

## WINE TOURISM IN THE SHERRY REGION: AN ANALYSIS FROM THE SUPPLIERS' PERSPECTIVE

*Juan Rodríguez García (\*)*, *Tomás López-Guzmán (\*\*)*, *Sandra María  
Cañizarez Ruiz (\*\*)* and *Mercedes Jiménez García (\*)*

(\*) Universidad de Cádiz

(\*\*) Universidad de Córdoba

### INTRODUCTION

Tourism is subject to constant changes. Nowadays, it aims to meet the needs of increasingly demanding tourists who are in search of more active experiences. Thus, among other changes noted, tourists now prefer to holiday at all times of year and for shorter periods of time. They are better informed about their chosen destination as a tourism product (through internet research) and they demand new kinds of tourism resources. Due to this trend, thematic tourism, which puts the spotlight on elements linked to the recovery of the cultural, social and environmental heritage of different areas, has increased. Therefore, in the last few years, resources have been dedicated to everything related to gastronomy and wine (or, in short, with culture), with these being seen as a reflection of the area's particular identity. In this sense, wine and tourism, linked with local cuisine, appear to combine perfectly, allowing tourists to appreciate a distinct product and to get to know a different destination, therefore favouring the economic development of specific rural (and, occasionally, urban) areas, based on the concept of sustainable development. According to Stewart *et al.* (2008), the increasing importance of wine tourism suggests and promotes the idea that gastronomy, wine and, more concisely, culture can be and often are the main attractions leading tourists to visit a specific region and not necessarily a secondary or complementary attraction. In this sense, it is important to remember that wine reflects the cultural, social and patrimonial heritage of these towns or, in other words, the specific idiosyncrasies of their residents. This may lead to the more general definition of the supply of this kind of tourism as the «wine landscape» (Brunori and Rossi, 2000).

The aim of this paper is to carry out a study into the existing supply of wine tourism in Spain. In order to do this, an analysis has been carried out into the supply along an official Spanish wine route, the area known as the *Marco de Jerez* or Sherry Region.

## BACKGROUND

A tourist route is defined as the creation of a cluster of activities and attractions which encourage cooperation among different businesses in an area and which therefore serve to stimulate economic development through tourism (Briedenhann and Wickens, 2008). Once designed, a tourist route has to be marketed. The marketing of a tourist route is subject to a series of variables which encourage an adequate form of promotion. According to Fernández and Guzmán Ramos (2003), among these variables, the following can be highlighted: firstly, the tourist route must begin at a determined point in the area where the tourist can find all the elements necessary for their trip; secondly, the route must be designed taking into account the existence of road networks, allowing tourists to move from place to place in a suitable way; and finally, the route must be built upon the basis of a specific cultural element which distinguishes it from other similar routes or other routes which are geographically nearby.

Literature in this field documents wine routes in Australia (Alonso and Liu, 2010), Canada (Hashimoto and Telfer, 2003), Chile (Kunc, 2009), Hungary (Szivas, 1999), Italy (Montanari, 2009), New Zealand (Berveland, 1998), Portugal (Brás *et al.*, 2010) and South Africa (Bruwer and Alant, 2009). Nevertheless, although the majority of scientific literature in wine tourism originates from Australia and New Zealand, these countries have not entirely developed the concept of tourist routes. This is in contrast to what has happened in other, predominantly European countries, where there is a long tradition of the cultural tourist route.

Following on from Getz and Brown (2006), wine tourism can be defined simultaneously as a form of consumer behaviour, a strategy for regional development and local wine market development, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to sell their own products directly to the consumer. There are currently several lines of research open in the field of wine tourism. Therefore, with the aim of determining the current state of the issue, Mitchell and Hall (2006) have suggested that lines of research into wine tourism can be grouped into seven different categories: the wine tourism product; wine tourism and regional development; quantification of demand; wine tourist segments; behaviour of visitors; the nature of winery visits; and food safety and wine tourism.

A wine route is created by defining one or various itineraries in the selected area. These should be perfectly signposted with the various wineries and other places related to wine indicated, as well as providing further information on historical sites and other areas of interest (Hall *et al.*, 2000). Furthermore, these routes must encourage the economic, social and cultural development of the region, generally being based in a rural context, with the objective being that the tourist's experience is based around wine knowledge, appreciation and tasting. All of this should serve to increase the value of rural tourism in the region (Fávero and Antunes, 2007).

Furthermore, following on from Bruwer (2001), it is interesting to note that wine tourism is found in rural areas, thus leading to greater development of these areas. At the same time, wine tourism also favours small wineries, since lack of adequate product marketing channels can increase sales in the winery itself, while also improving the image of the destination, increasing the number of tourists and improving infrastructure (Tomljenovic and Getz, 2009).

Focusing on Spain, as a consequence of the initiative proposed by the Spanish Government's Ministry for Tourism in the year 2000, wine tourism has become widely accepted. The 'Comprehensive Plan for Quality in Spanish Tourism 2000-2006' included among its ten programmes one called «Tourism Product Quality», which aimed to work on the design, creation and development of the supply of tourism products, the objective of which was to diversify such products and break with the seasonal nature of tourism at that time in Spain. As a result of this programme, the product 'Wine Routes' was created in Spain. Nowadays, the official denomination 'Wine Routes of Spain' brings together a total of 22 routes, 13 of which are certified and 9 of which are in the process of certification.

## THE GEOGRAPHICAL AREA OF THE STUDY

The production area of the Denomination of Origin *Jerez-Xérès-Sherry*, *Manzanilla-Sanlúcar de Barrameda* and *Vinagre de Jerez* (Sherry Vinegar), better known as the *Marco de Jerez* or Sherry Region, stretches through eight municipalities in the Cadiz province and one in the Seville province, both located in Andalucía. One of the great strengths of wines from this region is the versatility and wealth of the types of Sherry wines, from the palest and driest (*Fino* and *Manzanilla*) to the darkest and sweetest (*Moscatel* and *Pedro Ximénez*), passing through a range of colours, aromas and flavours (*Amontillado*, *Oloroso*, *Médium*, *Palo Cortado*, *Pale Cream* and *Cream*). This means that there is a variety of Sherry for every kind of person, for every occasion and for every market. The wine and brandy routes of the Sherry region were certified as an official wine route in 2007. Through the cooperation of the various public administrations and with the support of private initiatives, the aim is make this project a means of achieving adequate socioeconomic development of tourism in the area. Therefore, among the medium term projects in place, some of the most important are the creation of a wine tourism product, route signposting, the coordination of different itineraries, the creation of an integrated information system and the conservation of the region's wine-growing tradition.

## METHODOLOGY

This research is based on fieldwork carried out with the help of suppliers along the wine route located in this region. A questionnaire was designed specifically for this study, with a total of 17 items arranged into three blocks. There were a total of 33 responses. The tabling and analysis of the results were carried out through the creation of a database using the statistical programme SPSS.

## RESULTS

The establishments which made up the sample of this study were mainly wineries (39.4%), followed by accommodation providers, companies offering complementary services and restaurants. In general, these companies were large in terms of employee numbers and their employees were mostly educated to secondary school level.

With regards to the number of tourists, the highest numbers were noted over the summer period, on public holidays or long weekends and over the Easter period. Conversely, the lowest number of tourists was recorded in winter. As regards to the place of origin of visitors, the majority of tourists are from other regions of Spain (not Andalucía), followed by those from abroad.

In the opinion of the businesses surveyed, the current state of tourism in the area is not good, and greater support from local government is needed in order to set up advertising campaigns and help to coordinate this tourism product.

## CONCLUSIONS

During the first few years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new products have been created in an attempt to respond to the concerns of increasingly informed, demanding and motivated tourists. Important components of these new products are the local customs of the destination, with its social and cultural elements, as well as gastronomy and, obviously, wine. In Spain, the creation and certification of official wine routes is a recent phenomenon - with some 22 routes currently in existence. Having put in place a set of requirements to ensure the adequate development of such routes, wine routes attempt to, among other things, bring about socioeconomic development of rural areas.

This paper has focused on the analysis of the supply along a specific wine route, the *Marco de Jerez* or Sherry Region. In this paper, a study has been presented based upon fieldwork carried out in this area, allowing a series of results to be obtained. These results highlight that employees in the region's tourism sector (including wineries) have a high level of training, tourists visiting the region come from places far away from the Sherry Region itself and the level of customer satisfaction is perceived to be very important.