemaking in Western Europe are discussed, and the differences and specificities of its practice in Europe and America are considered. Our conclusion

after this review is that despite the existence of essential prerequisites for a very good position on the international and domestic tourism market, wine tourism in many destinations needs a pragmatic marketing strategy through which to develop and position itself as a competitive and sustainable specialized type of tourism.

The motivators of the wine tourist are discussed in *sub-paragraph 1.1.3* Identifying 'push' factors as the various psychological or social motivations that support the desire to visit a place and 'pull' factors (or what are called various external factors) that are related to the attractions of a destination and may influence the decision to travel. Classifications of wine tourists according to different attributes are presented. Depending on their previous experience and knowledge with wine, they are grouped into: "Wine Lovers" (comprehensive knowledge of wine); "Wine Interested" (likely to have attended a wine tasting prior to their visit to the winery, but unlikely to have had any other previous experience or knowledge of wine); and "Curious Tourists" (or "Wine notice " - tourists who have visited the winery, but this was their only such experience and therefore their motivation is less focused on wine-related purchases).

Emphasis is placed on the importance of the main elements that make the wine tourism product attractive: attractiveness of the wineries (architecture, quality and variety of wines offered), attractiveness of the destination as a whole (image, natural and cultural attractions, etc.), educational and recreational activities during the trip and stay.

Summarizing the contributions of different researchers on the motivation and typology of wine tourists, we can conclude that, in general, the motives of wine tourists can be distinguished into "primary" (wine tasting and purchase) and "secondary" (socializing, wine study, entertainment, immersion in a rural environment, relaxation, etc.). In general, tourists' motivation focuses on experiencing activities related to viticulture and winemaking in unique wine regions.

In *sub-paragraph 1.1.4* we examine the nature of the wine tourism destination, which as an element of the tourism system has a rich content and a complex structure.

After analyzing and comparing different definitions, we come to the conclusion that the presence of all resource components in a place is a necessary but not sufficient condition for it to be a wine tourism destination. A wine destination is shaped in the context of regional development, which depends on the coordinating role and support of the state, the actions of the tourism sector and other actors in wine tourism. A number of conditions are necessary for the normal functioning of a tourist region as a wine destination. These are not limited to investment in the region's wine industry - the availability of sufficient vineyards, wine production and wineries. It is also necessary to develop and offer facilities for wine tourism - wine tasting rooms, restaurants, accommodation, halls and entertainment venues.

The conclusion we reach is that wine regions cannot be automatically transformed into "wine tourism destinations". To successfully develop a wine region as a wine tourism destination requires quality natural and anthropogenic tourism resources, significant investment in the wine industry, time and effort on the part of the public and private sectors in the tourism destination.

Starting from the literature review, we can define a wine tourism destination as a physical space with or without administrative and/or analytical boundaries, where tourists stay for the purpose of visiting vineyards and wineries, tasting wines,

consuming or buying wine. A wine tourism destination is a cluster (co-location) of products, services, activities and experiences along the value chain of wine production and involves different stakeholders and can be networked to form larger wine tourism destinations covering shorter or longer wine routes.

We interpret the winery, the wine routes, the wine landscape and the basic and complementary services as the main elements of a wine tourism destination that lead to an improvement of the perceived benefits and values of wine tourism.

The dimensions of the wine landscape prioritized from the perspective of the wine tourist relate to: (1) wine and wine products, (2) vineyards and wineries, (3) connectivity to nature - environmental factors, (4) signage and layout information, (6) service staff and locals, (7) heritage towns, (8) entertainment activities. The wine landscape is the main driver of motivation for the hedonic experience of wine tourists when visiting and staying in a wine tourism destination.

From the literature review, we conclude that a wine destination should develop according to the requirements of the tourists and, if possible, be able to transfer the expectations of visitors into unique experiences. Therefore, it is essential that the attributes of a wine destination are subordinate to the main wine product - wine, which has a greater importance than any other type of good and service or destination characteristic when considered in the context of choices and decisions about visiting a wine tourism destination.

In *paragraph 1.2* Essence of market positioning we make a comparative analysis of the definitions of positioning. Positioning is concerned with clarifying the nature and specifics of the issue market and systematizing strategies for doing so. Based on the literature review in *sub-paragraph 1.2.1*, we define the outbound market as "*the area of the country where outward-oriented tourism demand originates and prevails*". The conclusion is that, from a marketing point of view, knowledge of the more important characteristics of the outbound markets related to tourists' preferences is a prerequisite for the correct positioning of specific destinations. Indicators such as:

- the number of trips abroad;
- the volume of expenditure on trips abroad;
- structure of trips by purpose (destinations);
- structure of trips by motives - the motives of the trip such as culture and education, active sport, rest, stress relief, etc. are linked to the preferred type of holiday organisation, which often varies from country to country;
- average duration of the tourist trip;
- frequency of participation in tourist trips;
- structure of journeys by mode of transport;
- structure of trips by type of accommodation;
- average costs per trip;

These indicators enable the tourism business to make an assessment of the purchasing power of tourists, respectively the acceptable level of prices, the quality and complexity of the services used, as well as the quantity of these services, directly related to the time of stay in a particular tourist site or tourist place.

Examining the work of a number of authors in *sub-paragraph 1.2.2*, we conclude that market positioning involves three interrelated components:

First, target segments.

Second, main competitors.

Third, distinctive or competitive advantage.

Successful positioning is that which clearly differentiates a tourism destination from its competing destinations through features that are considered important by consumers in the relevant market segment.

The destination must have a clear and favourable outlined position. Therefore successful positioning is the result of 3 factors:

- tourists' expectations;
- image of the competitors;
- nature of the destination;

A well-positioned destination should match the benefits that consumers are looking for. This is an important prerequisite for creating a valuable tourist experience in a tourist destination.

Due to the rapidly growing number of tourist destinations on the market, it is important for a wine tourism destination to find the right strategy which will help it to create a distinctive place in the minds of potential tourists. In *sub-paragraph 1.2.3* we look at the types of market positioning strategies that can help a wine tourism destination outlined from its competitors. The conclusion after the literature review is that creating successful market positioning strategies for a tourist destination is a complex managerial process of analysis and planning taking into account the status and impacts of all factors of the internal and external environment of the tourist place. A successful strategy is the key to overcoming competition and creating customer loyalty to the destination.

In the following *paragraph 1.3. Methodology for the positioning of a wine tourism destination*, a conceptual model for market positioning is presented (§1.3.1), with a retrospective of wine destination models.

On the basis of the collective consideration of the already derived theoretical positioning and the above models of wine tourism and given the scientific goal and objectives set in the dissertation, we propose a model based on the theoretical basis for marketing analysis and evaluation of the market position of the destination and the opportunities for its positioning. The model presents integratively the components of a tourist destination through the prism of the marketing mix concept, locked in the framework of consumer expectations and tourist motives. To explore the tourists' experiences, the model analyses the key factors according to their strategic contributions to position the wine tourism destination in the mind of wine tourists.

The central part of the model is the wine tourist and his motives. They are directly related both to the complex tourist product of the wine destination with its main content elements: wine cellar, wine landscape (terroir) and to the total tourist product of the wine destination, where the elements of the tourist offer are included, such as accommodation, catering, accessibility, additional services and entertainment and events. The total tourism product of the wine destination is linked to the other elements of the marketing mix - price per stay, distribution and communication.

The marketing mix of the wine destination as a market positioning tool is formed under the favourable and unfavourable influences of the content elements of the internal environment of the destination such as: tourist demand, social environment, suppliers and competition, as well as under the influence of external economic, technological, socio-cultural and environmental factors.

In *sub-paragarph 1.3.2. Methodology and research instruments of the study*, we assert for the choice of primary data collection methods to operationalise the systematised model for market positioning of a wine tourism destination. Primary data collection was carried out through three main methods: semi-structured in-depth interviews, focus groups and surveys.

For the purposes of this study, we propose the use of two surveys.

The first is designed for consumers and the second for winery owners. In order to collect a variety of data, the survey includes a combination of question types. The questionnaire contains two types of 'closed questions': in the case of the consumer surveys, these are questions relating to the demographic characteristics and personal preferences of the respondents and questions relating to the consumer's assessment of the factors and attributes that influence the positioning of the wine destination. In the case of winery owner surveys, these are questions related to the specific characteristics of the winery and questions related to the opportunities and issues of its positioning.

Assessment is done on a 5-point Likert scale, with users and owners rating the importance of each indicator with (1 = strongly agree; 2- rather agree; 3- neither agree nor disagree, 4 rather not agree; 5 - strongly disagree). Five-point scales were primarily used to assess the occurrence of a given attribute, as well as to express agreement/disagreement with a statement. In our opinion, five-grade scales are appropriate due to their easier perception by respondents and at the same time providing sufficient information for the study. In some of the questions, a ranking scale is used where respondents are asked to rank different factors in order of importance, in which case a limitation on the number of responses is imposed for comparability and reliability in processing.

In the case of consumers, the survey is structured in the following main sections: questions relating to the reasons for choosing a destination; questions relating to the evaluation of the main product of the wine destination and, in particular, the evaluation of the wineries in relation to their main indicators, the evaluation of the wine routes in the destination in relation to their main indicators and questions to evaluate the wine terroir in the destination in relation to its main indicators; questions related to the evaluation of the complex tourism product in terms of transport accessibility, quality of accommodation and catering facilities, opportunities for practicing other types of tourism and the availability and variety of additional services; questions related to the evaluation of the experience in the wineries in the destination; questions related to the evaluation of the quality-price ratio in the destination on the main elements of the complex tourism product; questions related to the satisfaction of consumers and the fulfillment of their preliminary expectations regarding the content elements of the complex tourist product; questions related to the evaluation of the information presence of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for wine tourism and questions related to its attitude for further recommendation of the destination.

For winery owners, the survey is structured in the following main sections: questions related to the winery's partnerships with other wineries in the region; questions related to the winery's partnerships with other wineries outside the region; questions related to the need for partnerships with other wineries in the region and beyond; questions related to the evaluation of the interaction between wine tourism companies and industry organizations regarding key elements affecting the competitiveness and positioning of the winery; issues related to the problems faced by

the winery in the implementation of wine tourism; issues related to the degree of use of information channels to promote its tourism services; questions related to assessing the contribution of the state and municipalities in the destination to the development of wine tourism in the area by main indicators; questions related to assessing the cooperation between businesses, states, municipalities and non-governmental organizations on the development of wine tourism in the destination by main areas.

Based on the literature review on wine destination positioning, all indicators and criteria used in previous studies are recorded and grouped as "motives and attributes". Following the interviews and focus group sessions, the results have been grouped to compile a more complete set of indicators and criteria for successful wine tourism destination positioning. The factors and attributes for wine tourism destination positioning are grouped into two main groups: factors and attributes focused on the core wine product and factors and attributes focused on the complex tourism product that would influence the destination image and tourists' motivation in choosing it.

The planned study design identifies the statistical analyses that are appropriate for its conduct, guiding the choice of procedures to test the research hypotheses. After primary data collection, it is necessary to verify that the constructed scales are sufficiently reliable and valid for the collected sample. This involves evaluating the questions through correlation and factor analysis, calculating the reliability and validity of the scales, and assessing the need to optimize the number of questions in the scales so that they are able to ascertain the value of variables not directly observable.

The initial analysis of the questions is based on a correlation analysis in order to identify which questions are appropriate for the construction of the measurement scales and which should not be included. The reliability and internal consistency of the items that make up the scales are demonstrated based on information about the values of Cronbach's coefficient alpha α . The results thus obtained on the usefulness of the questions are complemented by conducting a factor analysis, which confirms the number of scales and the distribution of the variables in them.

In conclusion, we can say that the methodological toolkit which is developed, summarizes the strengths of previous theoretical and practical work on the problem, taking into account the region-specific prerequisites of the studied phenomenon, and provides a starting point for future systematic and complex studies in this area.

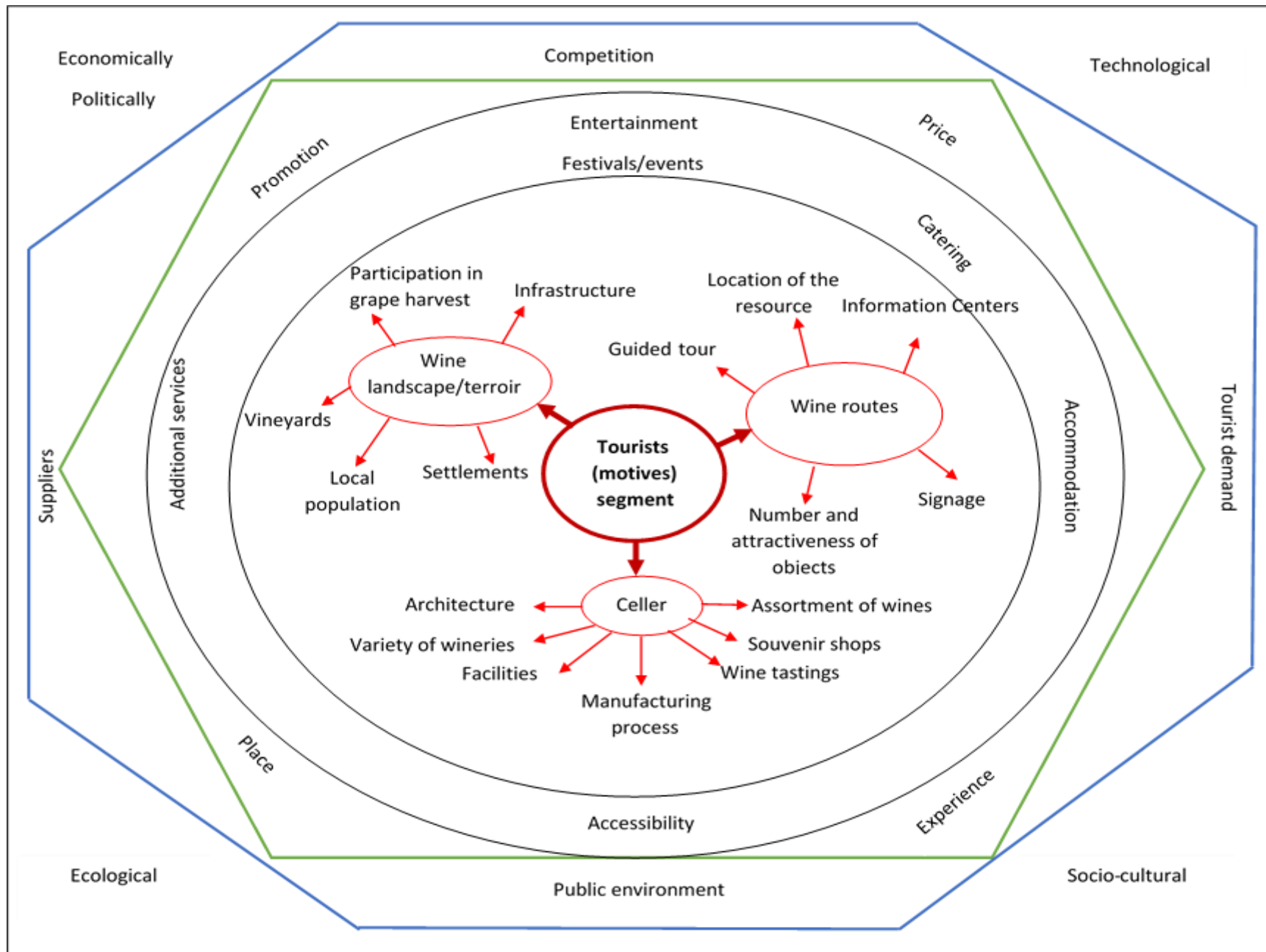


Figure 1 Conceptual model of the study

Source: Composed by the author

CHAPTER TWO

Analysis of the position of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination

Chapter two analyses the position of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination. As a prerequisite for the analysis, we characterise the state of the wine tourism market by making a retrospective and analysis of the development of wine production and wine tourism worldwide (*sub-paragraph 2.1.1*).

The conclusion we come to is that wine tourism as a separate sub-sector of the tourism industry is constantly evolving and changing in terms of its structure. The new market trends, as well as the experience gained by wine producers in the implementation of wine tourism development projects, contribute to the more dynamic nature of modern enotourism compared to its initial stage of development. Wine tourism meets the needs of modern man for a short getaway - detachment from the daily rhythm of urban life, contact with nature, acquaintance with the cultural characteristics of each region, entertainment and recreation in areas with preserved appearance, unaffected by the negative effects of mass tourism.

In *sub-paragraph 2.1.2* we examine the development of wine production and wine tourism in Bulgaria. The restructuring of the wine sector is one of the most important and long-term objectives set out in the "National Strategy for the Development of Viticulture and Wine in the Republic of Bulgaria 2005-2025".

The zoning of the Bulgarian wine sector is an important prerequisite for the development of modern viticulture and for increasing the efficiency of production and marketing of production. On the basis of the varied terroir resulting from the climate, the soils, the topography and, of course, the traditions and customs of the different parts of the country, there are five official wine-growing regions in Bulgaria, which have almost identical characteristics. They are the Northern, Southern, Eastern, Western and Sub-Balkan regions.

First steps in wine tourism in Bulgaria were made in the 1990s. Today there are more than 260 private wineries in Bulgaria and the number is constantly growing. Almost all wineries in the country offer tastings and have specially equipped premises for this purpose. The opportunity to stay overnight in a winery is another element of the wine tourism product that can be a source of competitive advantage and a significant number of wineries around the world are taking advantage of this. However, in contrast to global trends, the number of wineries offering overnight stays in Bulgaria is much smaller. Another important element of the wine tourism product is the opportunity to pair wine with food. In Bulgaria, however, the offer of wine tourism packages is still limited both in terms of volume and variety. The analysis of the data leads to the conclusion that the development trends of wine tourism in Bulgaria coincide with those of most of the wine producing countries in the world and our country provides a number of opportunities for practicing wine tourism. However, despite the conditions and the potential of our country, they are still not used to the necessary extent.

In *paragraph 2.2* we examine Pazardzhik region as a destination for wine tourism, first making a general description of Pazardzhik as a tourist destination. After a brief overview of the municipalities, we present an analysis of the dynamics of the number of accommodation places and beds in the period 2016-2021. We also analyse the data by the accommodation category. In contrast to the general trend in the country, where overnight stays of foreigners prevail, especially pronounced in our

seaside resorts, in Pazardzhik region they occupy no more than 10%. In summing up the analysis of the potential of Pazardzhik region as a tourist destination, it can be concluded that the opportunities that the district has as natural resources are not used to the necessary extent. The analysis of the tourist product of the district of Pazardzhik shows that there are real conditions for the development of ecological, sports, adventure and hunting tourism. In Pazardzhik region there are real conditions for the development of so-called rural tourism. Attractive villages in ecologically clean areas, rich and original cuisine, wine production and traditional crafts are the main prerequisites for this. The development of this type of tourism will have an economic, social and environmental effect on the development of the villages in the Pazardzhik region.

After the detailed analysis of the characteristics of the Pazardzhik region as a tourist destination, in *sub-paragraph 2.2.2* we examine the supply of wine tourism in the Pazardzhik region through the wineries in the region, and together with this we analyse the specific features of the terroir of the Southern wine-growing region.

In *paragraph 2.3. Assessment of the competitive position of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination*, we analyze the competitors and partners of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination. (*sub-paragraph 2.3.1.*). As competitors and partners of the wineries in the Pazardzhik region as a destination for wine tourism we take the wineries of the Southern wine-growing region - Thracian Lowland, of which the Pazardzhik region is a part. Wineries in the neighbouring districts of Pazardzhik should be considered as competitors, which are likely to divert visitors away from the studied destination. On the other hand, in a broader perspective, the wineries in the neighbouring districts of Pazardzhik should be perceived as partners for creating common wine tours and routes. The conclusion we come to is that for greater visibility, both in the domestic and inter-national wine tourism market, it is more appropriate to seek cooperation rather than competition with these wineries. To achieve greater competitiveness and popularity of wine tourism, the Pazardzhik region should work towards uniting the forces of wineries throughout the wine region and positioning them with a collaborative tourism product.

Next are the results of the empirical study, from which the **strengths and weaknesses** of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination are derived (2.3.2.). For the successful implementation of the study and to obtain relevant results, two surveys were conducted: one for the owners of wineries in the Pazardzhik region and one for the visitors-consumers of these wineries. The empirical study was conducted between January and July 2022. Initially 200 questionnaires were distributed to consumers and all 50 wineries in the territory of Pazardzhik region were contacted. After completion of the survey, it was found that the questionnaires of 106 consumers and 50 wineries could be used for analysis purposes. We chose a questionnaire as the instrument for collecting information so that the information obtained could be fully processed using quantitative methods. The main argument for our choice was to obtain comparable quantitative data that allow the use of statistical software in their processing (SPSS 16.0).

The results of the empirical study allow us to draw the following conclusions regarding the empirical hypotheses formulated in the research work in *sub-paragraph 2.3.2.*

The *first hypothesis* - the assumption that Pazardzhik region is not present with an original marketing mix on the wine tourism market, is partially proved by the methods of descriptive statistics - arithmetic mean and standard deviation. It is not confirmed only in terms of the product.

The *second hypothesis* is confirmed that there is a difference between the choice of wine tourism motive among different age groups.

In the *third hypothesis*, that representatives of the wine industry and other stakeholders in the Pazardzhik region have an attitude for partnerships between wineries in the Pazardzhik region and beyond, in both questions the results show an attitude for partnership among stakeholders.

As a summary of *sub-paragraph 2.3.2*, the data from the analysis give us reason to claim that Pazardzhik region offers a quality tourism product in terms of wine tourism and has a well-established tourism superstructure in terms of accommodation and restaurants. However, the poorly developed transport infrastructure hinders access to the Pazardzhik region and the supply of its tourism product. As a barrier to the successful positioning of Pazardzhik as a wine tourism destination we can also consider the poorly developed distribution system and the insufficient use of information and advertising sources.

CHAPTER THREE

Guidelines for the positioning of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination

As a summary of the theoretical review and the analysis of the empirical results, the third chapter outlines the possibilities for market positioning of a wine tourism destination on the example of Pazardzhik region. For this purpose, the target market segments for wine tourism are discussed in *paragraph 3.1*. After the last two years, which have been extremely crucial for the entire tourism sector and thus for wine tourism, with the restrictions linked to the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent economic crisis, the dynamics of consumption are changing: today's traveller is more demanding, more active, paying particular attention to safety and sustainability. Interest in wine and food when travelling is growing, expanding to new modalities and experiences that are more immersive, innovative and environmentally friendly.

Recent trends in wine tourism reflect general trends in the tourism industry at a global level. Special events, small boutique wineries away from the traditional, organic products, diversification in the mode of transport (by bike, by train, by helicopter) are among the latest trends in wine tourism.

Consumers are becoming more educated and more demanding and only make purchasing decisions after gathering all the information about the destination. The consumer should have easy access to product information. That is why a price list is a requirement. The increase in online information allows users to quickly check all data and compare products. Transparency also applies to tracking, as well as transport and storage information.

Paragraph 3.2 outlines good practices in the market positioning of a wine tourism destination.

Among the best practices to be implemented in wine tourism is sustainability. It is a wonderful and thoughtful way to grow wine, harvest and produce while respecting the codes of nature and respecting the environment.

Another important practice implemented by wineries in wine tourism is to provoke the educational interest of tourists and make them familiar with the processes of growing, winemaking and wine storage, along with the etiquette of wine consumption. This approach is called 'farm to table' and is particularly important for effective and attractive offers.

Consumption and demand for organic products, including organic wine, is growing. An important trend in organic viticulture is, in addition to the production of organic products, the concern for environmental protection. The advantages of organic wine are learned by consumers not only when they consume it, but also on site, among the vines, where the link between the quality and the origin of the product can be seen.

In order to increase the competitiveness of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination, cooperation and collaboration in the sector is recommended. Cooperation between wine and culinary, wine and tourism organisations, winemakers and cultural institutions.

The last *paragraph 3.3.* presents the strategic marketing mix for market positioning of Pazardzhik as a wine tourism destination. A prerequisite for successful wine tourism destination marketing is understanding the nature of wine tourists and their needs.

At the core of the wine tourism product is the wine itself. Given the complex nature of the wine product itself and the market for wine, plus the fact that research has relatively recently begun to reveal wine consumer behavior, it is no surprise that the wine tourism product is one of the most difficult consumer products to market (Hall & Mitchell, 2008).

Based on the analysis of the data from the surveys, it can be summarized that the wineries in Pazardzhik region have good company facilities, but in terms of services inside and outside the enterprise there are weak points that need to be improved in the future. It is recommended that winery managers take into account new consumer and production trends and strive to add value to the wine tourism product. The addition can be achieved through innovation, product specialisation and tailoring to new consumer tastes.

Apart from wine as a product, which is the basis of wine tourism, by its nature and uniqueness, the main tourist attraction of a wine destination are the wine cellars. The wineries are the attraction around which a whole series of elements are arranged that are difficult to find in other regions.

To be competitive, a wine tourism destination should put wine at the centre of its offer, but at the same time should offer an active stay within a specific natural, cultural and economic environment.

The price of the wine tourism product should give visitors the feeling that they are getting an experience in the destination that they could not purchase elsewhere.

In summary, the conclusion is that wine enterprises and their opportunities for wine tourism have great potential for the sustainable socio-economic development of the Pazardzhik region. It is necessary to diversify the activities of the wineries, which, in addition to the production and sale of wine, should develop wine tourism in its full range of services and entertainment.

Conclusion

The conclusion summarizes the analyses and findings on the opportunities for positioning a wine tourism destination. The theoretical and practical guidelines for the positioning of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination are systematized.

The implementation of the shared ideas for the improvement of the positioning of the Pazardzhik region as a destination for sustainable wine tourism has its favorable environment based on the declared willingness and readiness of all stakeholders in the destination for partnership.

Literature:

1. Alexieva, C. (2009). Wine cellars as tourist sites - mpu steps towards their transformation into a marketable tourist product. // Wine tourism- traditions and modernity, Varna, Slavena, pp. 53-59
2. Marinov, S. (2009) Development of wine tourism in Bulgaria - myths and realities. Wine Tourism: Tradition and Modernity : [Second] Black Sea Tourism Forum, Varna 2009, Varna : Slavena, 2009, 180 - 187
3. Marinov, S., B. Koprinarov. (2010) Alternative Tourism. Burgas : Diamond, 2010
4. Marinov, S. (2015). Menidzhmant na turisticheska destinatsia, Nauka i ikonomika – Varna.
5. Marinov, S. (2020). Development of the tourist destination product. Tourism, education, business : Proceedings of a scientific conference organized by the College of Tourism - Burgas, 24 - 25 September 2020, Burgas : Prof. Assen Zlatarov University - Burgas, 21 - 27
6. Marinov, S. (2021) Modern types of tourism. - Varna : Univ. ed. Science and Economics
7. Stamov, S., Alexieva, J., (2004). Specialized types of tourism. - Stara Zagora : Kota AD, ISBN:9543050791
8. Alant, K. and Bruwer, J. (2009), The hedonic nature of wine tourism consumption: An experiential view, International Journal of Wine Business Research 21(3):235-257
9. Asero, V., Patti, S., (2011). Developing the Tourist Market through theExploitation of the Typical Products. In: The Annals of “Dun área de Jos”University of Galati, Fascicle I/2009, Year XV: 5-14.
10. Bieger, T. (2008). „Management von Destinationen.“ BWL Tourismus 8-2011. Lehr- und Handbücher zu Tourismus, Verkehr und Freizeit.
11. Carlsen J., Dowling R. (1998). Wine tourism marketing issues in Australia. International Journal of Wine Marketing, 10(3), 23-32.
12. Carmichael, B.A. (2005), “Understanding the wine tourism experience for winery visitors in the Niagara Region, Ontario, Canada”, Tourism Geographies, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 185-204.

13. Cohen E., Ben-Nun L. (2009). The important dimensions of wine tourism experience from potential visitors' perception. *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, 9(1), 20-31.
14. Dodd T. H. (1995). Opportunities and pitfalls of tourism in a developing wine industry. *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, 7(1), 5-16.
15. Getz D. (2000). *Explore wine tourism: Management, development and destinations*. New York, NY: Cognizant Communication Corporation.
16. Hooley, G., Saunders, J., Piercy, N. (2004). *Marketing strategy and competitive positioning*. Third Edition. Prentice Hall.
17. Hudson, S., Ritchie, B., Timur, S. (2004). "Measuring Destination Competitiveness: An Empirical Study of Canadian Ski Resorts." *Tourism and Hospitality Planning & Development*, 1 (1): 79-94. Google Scholar
18. Jago L. K., Issaverdis J.-P. (2000). Building cellar door business through accreditation: Victoria's perspective. *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, 13(3), 13-31.
19. Macionis N. (1998). Wine and food tourism in the Australian capital territory: Exploring the links. *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, 10(3), 5-22.
20. Macionis N., (1996.) *Wine tourism around the world: Development, management and markets* (pp. 196-225). Oxford: Butterworth Heinemann
21. Mitchell R., Hall C. M. (2004). The post-visit consumer behaviour of New Zealand winery visitors. *Journal of Wine Research*, 15(1), 39-49.
22. O'Neill M., Palmer A., Charters S. (2002). Wine production as a service experience: The effects of service quality on wine sales. *Journal of Services Marketing*, 16, 342-362.
23. Ritchie, JRB & Crouch, GI. (2000). *The Competitive Destination: A Sustainable Tourism Perspective*. *Tourism Management*. 21. 1-7. 10.1079/9780851996646.0000.
24. Saayman, M. and Merwe, A. (2015), "Factors determining visitors' memorable wine-tasting experience at wineries", *Anatolia*, Vol. 26 No. 3, pp. 372-383.
25. The Australian National Wine Tourism Strategy <https://tourism.sa.gov.au/media/bg5ljup2/south-australian-international-wine-tourism-strategy.pdf> (accessed on 10.12.2021)
26. The South Australian Tourism Commission (1997)
27. Tourism Research Australia (2014) *Food And Wine Tourism In Western Australia* (summary), retrieved from http://www.tra.gov.au/documents/srr/Food_and_Wine_Tourism_in_Western_Australia_11062014.pdf (accessed on 10.12.2022)
28. World Tourism Organization (2019), UNWTO Tourism Definitions, UNWTO, Madrid, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18111/9789284420858>. (accessed on 10.05.2022)
29. <https://drprem.com/travel/wine-tourism-guide/> (accessed on 10.05.2022)
30. <https://focusonwomen.es/home.php> (accessed on 10.05.2022)

31. <https://www.transgourme.eu/images/joomlart/0.1%20Study%20of%20destinations%20for%20gourmet%20and%20wine%20tourism%20in%20Bulgaria-bg-1.pdf> (accessed on 15.09.2022)
32. <https://winetours.bg/villa-melnik-best-vineyards/> (accessed on 15.09.2022)
33. <https://winetourmaker.com/wine-tourism-in-bulgaria-touoperators/>
34. <http://bulgarianwines.org/>
35. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/wine-producing-countries>
36. <https://vinsdumonde.blog/en/the-dynamics-of-world-wine-tourism/>
37. <https://www.bkwine.com/features/more/global-wine-production-2020>
38. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/892901/leading-enotourism-countries-worldwide/>
39. <http://www.bessavalley.com/index>
40. <http://www.todoroff-wines.com>
41. <http://www.villavinifera.com/bg.html>
42. <http://www.pulden.com/>
43. <https://infostat.nsi.bg/>

IV. REFERENCES FOR THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE DISSERTATION

As a result of the research work carried out on the dissertation, the following more important scientific and applied-scientific contributions can be highlighted:

First, the specific concepts of wine tourism is built up and the theoretical aspects of the market positioning of a wine tourism destination are systematized.

Second, an author's conceptual model for market positioning of a wine tourism destination is developed and a methodological instrument for studying the market positions of a wine tourism destination is proposed.

Thirdly, the conceptual model was validated by conducting our own research (quantitative and qualitative) on the market position of Pazardzhik region as a wine tourism destination. The strengths and weaknesses of the wine destination in a marketing context are highlighted.

Fourthly, opportunities and guidelines for competitive positioning of Pazardzhik region as a destination for sustainable wine tourism are outlined. The main proposals are related to: maintaining the high quality of the tourist wine product in terms of the wines on offer, accommodation and catering facilities; improving the transport infrastructure to facilitate access to the wineries in the Pazardzhik region; developing the distribution network.

V. LIST OF PUBLICATIONS ON THE DISSERTATION TOPIC

COLLECTIVE CHAPTER FROM A MONOGRAPH

1. Markov, Y., Tourists' Motives for Wine Tourism (§2.2), pp. 46-66 and Destination Profile for Wine Tourism (§2.3) with Dr. Galina Ilieva, pp. 66-92 of Chapter 2 PROFILE OF TOURISTS AND DESTINATIONS FOR WINE TOURISM. In. Monitoring the sustainable development of wine tourism in the Southeastern

planning region of level 2 of Bulgaria. Burgas : FLAT, 2021, 172 p., ISBN (in print) 978-619-7125-82-51

ARTICLES

1. Ilieva, G., Markov, Y., Factors for Development of a Wine Tourism Destination. *Izvestia Journal of the Union of Scientists - Varna. Economic Sciences Series*, Varna: Union of Scientists - Varna, vol.10, №2, 2021, p.52-60, ISSN(печатно) 1314-7390, ISSN(онлайн) 2603-4085 /

2. Ilieva, G., Markov, Y., Winemaking and wine tourism-history, present and future. *Agrarian University - Plovdiv, Scientific Works*, vol. LXIV, no. 2, 2022. National Round Table "Sustainable Wine Tourism in the Context of the Green Deal" *Agricultural University - Plovdiv, Scientific Works*, vol. LXIV, book 2, 2022 National Round Table "Sustainable Wine Tourism in the Context of the Green Deal", pp. 110-119, ISSN 1312-6318, DOI: 10.22620/sciworks.2022.02.011,

REPORTS

1. Markov, Y., Motivation of tourists for wine tourism. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference "Tourism. Education. Business"*, organized by College of Tourism - Burgas, 29-30 October 2021, Burgas. University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov", pp. 173-182, ISSN 2738-893X

2. Markov, Y., Conceptual model for positioning a wine tourism destination. In. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 12 May 2022, pp. 918-927, University of Veliko Tarnovo "St. St.. The conference was held in St. Cyril and Methodius Cathedral, Veliko Tarnovo. Sofia. *Avangard Prima 2022*, ISBN 978-619-239-710-4.

3. Ilieva, G., Markov, Y., Marketing strategies for increasing the competitiveness of a wine tourism destination. In. *Proceedings of a scientific round table*, 30.06.2022 - 04.07.2022, Kirkovo - Alexandroupolis, Shumen : Univ. ed. Ep. Konstantin Preslavsky, 2022, pp. 21-45., ISBN(in print) 978-619-201-589-3

4. Markov, Y., Development of wine production and wine tourism. *Collection of reports from the international scientific conference "Tourism. Education. Business"*, organized by the College of Tourism - Burgas, 07-08 October 2022, Burgas. University "Prof. Dr. Asen Zlatarov", pp. 100-107, ISSN 2738-893X