



MASTER THESIS

SOLO FEMALE TRAVELLERS AS A GROWING SEGMENT IN WINE TOURISM

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Abstract

Solo female travellers are a growing segment in wine tourism demonstrating great potential. Recent researches show that women constitute 63% of solo travellers and their interest in wine tourism is promising. The survey performed during the research among 248 Russian-speaking tourists is the first of its kind and can lay the foundation for further studies of this segment both in Russia and abroad. Thought-provoking observations are made through different gender and age groups concerning their preferences in terms of tour duration and organisation, accommodation, meals, and additional activities. The results prove that the concept of “edutainment,” highly popular today in different spheres of life, can be used in wine tourism to attract new customer groups.

This study aims to make interdisciplinary research on female wine tourists behavioural patterns, motivations, expectations, and constraints. The scientific works from tourism, wine marketing, gender, and psychological studies are being reviewed. The study is supposed to help wineries, wine tour organizers, and other market stakeholders adapt and improve their services to meet the growing market segment’s demand and gain competitive advantages.

Keywords: solo travellers, female travellers, wine tourism, edutainment, Russian tourists

1. Internship presentation

1.1. Company profile: Hedonism Travel

Hedonism Travel is a travel agency founded in 2014 in Saint-Petersburg, Russia, by a famous sommelier and restaurateur Anna Moskvitina. Before starting the company, Anna had extensive experience in hospitality, wine tourism, and marketing. Her first wine tourists were regular clients of the restaurants where she used to work.

The offices are located in St. Petersburg, Russia, Tallinn, Estonia, and Cape town, Republic of South Africa.

Currently, the travel agency employs four permanent employees:

- Roman Chistiakov, financial director;
- Anna-Maria Kazakova, operational director;
- Karina Kudrina, sales manager;
- Inna Glushko, PR and marketing manager.

Travel organizers and guides are contracted on a project basis and paid according to the project budget.

The company organizes tours in 12 countries: the Republic of South Africa, Japan, Argentina, USA, Italy, France, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Austria, Georgia, and Armenia.

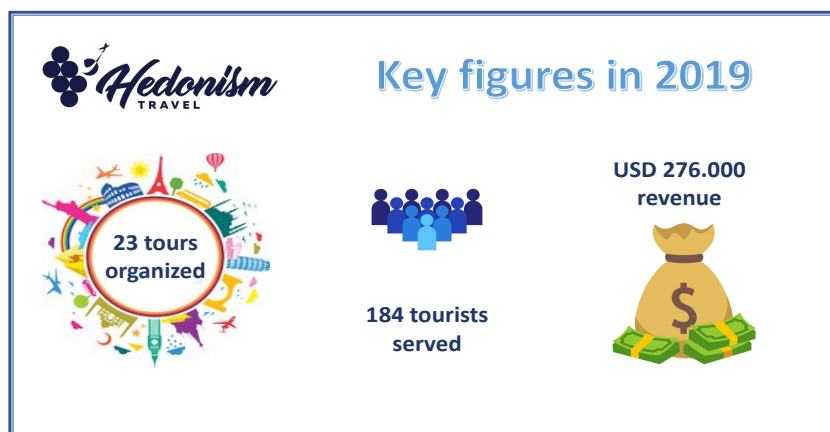


Figure 1. Key figures for 2019

The maximum number of tourists in one group is 12-14 people, though the amount does not usually exceed eight persons.

The tour lasts typically from 6 (for European travels) to 10 (for long-halt flights) days and is concentrated in one region. The visits include winery tours, local food production facilities, authentic family and Michelin-starred restaurants, cooking masterclasses, and other activities depending on the region visited.

The accommodation is provided in small rural hotels or “agriturismo” where clients can enjoy the local hospitality and live under the same roof with the hosts. The group is always accompanied by a tour leader who is always a certified Russian-speaking sommelier.

The company’s main clients are Russian-speaking people from different countries (Russia, Ukraine, Belorussia, Kazakhstan, Moldavia, Germany, Israel).

1.2. Hedonism Travel client profile

Based on the statistical data of the previous years, the following results are obtained:

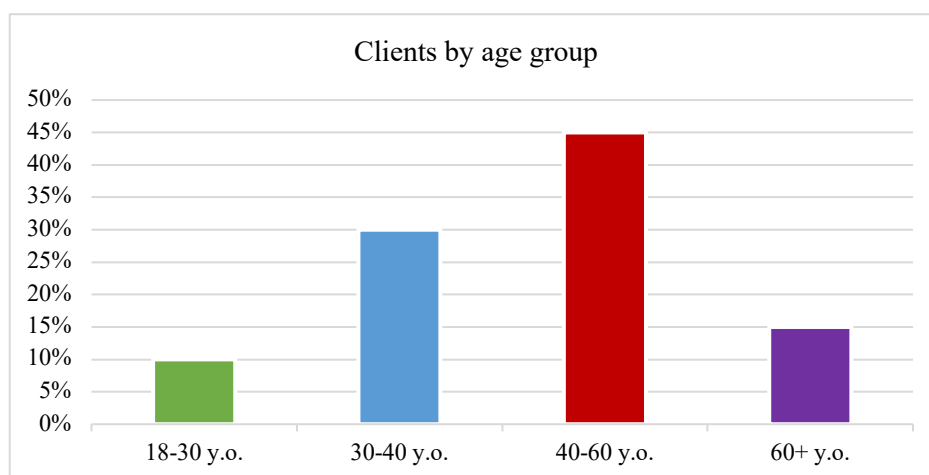


Figure 2. Clients by age group, 2014-2019

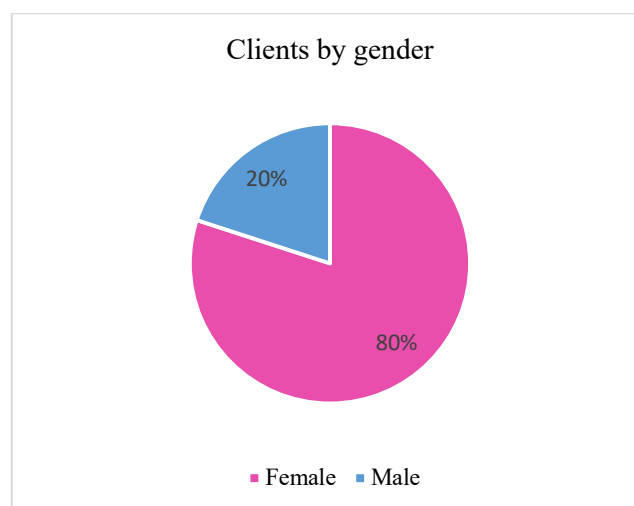


Figure 3. Clients by gender, 2014-2019

Around 50% of our clients are solo travelers; the other half are couples. The average spent per person in 2019 was 125.000 rubles, which roughly equals to 1500 euro.

1.3. Primary duties and activities performed

During the internship at Hedonism Travel, there were several main fields of training planned:

1. Customer relations;
2. Marketing and social media;
3. Tour budget calculation;
4. Reservations;
5. Fieldwork (tour guide).

Unfortunately, due to the world sanitary crises, the actual fieldwork with tourists was not possible; that is why the internship included only the other four activities.

1.3.1.Customer relations

At the beginning of March 2020, when the situation with Covid-19 in many European countries started to get worse, many clients already contacted the company to find out about the possibility of the cancellation. Later, when most airlines cancelled their flights and Russia closed its borders, all the tours were cancelled. Hedonism Travel decided to cancel all the tours until the end of August 2020, as the situation is not predictable. In these challenging times, it is vital to keep loyal clients and not to put anyone at physical or financial risk.

Due to these circumstances, I was involved in calculating and transferring refunds to the clients, or in some cases, we managed to negotiate the voucher issue that clients will be able to use when the crisis is over. As most of people feel vulnerability and anxiety these days, the task involved a lot of psychological studies – mostly empathy and stress management. We are satisfied that the company managed to fulfil all its promises and keep the loyalty of its customers.

1.3.2.Marketing and social media

Hedonism Travel has a website, an Instagram account with 13.500 subscribers, a Facebook page (1530 followers), and a VK page (1674 followers). The main marketing channel is Instagram, where all the tours and activities are advertised. The company decided to freeze posting any information in all the channels as it might be frustrating and irrelevant for our subscribers during the sanitary crises.

1.3.3. Budget calculation and reservations

Life goes on, and Hedonism Travel hopes to resume its activity after the pandemics are over. We plan to get back on track in September 2020. Thus, bookings need to be made in advance to calculate the budget of a tour and advertise the price for the final consumer. I was primarily involved in bookings for the tours to Sicily and Piedmont, scheduled for autumn 2020. The main observations of this activity are that service providers now are much more flexible with providing better booking conditions, extra services, and discounts. All the tourism industry stakeholders are going through the dark times, but the hope is over, and everyone is expecting to get back on track by the end of 2020.

2. Theoretical background

Nowadays, society is changing and puts less pressure on females concerning their family and birth-giving functions (Wilson & Little, 2005). The financial independence and purchasing power of women are growing year by year (Granot, Greene, & Brashear, 2010). The higher communal acceptance and more autonomy allowed women to participate more in various touristic and leisure activities (Berdychevsky, Gibson, & Bell, 2016).

Recent studies show that women became the principal wine buyers in the US and other developed countries (Southan, 2020). Women are also considered the decision-makers of the households concerning travel destination choice, accommodation booking, and activities selection. They are responsible for 80% of travel decisions and perform 50% of sales via the internet (Enelow, 2016). Besides that, the number of solo female travellers or women travelling in small groups has significantly increased over the last ten years. The number of women-only travel companies has increased by 230% between 2011 and 2017 (Galles, 2017).

This study aims to make interdisciplinary research on female wine tourists behavioural patterns, motivations, expectations, and constraints. The scientific works from tourism, wine marketing, gender, and psychological studies are being reviewed. The study is supposed to help wineries, wine tour organizers, and other market stakeholders adapt and improve their services to meet the growing market segment's demand and gain competitive advantages.

It is essential to mention one of the most significant limitations of this bibliography study. Most of the research reviewed is performed in English-speaking countries, predominantly Canada and the USA, while most of the wine tourism literature comes from Australia and New Zealand (Mitchell & Hall, 2006). Thus, further research should be performed to understand the wine tourism behaviour in the European and Asian countries.

2.1. Travelling solo as a new trend in tourism

According to Klook Solo Travel Survey (Gnock Fah, 2020) conducted in 2019 among 21,000 respondents, 76% of people either already travelled solo and consider doing it. Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT, 2020) reports that 85% of the registered solo travellers were female. Google searches for “solo women travel” grew by 32% in 2017, 59% in 2018, and 230% in 2019, reaching 100 million search requests (OAT, 2020).

Studies show that solo travellers take longer trips than couples or families, 19 days on average (Brown, 2019).

Despite the growth of the segment, 60% of the solo travellers think that the travel industry is not well adapted to their needs, meaning, first of all, single accommodation supplements. 54% of respondents enjoy group travel as well. 52% would be interested in taking an escorted tour, considering the importance of security (Dennis, 2018).

2.2. Solo traveller profile

Based on the survey conducted among 46,000 subscribers of the Solo Traveller newsletter in 2018, approximately 60% of the solo travellers are over 55 years old. At this age, people tend to be single, divorced, or widowed, and their children already have their own families. Winston (Southan, 2020) says: “The population is getting older, but people in their 50s no longer feel old. It is a time for exploration, adventure, and new horizons. For many women, their children have left home or become independent; there is money in the bank, and marriages have ended in some cases.”

Though, in countries other than the UK and the USA, solo female travellers seem to be much younger, notably 36-45 years old.

As mentioned above, 85% of solo travellers of Overseas Adventure Travel (OAT, 2020) are female. This fact might be linked to the age distribution of this segment. The life expectancy of women in developed countries is much longer than men (Eurostat, 2019). Thus, they are more likely to stay widowed at a certain age. Besides that, women feel more comfortable being alone. We can consider it an “Eat Pray Love” phenomenon, but the statistics show that women are more adventurous than men in taking a solo trip.

Based on the cumulative overview of several researches, the gender distribution of solo travellers in the world is:

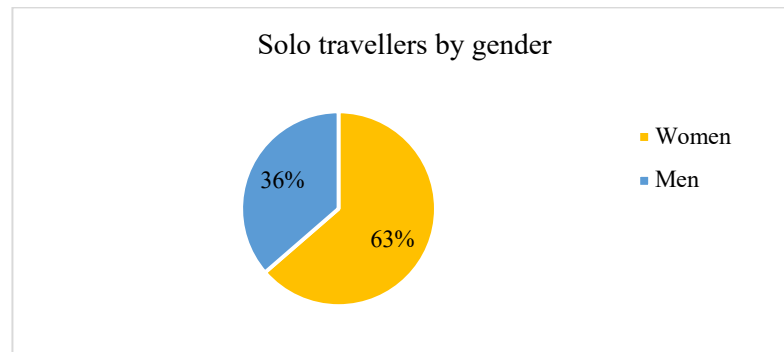


Figure 4. Solo travellers by gender

50% of solo travellers have a university or college degree, while 35% are post-graduates, and they are frequent travellers, taking trips three or more times a year.

2.3. Motivations for women travelling solo

Talking about the motivations of female solo travellers, it is essential to underline that the concept of leisure for women was not widely spread before the 1980s. Women's role in society was highly linked to family and housekeeping, so women were not involved in leisure activities as much as men (Jackson & Henderson, 1995). The principal activity where women were partially empowered was shopping. Urry (1990, p. 152) states that "shopping is a sphere of social activity in which women are empowered. It links together the public and domestic and involves activity in which women are permitted to demonstrate competence."

Numerous studies were performed trying to explain the principal motivations of female solo travellers. Bianchi (2015) explains that solo travellers mostly search for freedom and escape, while other authors highlight the striving for self-challenge, self-determination, and willingness to step out of one's comfort zone (Chiang & Jogaratnam, 2006; Jordan & Gibson, 2000; Wilson & Harris, 2006). According to Bond (1997), solo female travellers are looking for adventure, social interaction, education, and self-understanding. Among other motivations are the freedom of actions and choices during the travel and unwillingness to wait for others.

Education is one of the top motivations for women not only in their travel decisions but also in other spheres. For example, females are the most significant share of foreign language courses (Figueredo, 2017). While travelling, they are looking for eye-opening experiences (Tuang & Ritchie, 2011), multisensory-encounter experiences (Kastenholz et al., 2012), learning new things, and acquiring new skills. Recently, researchers started to talk about the new concept of "edutainment" = education + entertainment that is getting popularity in all tourism spheres (Del Baldo, 2018).

2.4. Constraints for women travelling solo

The major constraint for a solo female traveller is security. Safety is an essential factor for a woman while deciding transportation means, the choice of accommodation and destination itself (Uysal, McGehee, & Loker-Murphy, 1996). In this context, safety does mean not only real threats to a person's health and life but also a psychological perception of being safe, feeling of vulnerability, and lack of confidence.

Social expectations might play as a constraint as well if a woman comes from a society where solo female travelling is not considered a widely accepted thing (Wilson & Little, 2005, 2008).

2.5. Feminisation of wine

Before, men were regarded as the most desirable wine tourists as they were considered to be better spenders and wine connoisseurs (Charters and O'Neill, 2000). Today, the situation is changing.

Jancis Robinson (2014) writes about the feminisation of wine. Felicity Carter (2016), in *Meininger's Wine Business International Magazine*, points out that women are already "the most powerful economic force in the world's wine market." According to Carter, in the United States, females contribute to 59% of regular wine sales. Carter quotes Nielsen report, which states that women buy seven bottles out of 10 sold in the UK. Though studies show that women mostly buy wine in the supermarkets for casual consumption, while many men are wine collectors, possess wine cellars, and spend more money on wine (Carlsen /Mitchell and Hall (2001b).

Robinson (2014) underlines that marketing wine to males is different from marketing to females. Men are hugely influenced by the status, which can be expressed by the price or critics' points, while women are mostly determined by the hedonistic concepts of pleasure, enjoyment, and sharing.

Nevertheless, Carter (2016) quotes Richard Halstead of Wine Intelligence, who warns companies not to overuse gender marketing. "People do not like to be labelled," he highlights. When marketing a wine product or activity, it is worth avoiding sexist slogans like "Made for her/him" or "Ladies' delight."

Wine tourism in the context of female travellers segment

According to recent studies, adventure and ecological tourism, along with wellness, health, and wilderness, are the most attractive activities for female travellers (Bond, 2017; Doran, 2016; Notable Life, 2017; Weaver, 2001).

Getz and Brown (2004) consider wine tourism a sub-category of cultural tourism. They prove that age and gender are decisive factors in forming preferences for experiences and destinations. In general, females are more predisposed to wine tourism, but they are looking for a different experience: predominantly socializing, savvy personnel, top-notch customer service, and enjoyable ambience.

Despite the prevailing prejudice, women also buy wine in the wineries, but the purchase is more emotional than rational, it implies a gesture of gratitude for the people who welcomed the visitor.

In the context of wine tourism, further research reveals that female travellers especially those belonging to Generation Y when visiting a winery are more focused on overall enjoyment and “having a great time” rather than on a wine tasting (Dodd et al., 2006; Treloar et al., 2004).

Several studies were performed to evaluate the importance of different components of the wine tour experience. Significant differences were observed between males and females in parameters like “Food served” (males: 3.83; females: 4.21) and “Weather” (males: 2.68; females: 3.18) and “Scenery” (males: 3.92; females 4.34) (Carlsen, 2006). In other words, wine tourism operators targeting their products for women should concentrate on the quality and healthiness of the food served and the possibility of interaction with the natural environment or at least the view to the vineyards from the tasting room.

Recreation and learning turn out the most important motives of visiting the winery for females, and buying wine is the least important (Alebaki and Iakovidou, 2010). Thus, wineries should refrain from aggressive sales strategy with this clientele and concentrate on education and leisure dimensions. The sales of other accompanying and merchandising products (olive oil, chocolate, bags, aprons, glasses, pepper mills, magnets) could be significantly higher than among male visitors.

In general, females are searching for a holistic wine tourism experience, rather than tasting wine or visiting the facilities.

3. The survey

3.1. Internship objectives

Before the start of the internship the following objectives were coordinated with the Academic and Professional Supervisors:

- Creating itineraries of wine tours in France, Italy, Spain and Portugal for Russian-speaking clientele;
- Promoting the wine tours offered by the company through online and offline channels;
- Organising the tours by booking hotels, restaurants, winery visits, tour guides;
- Accompanying wine tours as a coordinator/wine specialist;
- Following-up on financial results and analyzing profitability;
- Analyzing competitors' activities.

As most of the objectives could not be fulfilled due to the crises, the research was decided to be performed in order to deepen the knowledge about the current and potential clients: collect sociodemographic data, create a customer persona profile, identify clients' preferences and single out their interests. These data are supposed to help the company improve the services provided in future.

3.2. Methodology

The survey used a structured questionnaire created on Google docs (Annex 1). The questions were formulated in the most accurate way to avoid possible errors, confusion, and misunderstandings and to generate as many adequate answers as possible.

The first part of the questionnaire consisted of socio-demographic questions.

The questionnaire was initially created in Russian as the researcher, and all the respondents are Russian-speaking and translated into English for the presentation of the results.

The questionnaire was actively promoted among the current and potential clients of Hedonism Travel and through the company partners and subcontractors.

The questionnaire was self-administered by the respondents online. The data was collected during May 2020.

3.3. Results

Overall, 248 respondents participated in the survey. Among them, 187 females (75,4%) and 61 males (24,6%).

The distribution by age was the following:

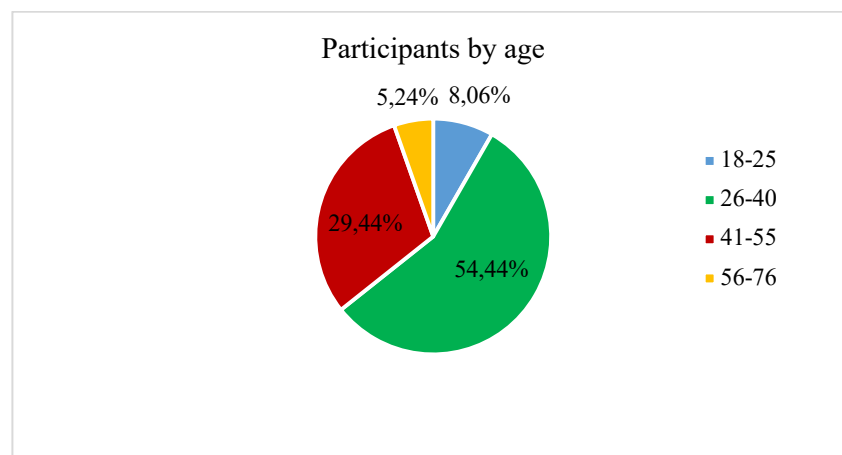


Figure 5. Respondents by age

In each age group, we observe relative equality of genders.

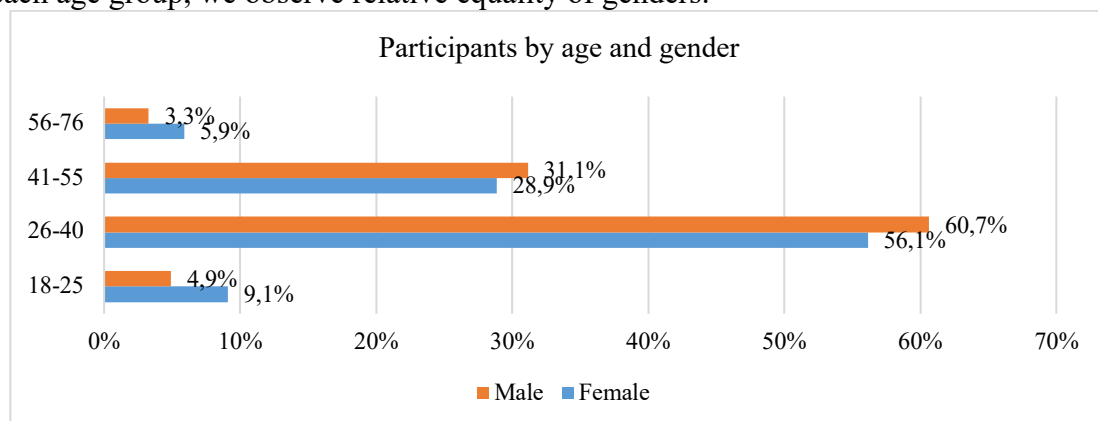


Figure 6. Respondents by age and gender

Among the participants, 41,5% have already been involved in wine tourism activities, while the rest (58,5%) have never been on a wine tour.

Concerning the duration of the tour, 4-5 days is the most popular answer among all the participants. Though older people tend to accept more extended tours, probably, since many of them are already retired (in Russia women retire at 60 and men at 65), and their children are already grown-up, they have more free time for travelling. Interestingly, the youngest group (18-25) is also ready for longer trips. The explanation is likely that they do not have a permanent job, work part-time or free-lance, and do not have children. The two middle categories, 26-40 and 41-55, are the busiest people, they prefer the tours to be between 4-5 or 6-7 days correspondently.

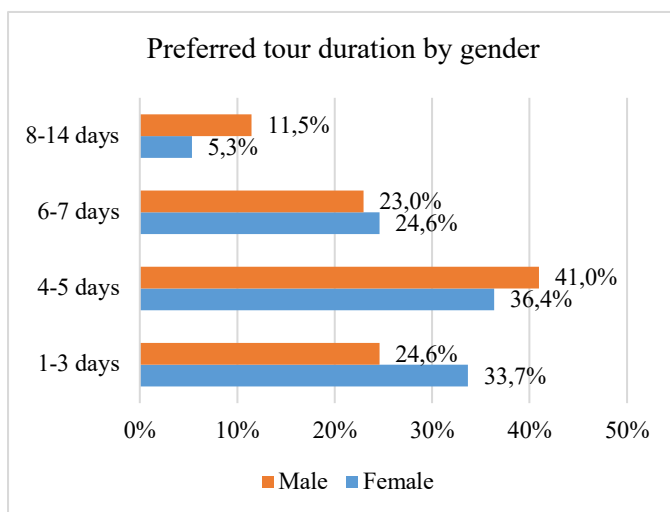


Figure 7. Preferred our duration by gender

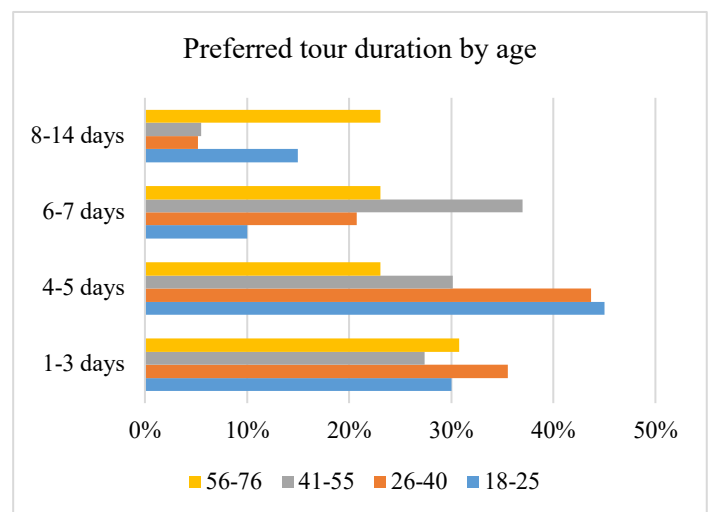


Figure 8. Preferred tour duration by age

For most of the participants, the two main dimensions of taking a wine tour are educational and recreational (“Learn more...” and “Relax and unwind”). This trend correlates with the recent interest in “edutainment,” which travel organizers need to consider constructing their offer. The tendency is universal across all gender and age groups.

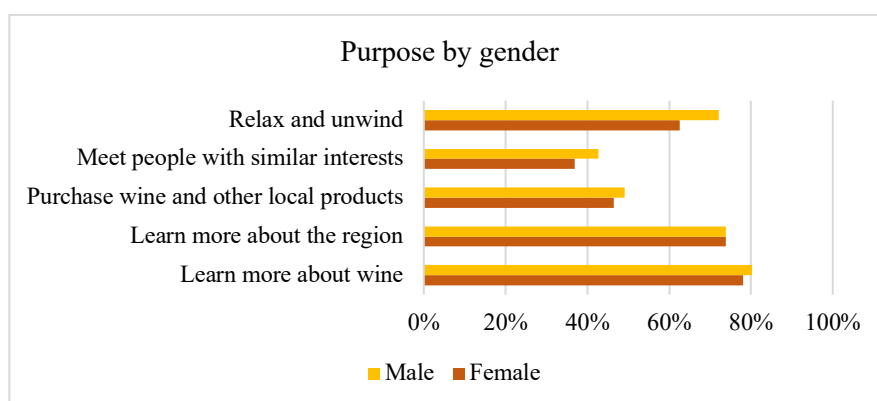


Figure 9. Purpose by gender

The vast majority of the respondents are wine drinkers, 59% of them consume wine every week. There is 1% of the respondents who are not wine consumers but prefer other alcoholic beverages. More research could be performed about the potential of beer, cognac, whisky and other types of tours for this audience.

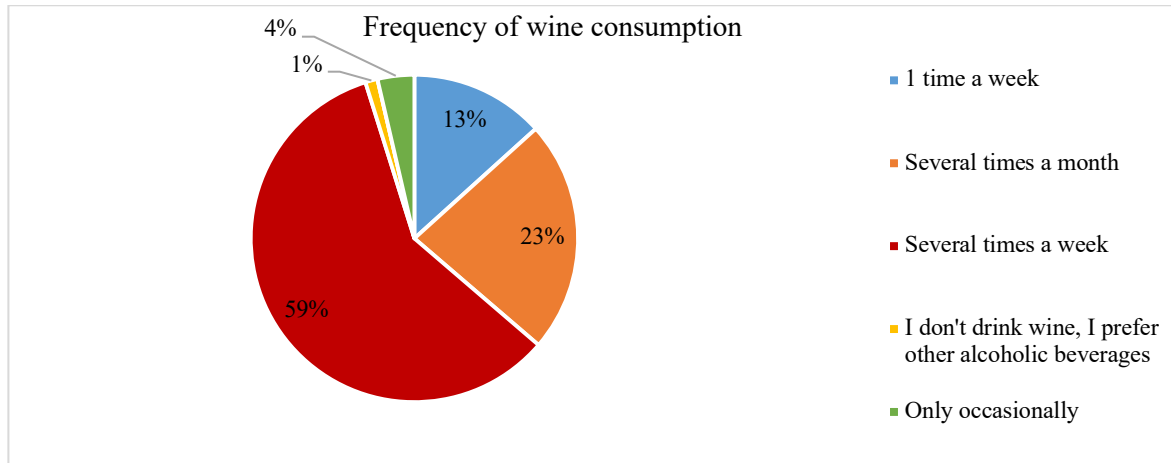


Figure 10. Frequency of wine consumption

The next block of questions was dedicated to more practical aspects of the wine tour organizations. As the research is concentrated on solo travellers, one of the most crucial issues is sharing the accommodation. In general, men are more prone to sharing than females, but females are more sensitive to the price difference between single and twin accommodation options.

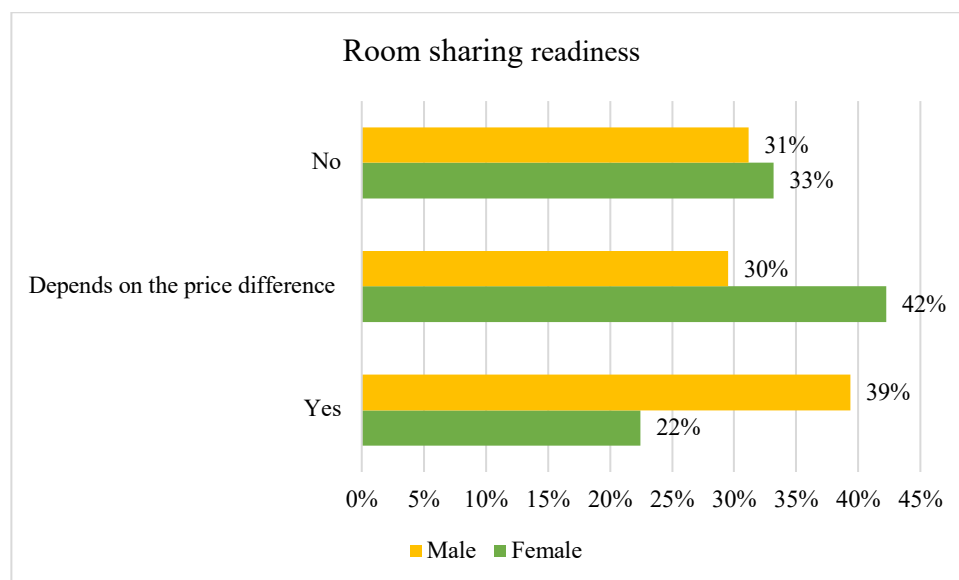


Figure 11. Room sharing readiness

In terms of meal preferences, men are much more intent to less formal options like picnic or coffee-break, while women, likely because of the health concerns, are inclined to an organized restaurant option.

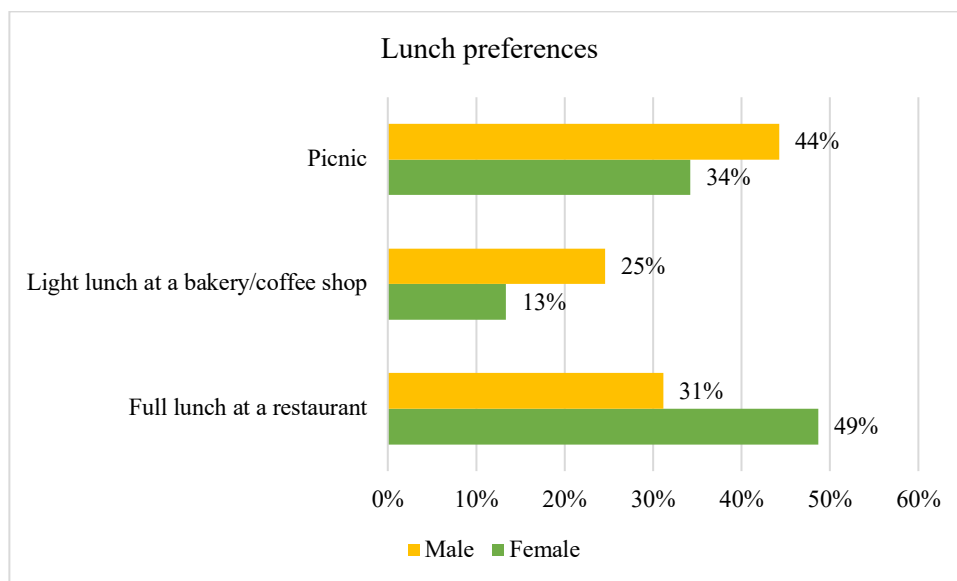


Figure 12. Lunch preferences

Most of the respondents are not ready to spend more than 4 hours per day on the way.

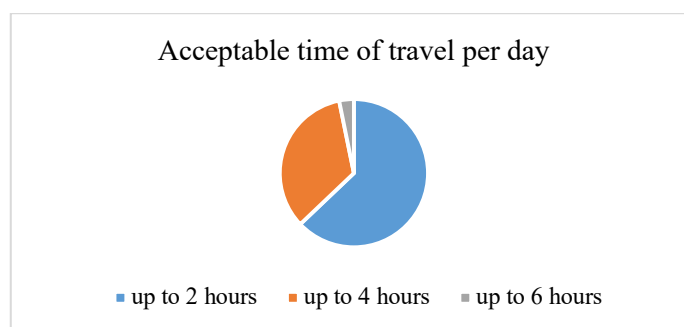


Figure 13. Acceptable time of travel per day

As for the additional activities, females are more interested in activities related to health, like spa and yoga classes, and education, like professional lectures, while, surprisingly, men are attracted by shopping.

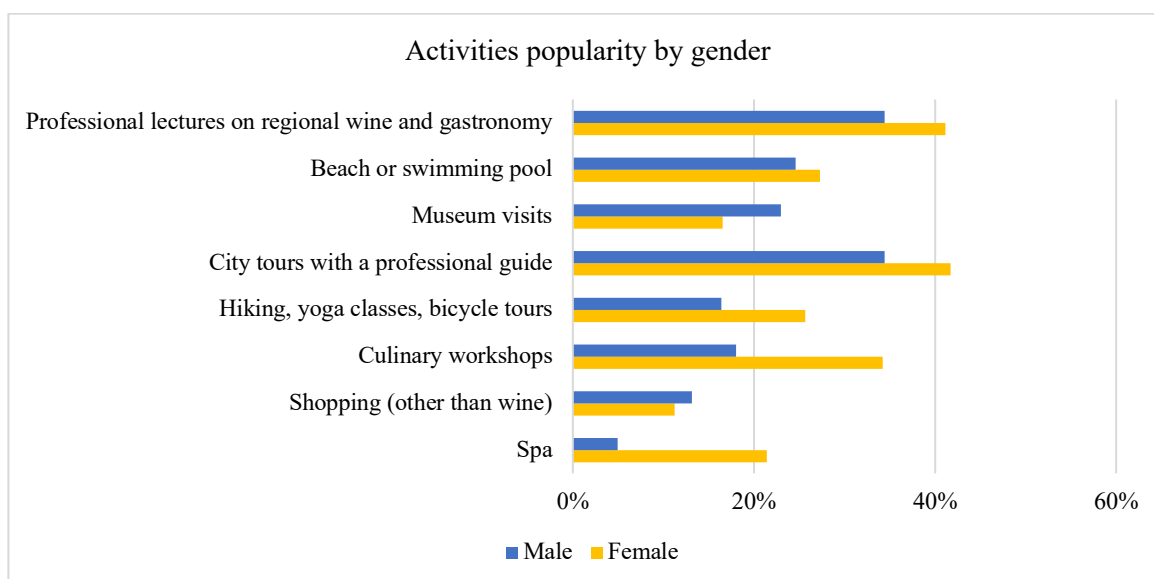


Figure 14. Activities by gender

With age groups, younger people are more interested in educational lectures, health and sports activities, and museum visits.

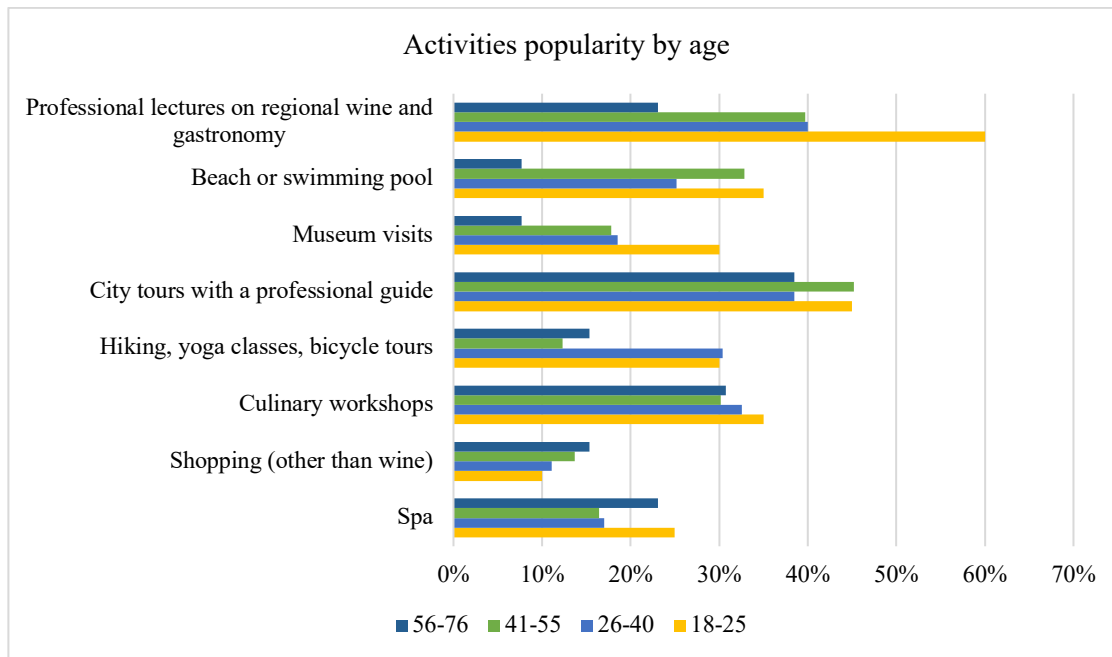


Figure 15. Activities by age

4. Guidelines for creating a wine tour

4.1. Step 1: Who is our client?

Hedonism Travel clients are mostly middle-aged representatives of the Russian middle class. It means their monthly income is approximately 2500-3000 EUR. The cost of a 5-day tour is between 1000 and 1500 EUR, so we need to provide an adequate service level.

A tour organizer, usually a certified sommelier, always accompanies the group. Accommodation, transport, wineries, restaurants, and other activities should meet the expectation of our demanding clientele.

4.2. Step 2: The choice of destination

While creating a wine tour package product, it is essential to choose the right destination. When choosing a new destination to propose to our clients, we consider several factors:

- Time of travel;
- The reputation of the destination;
- Cost of living (accommodation, transport);
- Variety and quality of attractions (historical and cultural);
- Accessibility of the wineries to the public (organized visits and tastings available);
- Traffic rules and conditions (steep and curvy mountain roads, high road death toll);
- Overall infrastructure (shops, pharmacies, restaurants);
- Security (crime rate);
- Political issues (visas, restrictions, war conflicts);
- Sanitary norms (epidemics, necessary vaccinations);
- Religious considerations (holidays, traditions, attire requirements);

In the case of Hedonism Travel, which primary market is Russia, we consider destinations two types of destinations:

1. Well-known European destinations have an established reputation, preferably situated no more than a 2-hour drive from an airport that directly connects to Moscow and St. Petersburg. The duration of a wine tour for this kind of place is 5 days/6 nights. Many clients prefer to take one week time off throughout the year to have a short break;

2. Exotic remoted destinations that can be attractive to our clientele in terms of wine, gastronomy, and leisure activities. As the time for travelling, in this case, is much longer, the duration of the tour increases to 11 days/12 nights, so the client takes 2-week vacation time.

The examples of the destinations of the first category would be:

- Champagne (Paris airport);
- Porto and Douro Valley (Porto airport);
- Priorat and Penedès (Barcelona airport);
- Prosecco area (Verona or Venice airports);
- Burgenland (Vienna airport);
- Kakheti (Tbilisi airport).

It is also vital that the destination offers a wide range of activities, including shopping, recreational activities, and sightseeing, usually not an issue in the main European capitals and big cities.

For the second type of destination, the one that we already work with is South Africa, which can boast a rich winemaking history, high-quality wine and gastronomy, top level of service, and beautiful scenery. The most critical restriction, though, is security. The country has a high level of crime and still affected by the consequences of the Apartheid abolished in 1994.

Other potential destinations that we are working at are:

- California (USA);
- Mendoza (Argentina);
- Maule Valley (Chile);
- Katsunuma Valley (Japan);
- Hunter Valley (Australia).

Due to the current sanitary situation and the financial crises in Russia where the local currency “rouble” has lost approximately 20% in exchange to the US dollar, the development of the programmes for remote destinations is temporarily put on hold.

4.3. Step 3: Time of travel

It is crucial to understand the climatic conditions of the destinations to choose the best time for the planned tour. In general, people prefer moderate temperatures for wine tourism activities. In many places, summer months can be too hot, and tourists choose beach destinations for this period, so we prefer spring and autumn for the wine tours. Again, the weather should not be too rainy, so April, May, September, and October seem to be the best options in the Northern hemisphere.

We also need to consider public holidays in Russia and the countries of destination. In Russia, there are long holidays for the New Year's and Christmas celebration (January 1st – 12th) and for the May holidays (May 1st-10th). For the January period, we offer tours to a long-halt destination like South Africa and several European options for May.

As for the public holidays in the countries of the destination, we need to bear in mind that most of the wineries and restaurants would be closed for the Christmas holidays and some in August, regular vacation time in Europe.

Planning a tour, we always check wine- and gastronomy-related events in the area. The most popular are:

- Hemel-en-Aarde Pinot Noir Celebration, South Africa (January);
- Alba White truffle fair, Piemonte, Italy (October-November);
- Batalla del Vino in Haro, Rioja, Spain (June);
- Bordeaux Fête le Vin, France (June, every second year);
- Les Sarmetelles de Beaujeu, Beaujolais, France (November);
- Habits de Lumière, Epernay, Champagne, France (December);
- and many others.

It is crucial to understand that this kind of event attracts many people from all over the world; thus, the prices for accommodation inevitably rise, and crowds are an essential part of the experience. On the other hand, these are great opportunities to discover local culture and live authentic traditions. Most tourists enjoy participating in wine and food festivals.

4.4. Step 4: Accommodation

Accommodation is usually the leading share of the tour cost; that is why it is vital to choose it wisely. It is essential to take into consideration several factors:

- price;

- value;
- number of rooms;
- facilities;
- availability of twin rooms;
- distance to the locations.

Usually, wine tourists prefer to stay closer to vineyards and nature; thus, small rural hotels and B&Bs might be a good option. Though, depending on the clientele, they can range from simple local “agriturismo” to luxurious villas.

The majority of our clients are single travelers, but, as the survey shows, the majority is ready to share a room to cut costs, so the availability of twin rooms is crucial. The rooms should not be too small, though, and should fit two adults comfortably without violating the personal zone.

In our experience, some facilities play a more important role than others. We always choose properties that provide hair-dryer and iron as most of our clients are female. Having a fridge in the room is also desirable as many customers buy cheeses, charcuterie, and other products that need refrigeration.

We do not prioritise accommodations with SPA or swimming pools, as our tours are very intense, and tourists usually do not have time to use these facilities.

4.5. Step 5: Transportation

Comfortable transportation is a crucial element of any travel. We recommend renting a minivan for a group of 4 and more people. It should also have enough space to fit bulky luggage, as many clients do much shopping on the way, buying boxes of wine and other products.

We provide wet wipes and water on the bus and try to tune our guests into a good mood by creating an appropriate sound-track made of well-known songs of the hosting country.

4.6. Step 6: Activities

Hedonism Travel European tours are always 5 days/6 nights and usually start on Sunday. The day of arrival is tiring, and it is essential to give tourists time to relax and adapt. Also, Sunday is not a working day for the majority of restaurants and wineries, so we tend to book dinner for this day in the property where we stay if it is available.

For the rest of the tour, we plan three to four winery visits with tasting, sometimes combining with lunches or dinners on-site. In our experience, one visit per day is optimal, but sometimes due to

logistics issues, two visits per day might be possible. Our observations show that non-professionals feel palate fatigue very quickly after an extensive wine tasting, so we usually book a tasting of up to 5 samples, preferably accompanied by light snacks. We prefer to book a winery visit in the morning when people are still fresh and energetic.

Timing is crucial. We usually block 2 hours per visit, though it might be shorter or longer depending on the group. It is a must to ask about the duration of the tour during the booking, the number and names of the samples for tasting, and the language of the tour. We always try to find tour leaders who speak the local language, but there are exceptions.

Wine tourism is our specialization, but other activities are as important. Sightseeing, shopping, SPA, relaxation time, cooking classes, local product production, and tasting (olive oil, cheese, truffles, charcuterie) and other activities should intermingle to keep tourists interested entertained.

The choice of restaurants is another crucial part. We try to create the right balance between traditional places and top-rank, Michelin-star establishments. It allows our clients to experience the diversity of the local gastronomic scene. Hours of operations, booking availability, wine list, accessibility are other essential things to bear in mind. We regularly ask recommendations from winery hosts and hotel staff to explore new, less touristy places.

There is a rule that during the programme the tour leader must call all the booked activities in advance to double-check and confirm the details of the reservation.

4.7. Step 7: Road map for the clients

We need to give our clients all the necessary information before the tour so they will feel comfortable during the trip. Things to include:

- programme of the tour (always with a notice that there might be changes);
- contacts of the tour leader and company office coordinator;
- weather forecast;
- recommendations for appropriate attire (comfy shoes for winery visits, formal attire for specific restaurants, swimming suits for SPA);
- information about the currency and current exchange rate.

We also created a “winery etiquette” flyer for our tourists which we called Winery Visit Survival Guide (Annex 2).

- Comfortable shoes and a warm jacket as wine cellars might be cold and slippery;

- Warm clothes for visiting cellars;
- Moderate perfume, not to irritate hosts and other guests;
- Spitting is strongly recommended for the personal health and comfort of others;
- Asking questions is more than welcome;
- Buying wine is recommended but not obligatory.

Some more recommendations to include in future:

- No empty stomachs! Alcohol is absorbed faster when a person is hungry;
- Drinking water is crucial to stay sober and hydrated.

4.8. Step 8: Follow-up and feedback

Before the tour, we always create a group chat on WhatsApp to be in touch with the tourists on a 24-hour basis. Usually, after the tour, the guide creates a short video from the photos and sends it to the group, highlighting the wineries, restaurants, and other attractions that were visited. It always meets good feedback from the people. Also, this group can be used to send information about future tours and activities organized by the company. We also congratulate our clients on major public holidays. Our clients use this channel to communicate with each other and plan new adventures together.

5. Conclusions

As a result of the internship and the research performed the following observations were made. First of all, there are significant differences in wine tourist profiles between the so-called Old World and New World. In the New World countries, wine tourists are mostly female while in the Old World seem to be predominantly male.

What European wineries can offer to attract females, travelling solo, or in small groups?

- They should create a comfortable and “Instagram-able” reception space. Women love to take photos while traveling and share them with their relatives and friends through social media. This “word of mouth” promotion is a free marketing tool for wineries, though obviously, the webpages should provide quality pictures and attractive and easy-to-use design;
- Women enjoy nature and scenery. When there is a possibility, and the weather conditions are favourable, female visitors should be able to walk through the vines or see the vineyards and landscape. Nowadays, many wineries build new facilities with panoramic windows to give tourists the possibility to enjoy the view in any case;
- Female travellers would like to learn new things. Rules of wine tasting, basics of winemaking, regional gastronomy – these are few options that could be included seamlessly into the guide’s script;

- “Edutainment” is a new concept in the world of tourism, but it is used for many years in other spheres. Learning through playing is as attractive for adults as it is for children. Blending masterclasses, cooking classes, painting with wine, aroma kits, touristic harvest, and foot threading – all these activities are much more attractive for females, than for males;
- Time to enjoy themselves is crucial for female visitors. Guides should be educated to give tourists time to talk, discuss, and enjoy. Most women do not come to the wineries for the single purpose of buying wine; they would like to have a pleasant moment of relaxation and joy;
- Shopping is a significant part of the experience for many women. It is essential to plan visits in a way that clients would have enough time in the shop. Besides wine, it is appropriate to offer merchandising products: T-shirts, aprons, cooking utensils, local food specialities. Wine in small bottles can be an attractive souvenir as well.

Thus, developing a clear marketing strategy for female clientele is crucial for any winery that would like to expand their business using this growing trend in travelling.

Besides that, the following competences were acquired or improved during the internship:

1. Clients and subcontractors relations;
2. Calculation of a wine tour budget;
3. Collecting of data and market research;
4. Working autonomously without constant supervision;
5. Time management;
6. Knowledge of European wine tourism destinations (France, Italy, Spain and Portugal).

In general, it was a very enriching experience allowing the intern dive deeply into the management, functioning, operational activity of the company, learning the daily life of wine tourism from on-the-floor professionals and acquiring first-hand know-how.

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Annex 1

Questionnaire

Questionnaire “Hedonism Travel wine tours”

Dear customer! We are constantly striving to improve our services and ask you to feel this questionnaire to help us make our tours more exciting and interesting for you.

1. Your age *
 - 18 – 25 (Gen Z)
 - 26 – 40 (Gen Y or Millennials)
 - 41 – 55 (Gen X)
 - 56 – 76 (Baby Boomers)
2. Your gender *
 - Female
 - Male
 - Other:
3. Have you ever participated a wine tour? *
 - Yes
 - No
4. The ideal duration of a wine tour for you *
 - 1 - 3 days
 - 4 - 5 days
 - 6 - 7 days
 - 8 - 14 days
5. What is the main purpose of a wine tour for you? * (choose all that apply)
 - Learn more about wine
 - Learn more about the region
 - Purchase wine and other local products
 - Meet people with similar interests
 - Relax and unwind
6. Do you consider yourself a wine lover?
 - Yes
 - No
7. How often do you drink wine?
 - Several times a week
 - 1 time a week
 - Several times a month
 - Only occasionally
 - I don't drink wine, I prefer other alcoholic beverages
 - I don't drink alcohol
8. If you are on a wine tour solo, are you ready to share a room with another same-sex traveller in order to avoid a single supplement?
 - Yes
 - No
 - Depends on the price difference between single and double accommodation
9. What type of lunch would you prefer on a wine tour?
 - Full lunch at a restaurant
 - Light lunch at a bakery/coffee shop
 - Picnic

10. How many wineries per day are you willing to visit?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

11. How much time per day are you willing to spend on transfer between wineries, other attractions and your accommodation place?

- up to 2 hours
- up to 4 hours
- up to 6 hours

12. What activities, besides wineries visits, would you be interested in?

- Spa
- Shopping (other than wine)
- Culinary workshops
- Hiking, yoga classes, bicycle tours
- City tours with a professional guide
- Museum visits
- Beach or swimming pool
- Professional lectures on regional wine and gastronomy
- Other:

Thank you for your time! If you would like to add something or leave a message, feel free:

