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THE ROLE OF WINE TOURISM IN THE WINE DISTRIBUTION SYSTEM

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РОЛЬ ВИННОГО ТУРИЗМУ В СИСТЕМІ ДИСТРИБУЦІЇ ВИНА

The article confidently examines the essence of this category, providing a thorough and insightful analysis of wine tourism's role in modern wine distribution. This analysis is particularly crucial in the face of intensifying international competition and evolving consumer patterns. Recent research shows that, contrary to earlier views, wine tourism is no longer seen as an exclusive niche; it has evolved into a strategic sales channel, especially for small and medium-sized wine producers. The promotion of direct sales, the establishment of long-term relationships with customers, the popularization of local brands, and the expansion of sales markets are all key objectives of this initiative.

The international experience of wine tourism development is analyzed using case studies of France, Italy, the USA, Argentina, and Chile. The primary instruments of this endeavor are wine tastings, the exploration of designated wine routes, active participation in regional festivals, the culinary traditions of the local populace, and the implementation of digital marketing strategies. The text places particular emphasis on the importance of regional branding, as well as the establishment of partnerships among various entities, including wineries, tourism companies, and local authorities.

The potential of Ukraine's southern and western regions for wine tourism is significant, yet the full-scale war launched by Russia in 2022 has posed major challenges, including infrastructure damage, decreased tourist activity, security concerns, and economic instability. The article identifies key obstacles to the sector's development: poor logistics, limited marketing, the absence of a national strategy, and underdeveloped domestic tourism. To address these issues, it proposes forming wine clusters, fostering cross-sector collaboration, enhancing regulatory support, attracting investment, and embracing digitalization. Ultimately, wine tourism is seen as a vital contributor to the economic and cultural recovery of Ukraine's regions in the post-war era. In the long term, the integration of wine tourism into national and regional development strategies may strengthen rural economies and promote Ukraine's global image as a quality wine destination. Continued innovation, investment, and alignment with EU standards will be crucial to unlocking the sector's full potential.

У статті досліджено роль винного туризму як інноваційного та ефективного інструменту дистрибуції вина в умовах зростаючої глобальної конкуренції та змін у поведінці споживачів. Встановлено, що енотуризм, який ще донедавна вважався вузькоспеціалізованим видом туризму, нині трансформується у стратегічно важливий канал збуту, особливо для малих і середніх виноробних підприємств. Він сприяє прямим продажам, формуванню довготривалих зв'язків із клієнтами, популяризації локальних брендів та розширенню ринків збуту.

Проаналізовано міжнародний досвід розвитку енотуризму на прикладі Франції, Італії, США, Аргентини та Чилі. Виокремлено основні інструменти: дегустації, винні маршрути, участь у фестивалях, локальна гастрономія, цифровий маркетинг. Наголошено на важливості регіонального брендингу та партнерства між виноробнями, туристичними компаніями і місцевою владою.

Розглянуто потенціал України, зокрема південних і західних регіонів. У сучасних умовах повномасштабної війни, розпочатої росією у 2022 році, галузь зіткнулася з серйозними викликами: руйнування інфраструктури, зниження туристичної активності, ризики безпеки, економічна нестабільність. Водночас спостерігається стійкість окремих виноробень, які адаптуються до нових умов, приймають відвідувачів, розвивають онлайн-продажі та міжнародну співпрацю.

Потенціал південних і західних регіонів України для винного туризму є значним, проте повномасштабна війна, розпочата Росією у 2022 році, створила серйозні виклики, зокрема пошкодження інфраструктури, зниження туристичної активності, проблеми з безпекою та економічну нестабільність. У статті визначено основні перешкоди для розвитку галузі: погана логістика, обмежений маркетинг, відсутність національної стратегії та недорозвинений внутрішній туризм. Для вирішення цих проблем пропонується створити винні кластери, сприяти міжгалузевій співпраці, посилити регуляторну підтримку, залучити інвестиції та впровадити цифрові технології. Врешті-решт, винний туризм розглядається як важливий фактор економічного та культурного відновлення регіонів України в післявоєнний період.

Key words: wine distribution, wine tourism, consumer behavior, regional branding, post-war recovery.

Ключові слова: Винний туризм, дистрибуція вина, споживча поведінка, регіональний брендинг, післявоєнне відновлення.

GENERAL STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM AND ITS CONNECTION WITH IMPORTANT SCIENTIFIC OR PRACTICAL TASKS

In today's environment, the wine industry faces increased competition, dynamic changes in consumer demands, and the growing importance of emotional experience in product selection. Traditional sales channels no longer provide the necessary level of consumer engagement, especially in the premium segment, where buyers expect not only a high-quality product but also a deeper cultural immersion. In this context, the search for new, more flexible and effective ways to sell products, in particular through the Direct-to-Consumer (DTC) model, is becoming particularly relevant.

One promising area is the development of wine tourism as a multi-sector economic activity that combines DTC sales, hospitality, the creative economy and international marketing. The format of direct interaction with the end consumer not only allows producers to increase margins and strengthen their brand, but also creates added value through personalised experience and emotional engagement. Thus, research into models of integration of wine tourism and DTC sales has significant scientific and practical importance for the formation of modern sales strategies in the wine industry.

AN ANALYSIS OF SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE PUBLICATIONS

An increasing interest among researchers in the field of wine tourism, as evidenced by the publication of studies that address its impact on product distribution, consumer

behavior, and regional development. In particular, Chorna N. in her article, entitled "Wine Tourism in Ukraine: Potential and Development Trends," analyzes the cluster approach to the development of the industry, drawing on foreign experience and opportunities for its implementation in Ukraine. She underscores the necessity of collaborative endeavors among tour operators, winemakers, and local authorities to establish sustainable wine clusters and thereby foster the growth of tourism. Consequently, wine tourism has emerged as a pivotal element in the economic and cultural revitalization of regions in the post-war era. [1]. The work of Basyuk D. and Muzychka E. highlights the basic approaches to the development of wine tourism in Ukraine, with an emphasis on its recreational and economic potential. The authors define it as a new tool for activating local communities and as a form of cultural tourism [2]. The issue of consumer behaviour in the wine segment is analysed in detail in a study by Braiko M. and Golubonkova O., who investigate the factors influencing wine choice, including emotional experience, brand, region of origin and participation in tasting events. This confirms the importance of wine tourism as a channel of communication with the end consumer [3].

Ilchenko N. and Todoriuk O. in their joint work analyse the sparkling wine market in Ukraine, including the specifics of promotion and challenges in product positioning. The authors emphasise that for niche types of wine, wine tourism can be an effective distribution channel [4]. In their subsequent work, Todoriuk O. and Ilchenko N. consider an organised wine distribution system

in which wine tourism is viewed as part of a multi-component logistics chain that contributes to increasing customer loyalty and expanding the market [5]. The Ukraine Wine Market 2025 analytical report provides an overview of the current state of the industry and predicts a strengthening role for tourism as a direct sales channel, particularly for small producers who do not have access to large retail chains [6]. Szolnoki G. and Comp?s L?pez R. in their joint publication, they explore sustainable and innovative wine tourism practices around the world, focusing on successful regional models. The authors emphasize that wine tourism can be a driving force for rural development, sustainability, and brand strengthening, especially when based on local identity and innovation [7].

FORMULATION OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE ARTICLE (TASK STATEMENT)

The purpose of this article is to summarise theoretical approaches and practical experience regarding the role of wine tourism as an innovative channel in the wine distribution system, with an emphasis on its significance for the development of direct-to-consumer models. The objectives of the article are to analyse current trends in wine distribution in the context of changing consumer expectations, to determine the place and functions of wine tourism in the formation of the sales strategy of wine-producing enterprises, to explore the potential of wine tourism as a tool for forming an emotional connection with consumers, and to identify areas for integrating wine tourism with the DTC model to increase sales efficiency. The purpose of this article is to summarise theoretical approaches and practical experience regarding the role of wine tourism as an innovative channel in the wine distribution system, with an emphasis on its significance for the development of direct-to-consumer models. The objectives of the article are to analyse current trends in wine distribution in the context of changing consumer expectations, to determine the place and functions of wine tourism in the formation of the sales strategy of wine-producing enterprises, to explore the potential of wine tourism as a tool for forming an emotional connection with consumers, and to identify areas for integrating wine tourism with the DTC model to increase sales efficiency.

SUMMARY OF THE MAIN RESEARCH MATERIAL

Wine tourism is now seen not only as a means of attracting tourists and consumers, but also as an important element of the marketing strategy of wine producers and distributors. It is becoming increasingly important as one of the key elements of the wine distribution system. It is not just a way to attract tourists and increase visits to wine-producing regions, but also an effective tool for building sustainable relationships with consumers and developing a brand. Unlike traditional sales channels, wine tourism allows you to create a unique, personalized experience that strengthens the emotional connection between the customer and the wine company. Such an experience contributes to increased loyalty, stimulates repeat purchases, and actively promotes the brand through word of mouth. Another important aspect of wine tourism is its contribution to the sustainable development of

regions. The active involvement of local communities, the preservation of cultural and natural heritage, and the use of environmentally friendly technologies in winemaking not only increase the value of the product but also strengthen the image of the region as an attractive and responsible tourist destination. Thus, wine tourism contributes to the formation of complex value — not only economic, but also social and environmental [7].

In addition, wine tourism plays an important role in expanding sales channels. Visiting wineries and participating in tastings creates direct contact between the producer and the end consumer, bypassing traditional intermediary chains and increasing the share of direct sales. This is particularly relevant for small and medium-sized wineries, for which the development of their own wine tourism is becoming a strategically important direction, contributing to revenue growth and strengthening their market position [8].

Global experience shows that wine tourism is highly effective in promoting wine products directly to end consumers. In Italy, according to the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, direct-to-consumer sales through wine clubs, tastings, festivals and individual tours account for around 30—40% of the income of small wineries. This avoids the costs of intermediaries and maintains constant contact with customers, encouraging repeat purchases and forming a stable base of loyal consumers.

In France, the Bordeaux Wine Trip wine routes include more than six themed regional destinations with unique gastronomic and cultural features. Tourists not only buy wine directly on site, but also participate in master classes, gastronomic tastings and festivals, which creates a multi-sensory experience and strengthens brand loyalty [9].

In Argentina, more than 60% of wineries depend on sales made during wine tours [10]. There are over 400 wineries in Napa Valley (USA), which receive about 3 million tourists annually. Wine tourism generates approximately \$2.23 billion in annual revenue, with an average spend per visitor exceeding \$500 [11]. The example of Georgia, where wine tourism has become one of the key areas of the national tourism strategy, is no less indicative. Projects such as the Wine Route of Georgia integrate small producers, family wineries, gastronomy and traditional crafts. With government support, a mobile app has been developed that brings together more than 250 wineries with the ability to book, plan routes and receive personalised recommendations. This has significantly facilitated access to wine tourism for foreign visitors and at the same time stimulated the development of local initiatives.

The experience of Portugal deserves special attention, where the wine-producing regions of Douro and Alentejo have become centres of integrated tourism. Here, wine tourism is combined with river cruises, historical excursions and gastronomic tours. The Portuguese government finances infrastructure projects to improve access to wineries, as well as certification programmes for guides and wine consultants. This contributes to improving the level of service and the attractiveness of wine tourism products on the global market.

In Ukraine, SHABO is an example of effective distribution through wine tourism. The company organises

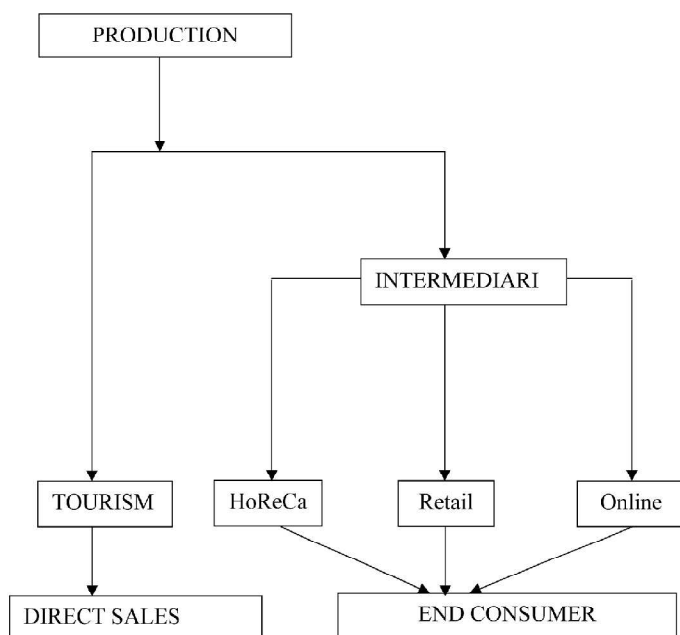


Рис. 1. The main pathways of product movement from the producer to the end consumer

Source: Systematized, summarized, and grouped according to data from [4—5].

regular tours and tastings and maintains its own wine museum. Up to 25% of the company's sales are made during tourist visits. In Zakarpattia, winemakers are developing tourist routes that take into account ethnic cuisine and the natural landscape, which increases the region's attractiveness to tourists.

However, most Ukrainian wineries use wine tourism more as an image-building tool than as a systematic sales channel. The main problems remain the lack of state support, a shortage of marketing expertise, and underdeveloped digital tools.

The digitalization of wine tourism is increasingly viewed not only as a trend but also as a requisite for effective distribution. In Spain, for instance, numerous wineries in the Rioja region provide mobile applications featuring augmented reality, which enhance visitors' understanding of the terroir, production technologies, and the historical context of the wineries. These digital instruments foster emotional connections to brands, augment purchasing frequency, and enhance consumer engagement. Conversely, the availability of digital services in the Ukrainian market remains relatively limited. Certain wineries, such as SHABO, Beykush winery, and Father's Wine which offer tour booking functionalities on their websites and engage actively on Instagram; however, they lack dedicated mobile applications or interactive maps.

This limitation poses a risk of alienating a digital audience accustomed to planning their travel online. The advancement of the digital ecosystem in wine tourism, encompassing geolocation services and online retail, stands to profoundly influence the expansion of sales channels in both domestic and international markets. The example of Georgia is particularly instructive, where wine tourism has emerged as a pivotal element of the national tourism strategy. Initiatives like the "Wine Route of Georgia" amalgamate small producers, family wineries, gastronomy, and traditional crafts. With

governmental support, a mobile application was created that consolidates over 250 wineries, allowing users to book tours, devise itineraries, and receive tailored recommendations. This development considerably enhances accessibility to wine tourism for international visitors while simultaneously fostering local entrepreneurial initiatives. Moreover, the experience in Portugal merits additional attention, as the Douro and Alentejo wine regions have evolved into hubs of integrated tourism [12]. In these areas, wine tourism is intertwined with river cruises, historical tours, and culinary experiences. The Portuguese government invests in infrastructure projects to improve accessibility to wineries, along with certification programs for guides and wine consultants. Such efforts substantially elevate service quality and the marketability of wine tourism products on a global scale.

It is important to note that the direct-to-customer concept plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of wine distribution channels. Here is illustrating the main pathways of product movement from the producer to the end consumer:

At the center of the chain is production, from which the main channels branch out: tourism, HoReCa, intermediaries, direct sales, online retail, and brick-and-mortar retail. Each of these channels leads to the end consumer.

DTC model implies that a winery sells its products directly to the end consumer, bypassing traditional channels such as distributors, wholesalers, and retail chains. This approach allows to:

Achieve higher margins by eliminating intermediaries.

Establish direct contact with customers, building long-term loyalty.

Quickly test new products and gather feedback.

Use personalized offers based on purchase history.

DTC sales include various channels: tasting rooms and wine clubs, online retail, as well as sales during wine tourism events.

Current statistics confirm that direct sales play a key role in the development of the wine business. DTC sales now account for almost 75% of the total sales of medium-sized wineries, a significant increase from around 50% in previous years. Moreover, nearly 60% of wineries expect their DTC sales to grow over the next year, with the most optimistic outlook reported by producers in Napa and the Pacific Northwest, where 68% anticipate growth [13].

At the same time, total DTC wine shipments have decreased to 6.4 million cases, representing a 10% drop compared to the previous year. However, this decline in volume has been offset by an increase in the average price per bottle, leading to higher overall revenue. Wine clubs continue to play a pivotal role in this model, with 64% of wineries stating that more than half of their DTC sales come from tasting rooms, underscoring the importance of direct, personal contact with customers.

These data underscore the importance of developing direct sales channels through wineries, which may also be useful for Ukrainian wine producers seeking to develop distribution and attract new consumers.

Table 1 presents the share of winery revenue generated from wine tourism in selected countries. The data highlight

significant variations between regions: Argentina shows the highest reliance on tourism income (up to 50%), while Ukraine records the lowest (up to 25%). Each country leverages specific tourism-driven distribution channels from organized wine routes and festivals to direct orders and club memberships, reflecting unique market structures and cultural contexts.

Table 2 presents a comparative overview of the share and features of DTC wine sales across various countries. The United States shows the highest share of DTC sales, particularly among medium-sized wineries, where tasting rooms and wine clubs dominate distribution. Napa and the Pacific Northwest are experiencing growth, driven by tourism integration and digital subscription models. European countries like Italy and France focus on tourism, events, and wine routes as key DTC drivers. In Argentina, tourism plays a central role, while in Ukraine, DTC sales occur mostly during winery tours and tastings.

Thus, the highest efficiency in distribution is demonstrated by countries with a comprehensive approach to wine tourism, combining government support, regional branding, and digital tools. Ukraine has the potential to scale this model but requires integration of infrastructure, marketing, and digital solutions into its winemaking strategy.

CONCLUSIONS AND PROSPECTS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH IN THIS AREA

Wine tourism is a powerful distribution factor that integrates economic, cultural, and marketing aspects. Examples from developed countries demonstrate that an effective enotourism model not only ensures wine sales but also fosters the creation of a sustainable regional brand, increases tourist flows, and generates added value.

A distinctive feature of wine tourism is its multi-functionality: it simultaneously serves as a direct sales channel, a marketing platform for brand promotion, a means of popularizing regional culture, and a driver of infrastructural development. Wine events such as festivals, tastings, and exhibitions create informational occasions that generate additional traffic to wineries, enhance product recognition, and provide opportunities for networking with distributors, retailers, and the HORECA sector.

In the case of Ukraine, special attention should be paid to developing a national concept for enogastronomic tourism that takes into account local specifics — climatic, cultural, historical, and economic factors. Additionally, it is important to design educational programs for wine guides, sommeliers, and marketers who can professionally support the development of distribution through tourism. Successful implementation of such measures will enable the formation of stable sales channels, even amid external economic instability.

Further research should focus on quantitative analysis of enotourism's impact on winery revenues, evaluation of enotourists' consumer behavior, identification of government incentive tools, and development of an effective wine route model tailored to Ukrainian conditions.

Table 1. Share of winery income from wine tourism in selected countries

Country	Share of income from wine tourism	Main distribution channels through tourism
USA (Napa)	25–35%	Tastings, clubs, direct orders
France	20–30%	Wine routes, festivals, branding
Italy	30–40%	Wine roads, restaurants, events
Argentina	Up to 50%	Tour routes, local sales
Ukraine	Up to 25%	Tastings, festivals, one-off initiatives

Source: Systematized, summarized, and grouped according to data from [8, 9].

Table 2. Comparison of DTC Sales by Country

Country	Share of DTC Sales	Characteristics	Source
USA (medium-sized wineries)	≈75%	Main channel: tasting rooms and wine clubs	Silicon Valley Bank, 2024 (svb.com)
Napa & Pacific Northwest	68% (expected growth)	Active integration of tourism and digital subscriptions	BMO / Wine Enthusiast, 2024
Italy	30–40%	Direct sales through tourism, clubs, and regional events	OIV, 2023
France	20–30%	Wine routes, festivals, tastings	Bordeaux Wine Trip, 2024
Argentina	Up to 50%	Tourism as the main DTC channel	Ministry of Tourism of Argentina, 2023
Ukraine	Up to 25%	Sales mainly during tours and tastings	SHABO, 2024

Source: Systematized, summarized, and grouped according to data from [8, 9].

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