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MASTER THESIS

**CO-HUB FOR ITALIAN WINES: MULTIDIMENSIONAL WINE
TOURISM DIGITAL PLATFORM**

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June 3, 2020

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ABSTRACT

Italy is a top wine producer country and one of the most visited places in the world. Marking wine-producing parts under denominations of origins played a significant role in the excellence of Italian wines. Regional level managing bodies consortiums are representatives of the commercial aspects of wine production. The umbrella organization that unites consortiums is Federdoc. Institution assists consortiums with marketing, trade and production requirements, registration processes, as well as protection on national and international levels. The aim of the paper is to examine the relations between the wine tourism in Italy and promotion of the wine industry, specifically using domestic tourism as an instrument for raising awareness of the excellence of Italian wines and reinforcing long-term loyalty among tourists. Using the existing model of collaboration between Federdoc and consortiums, thus proposing a new digital product, that would urge the alliance between the tourism and the wine industries.

Key words: PDO, digitalization, content, big data, e-WOM

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

DOC - Denomination of Controlled Origin
DOCG - Denomination of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin
IGP - Indication of Geographic Protection
PDO - Protected Designation of Origin
PR - Public relations
MiPAAF - The Ministry of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Policies
B2B - Business to business
ICT - Information and Communications Technology
OIV - International Organisation of Vine and Wine
CMO - Common Market Organisation
CAP - Common Agricultural Policy
VQPRD - Quality Wine Produced in Determined Regions
MIBACT - The Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism
ISNART - National Institute for Tourism Research
e-WOM - Electronic Word of Mouth
UI - User interface
GPS - Global Positioning System
SME - Small Medium Enterprise
API - Application programming interface
UNWTO - The World Tourism Organization
SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
EU - European Union

1.INTRODUCTION

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY OF MASTER THESIS

The Wine Tourism Innovation Masters program gave the students the possibility to get acquainted with the wine world. Spain, France and Portugal were covered through the course, the puzzle of “old world” wine regions missed the one piece - Italy. That became the focus of the master thesis. The principal interest stood for the denominations of origins, their promotion and its role in the wine and tourism sectors. This curiosity had a reason, linked to the author's home country Georgia, since it is on the way of developing and promoting its denominations of origins. On the reference to Italy, having 408 PDOs (*Denominations – Alphabetical* », n.d.), it was interesting to see how the model of consortiums work and what part it plays in promotion of wine and tourism (*DOCG and DOC Going Away? Not Anytime Soon* », 2014). The primary intention of the thesis was to emphasize the importance of wine tourism for the wine industry. The aim of the paper is to show the significance of wine tourism as a major instrument to marketing. For this purpose, the organization Federdoc was contacted and proposed the idea to work on developing the multi-dimensional platform that would stand as an informational co-hub for Italian wines and tourism, addressing several audiences and using the wine tourism content as the front end communication. The topic got interest and a will to collaborate was expressed by the institution, with the condition of no possibilities for a practical internship. Thus the option was laid under the dilemma of leaving the interesting topic or keeping it but doing the internship in another institution. Being consulted with the program consortium, academic supervisor and several professors, the decision to keep the master thesis topic was made. Therefore this document represents the out-source work process in a frame of distance meetings with supervisor from Federdoc institution - Monica Minelli.

1.2 DESCRIPTION OF THE COMPANY OF INTERNSHIP

The practical internship was intended at a wine and destination marketing agency in Lisbon, Portugal. The Wine Agency since 2012, provided destination marketing, communication, PR and wine events for its clients in the wine trade and tourism, for individual producers, regions or countries (*The Wine Agency | Ana Sofia Oliveira – Wine Marketing Agency*, n.d.). A few outstanding projects were: annual tasting of Portuguese wines in London, that included 72 producers. Event was mainly oriented towards professionals. A massive success for Wines

of Portugal UK, as it was followed by a wave of PR and Instagram positive mentionings. The clients list counts Antonio Saramago Vinhos, Quinta do Monte d'Oiro, Azamor, Quinta da Pedra Alta, Casa de Darei, Familia Salton, Lisbon Family Vineyards and much more. The agency became PR Company of the Year 2015, Campaign of the Year 2018 with Wines of Brasil project and Wine PR Company of the Year 2017. The business model of the company is operating in the UK, France and Portugal and partnering with several agencies. JK marketing in the UK, that guides UK market insights and provides consultancy to individual producers, regions and countries. In order to provide full service The Wine Agency partners with Ricardo Bernardo, whose responsibility is art direction, photographing in studio, outdoors or food and wine events. Lastly the agency that operates in France and collaborates with Portugal is My Genuine Portugal, primary focus is promoting Wines and food of Portugal in France and several other markets.

1.2.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE DUTIES DURING THE INTERNSHIP

The internship was supposed to cover two known projects and the rest was under discussion depending on projects that would emerge.

- ❖ The project of Wines Unearthed, created in 2015 is the event, inside the London Wine Fair that helps international wine producers to find distribution in the UK. The working process involves promoting Wines Unearthed to producers worldwide. The duties involved managing social media and digital marketing. Strengthening the presence on Facebook, Instagram, Linked In and Twitter, mail marketing and community formation.

Also, B2B correspondence with producers and media representatives. The most interesting part was to guide the small producers. The Wine Agency elaborated the confidential document, called The Roadmap to export, that covers market insights and preparation know-hows that producers should adopt before The London Wine Fair. Preparation for the webinar "flesh to the bones", explaining the ways to understand UK market, pricing and promotion strategies. Due to pandemic 2020 the London Wine Fair and all other activities were postponed for 2021, which made the internship short and obliged to be paused for unknown dates.

- ❖ As mentioned above The Wine Agency has been appointed the Wines of Portugal UK agency for 2020. Another exciting event that was supposed to happen in June was the Wines of Portugal sommelier event in London. That would involve working on key visuals, print materials, press releases and correspondence with producers and media. Unfortunately this event was also postponed.

1.3 INTRODUCTION OF THE TOPIC

Wine production carries a high importance in many aspects of economy and social life in Italy. Some regions are better-known to the world than others consequent to a tradition of high quality. Terroirs, grape varieties and styles are characterized by tremendous diversity. To protect the origin of each area, Italy developed wine classifications beginning in the 60s. First were the highest ranks in the DOC (Controlled Denomination of Origin) and DOCG (Controlled and Guaranteed Denomination of Origin) categorization and after the IGP (Protected Geographical Region) class was introduced in the 1990s. At the moment listing 75 DOCGS, 333 DOCs, 118 IGPs (*Denominations – Alphabetical* », n.d.).

Inside the country, the wine market is large, however dispersed support is seen towards wine-producers in helping to raise awareness of Italian wines (Jenkins, 2019). The concept is following, the priority is promoting categories or regions and not the brands itself. For instance, the Prosecco can be seen as outstanced brand with a stronger identity than any particular producer of this category (Carlotta & Alampi, 2014).

As an inter-professional organization and umbrella representative of consortiums, among many aspects Federdoc is in charge of the strategy for raising awareness of Italian wines of origin. Mainly focusing on pushing the promotion on professional levels, reaching out wine influencers and spending huge marketing budgets abroad (*Comunicazione*, n.d.). On 29th of November 2019 MiPAAF met the whole supply chain representatives of wine sector and defined new aim to come up with the system promoting the entire wine sector abroad, by involving the activities related to wine tourism (*Mipaaf - QT 29 Novembre 2019 - Risposte del Ministro Centinaio su enoturismo e misure di sostegno al territorio*, n.d.).

The assumption of this master thesis is that countries and their wine institutions may not be paying enough attention to a huge channel of the domestic market that stands as an arena for millions of tourists who may become their wine ambassadors. This document stands as an investigation of crossroads between tourism and the wine industry for raising the awareness of the Italian wines on the reference of the institution that protects Italian wine designations, Federdoc. Keeping this concept as the goal the paper draws the product proposal.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

Research methodology used in the thesis has several objectives: on the one side, to give generalised understanding of wine and tourism industries in Italy and the link between these two disciplines. Another principal aspect is to show the role of Fedredoc as a regulating

association of denominations of origins, the value of PDO in marketing strategy, and identify the innovative approach for bringing consortiums together to form a collective image of excellence of Italian wines. On the other side, it is important to describe the wine tourists and consumers behaviours with the aim to come up with a proposal. In order to support the solution introduced in this paper, the following research methodologies has been selected: In the first part of the paper descriptive methodology is used, to identify the insights through description of current wine and tourism industries in Italy, over-viewing the secondary data and the recent statistics on various aspects. In the second part of the thesis the small scale exploratory research will be demonstrated. The qualitative research that aims to support the direction for the proposal by studying the impact of travel experiences on consumption choices, the key attributes of wine in the purchasing process and the role of social media.

2.1 LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's world wine producer countries have countless distribution channels for selling wine inside and outside their countries available to wine producers (Hall et al., 2008). Wine industry representatives take into account various issues, such as price and brand image. Latter is often in correspondence to the origin of the wine.

❖ The importance of PDO to support the brand value and quality perception

A series of studies show the link between origin of the wine and the perception of quality among consumers, thus it is interesting to see what value PDO brings to products and even places. For instance, Scozzafava et al. (2018), illustrated the significance of higher ranking within PDO. Two hypotheses were examined, whether higher classification of premium wine within PDO was more attractive to consumers and whether socio-demographic traits and attitudes affect the choice. The findings of the study are interesting, according to consumer preferences, introducing a novel form of excellence classification and labeling is effective. Paper states that in presale assessment of wines several attributes contribute positively: certification, region of origin, vintage and grape variety, past experience also played positively.

❖ The relation between wine PDO and tourism industries

According to the Journal of Wine Economics and Policy, two studies stress the importance of wine trade and tourism correlation. The article illustrates that the number of PDOs (wine and food) increases tourist flow. Exploration of wine tourism displays the image of the wine terroir or denomination of origin influences wine tourists demand on several levels of choosing, consuming, spending on wine products (Santeramon et al., 2017). Brown and Getz (2005) investigate relatedness of wine consumer's attitude for wine depending on specific

wine-producing countries or regions and their willingness, as well as tendency to travel to particular wine regions. Results show that specific appellation of origin has an effect on travel trends. Almost 70% of respondents were interested to have wines from particular origins and also expressed a wish to travel to those geographic areas.

❖ Wine tourism experience has an impact on wine consumer choice on a long-term. Another research was conducted in Ireland by Dublin Institute of Technology. The work identified the correlation between wine tourism and the consumer's decision-making process after it. The findings were several, people tend to purchase the wines they tried during their trips and also recommend them to others, which in time span lasted for long-term loyal relationships (Connolly, 2019).

❖ The role of ICT and Social Media for wine and tourism industries. The multiple literature draws the importance of ICT and social media, e-WOM, customer engagement and co-creation of the products and contents (Sigala & Haller, 2019). Direct image formation and sales is powerful, thus the actual strength of ICT lies in the concept of Big Data and enormous possibilities of using it. Applying it in several directions developing and assessing marketing strategies, thus improving branding and positioning among tourism and marketing business representatives. The authors highlight that first-hand user-generated data should count as operational in obtaining insights (Marine-Roig & Clavé, 2016).

2.2 THE OVERVIEW OF THE WINE SECTOR IN ITALY

The history of wine-making traditions, a wide range of grapes and the diversity of terroir makes Italy top wine producer in the world. In 2017, the wine production area was 695 kha, with a production of 42.5 mhl including 19.5 mhl of Protected Geographical Indication (federdoc, n.d.-c). Following years 54.8 mhl, 47.5 mhl including the trend in the PDO production raising +4% in 2018 (*Rapporto Ismea - Qualivita 2019, 2020*). Top regions were Veneto, Piemonte, Toscana, Emilia Romagna, Sicilia. Land distribution is characterized by small family-owned farming. Classification system is geo focused considering its terroir and grape varieties (Santeramon et al., 2017). Italy is one of the biggest exporters of wines, second by volume after Spain and follows France by value. The United States is the largest importer of Italian wines by value, followed by Germany, the United Kingdom, Switzerland, Canada, France, Japan and Sweden (*STATE OF THE VITIVINICULTURE WORLD MARKET April, 2018*).

2.2.1 FEDERDOC

With the change in Common Market Organisation policies, reforms to the CAP have also made the certification policy focused and tailored on the market. New organisation called Valoritalia became allowed by MiPAAF to certificate wines with Denomination of Origin. Before, it was managed under consortiums. Federdoc, as an umbrella association of the majority of the consortiums, for many years was advocating the introduction of European Union certification policies. Federdoc has strongly supported consortiums with the commitments for Denominations of Origin. Transferring into EU, national legislation advancement and introducing Valoritalia advanced wine policies. Merging the experiences obtained by Federdoc, consortiums and standardizing the processes of registration, data, solutions (*First pillar of the CAP: I — Common organisation of the markets (CMO) in agricultural products | Fact Sheets on the European Union | European Parliament, n.d.*). The complexity of obligations on different levels such as local community, regional or national levels certainly needs to have a united vision of the sector (*Studi e Ricerche, n.d.*). The full name of the Federdoc is the Voluntary Consortia National Confederation for the Protection of the Italian Wines Designations. The history and concept of the institution itself, unites all the parts of designations and their representative consortium since 1979. Federdoc can be seen as a conversation between winemakers or cooperatives and the commercial side of the industry, to solve various issues of denominations. Besides the legal purposes, Federdoc also focuses on improving the knowledge among merchants and consumers about Italian wines with Denomination of Origin. Federdoc has conducted numerous educational projects about DO wines of Italy, partnered with the Ministry of agricultural, also food and tourism within European community (federdoc, n.d.-a). One of top priorities is sharing the data by publishing annual reports on production and exports, as well as providing monthly updates on worldwide wine news. Besides numerous outside the country events, Federdoc participates in educational and awareness initiatives inside the country, supporting and initiating various campaigns (federdoc, n.d.-b).

2.3 TOURISM IN ITALY

Italy is one of the most visited countries in the world, with the annual growth of arrivals and tourists (*Movimento turistico in Italia, 2018a*). The Italian National Institute of Statistics shows that the year 2017 was important due to its growth in tourism. Lodgement marked one more peak in the history of Italy recording 123 million arrivals, the growth from previous year was + 5.3% (*Movimento turistico in Italia, 2018b*). In 2018, the Italian hospitality establishments

stated 128.1 million arrivals (*Movimento turistico in Italia*, 2019a, *Movimento turistico in Italia*, 2019b). The positive curve was massively impacted with one of the most immediate economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis in 2020, due to the blockage of tourist flows. The first effects have already emerged in March introducing generalized measures of social distancing, bringing tourism flow to zero (*Una stagione mancata: impatto del Covid-19 sul turismo*, 2020).

2.3.1 WINE TOURISM IN ITALY

Italian food and wine has had and continues to have an extraordinary ability to attract tourist flows. The food and wine tourism extends benefits to other resources in the area, historical, culture and landscape to all those touching points of the sector representing a real resource for the country's economy. The statistics in wine tourism in Italy for 2018 marks 14 million people (*Wine tourism numbers in Italy: 14 million people, 2.5 billion euros*, 2019). However the most comprehensive data in wine tourism dates 2017 and illustrates that the tourist demand for food and wine holidays follows a significant growth trend in the last years. It is interesting to see that increase stood at around 70.0% in 2017 compared to 2013. Compared to the other types, the food and wine holiday is the one that grows most in the long run, also reaching the positive change in total spending (+ 18.4% 2017 on 2013). The top 5 markets of origin that generate the highest revenues for food and wine holidays in Italy are: United States, United Kingdom, Austria, Switzerland and France. Together they cover 55.2% of the total, followed by Canada, Brazil, Germany, Denmark and Belgium. This profile corresponds to the most exported countries, thus assuming that inflow tourists are the target audience for Italian wines and most likely they will be consumers of Italian wines in their countries after their trips. Food and wine is the first motivation to visit for Italian and foreign tourists who spend a holiday in Italy. Among those who use mobile applications to search for information during the tourist stay, the first place inquiry is where to eat and drink. The definition for quality of product classification plays a significant role, 53.4 % of surveyed perceive it as a quality mark. Within comes the geographical origin of the product with 31.4%, mentioning that these two matters are highly interrelated. Enogastronomic consumers-tourists declare to be interested in mainly four things: recipes, history, tradition and itineraries. The most effective channel is still the traditional advertising, followed by fairs and the Internet, which is considered the most reliable channel for trustworthy information. And 65.5% of tourists are looking for information with mobile applications (Isnart-Unioncamere, 2018, pp. 8–15).

The first wine tourism activity started in 1993 with “Cantine Aperte”. The association behind The Wine Tourism Movement, is active nowadays offering different joint activities for wineries and regions. Another strong association is Associazione Citta del Vino, that aims to help the Municipalities developing activities that allow wine producers, create local food and wine products, sustainable development and more job opportunities. Wine tourism is strongly supported by the government. Creating the law that regulates the Wine Routes, the decree that stated the guidelines regarding the requirements and minimum quality standards for the wine tourism activities (Colombini, 2015).

2.3.2 GLOBAL PANDEMIC

Tourism industry had a growth trend until the beginning of 2020. When the coronavirus pandemic occurred all over the world, after China the epicenter moved to Italy. The impact on the global economy is huge, yet not having the unobstructed views economists can only predict. Travel restrictions, countries’ and venues lockdown and no demand, dropped travel by 90-100%. The draft forecast of UNWTO tourist arrivals internationally will decrease by 20% to 30% in 2020 compared to 2019 figures. Furthermore, UNWTO saying that these numbers are positive as it considers the planned anti-crisis developments, the industry experiences a unique crisis. In other words, it could mean the loss of between five and seven years worth of growth due to COVID-19 (*COVID-19: PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST*, 2020). What will happen to the tourism and hospitality industries - the answer is that one day, people will leave the houses. But what will the behaviour of the traveler and consumer will look like? Fear of travelling could bring the whole other world. Yet the one aspect is clear, that the change will be towards online development of sectors like never before.

2.3.3 WINE TOURIST AND CONSUMER TYPES

It is interesting to see a wine tourist profile in Italy, Colombini (2015) describes the wine tourists of Italian wineries as follows: a majority of 61.3% are male 30-50 years, travelling as a couple or with friends. The types are differentiated among four categories: tourists by chance, usually bit older tourists who care about price, convenience and tradition, also fun during the visit, looking for less professional descriptions. Another type is dedicated wine lovers, the major visitors of Italian wineries, this kind of wine tourists prefer tailored visits with information, spend more on wines, love the sense of discovering new products, are more loyal and spread the word-of-mouth, also follow wine blogs and different informational portals. Characteristics differ by nations, for instance, German-speakers prefer small wineries and they tend to return year after year, North Americans prefer group visits accompanied by

wine experts, mostly wine tours booked on the Internet. The third, as well as fourth category consist of professionals, such as wine writers and general lovers of luxury, but this last are different groups, with some shared attributes such preference for exclusivity, meeting the owners of wineries or witnessing new winemaking techniques. These last three categories usually popularize new trends. They favour reporting back to the public, peers, wine journalists, important representatives of sectors and spread the opinion (Colombini, 2015).

3.RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

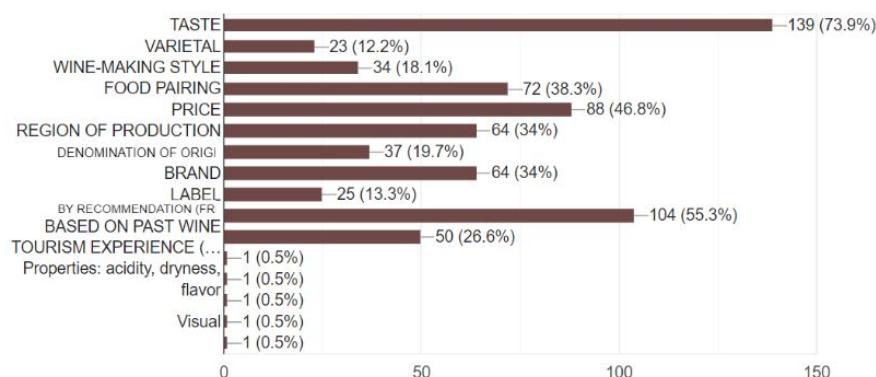
3.1 RESEARCH METHOD AND RESULTS

Hence to illustrate the qualitative relevance to the above-mentioned statements, the following small scale research was conducted. The online questionnaire was filled by 189 people, 58.1% Georgian population and the rest world-wide nationalities. 77% respondents were females and 87.2% allocated in the age group of millennials 25-39 years. Vast majority of participants are not related to the wine industry, but consider themselves as habitual consumers of wine.

❖ Consumer choice and wine attributes

Selecting a bottle of wine is not easy, some attributes can not be assessed before consuming or purchasing the wine and can only be experienced after. Ergo, consumers have to rely on intrinsic characteristics such as color, alcohol level, indicated flavour set or extrinsic - label, brand, PDO or even just package design. Many studies show the significance of PDO as one

When making a decision on which wine to buy, I usually consider
188 responses



of the extrinsic values that directs

consumers. Price is also a huge factor in choice formation and sometimes is attributed to quality (Scozzafava et al., 2018). The survey supported these

findings and Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Purchasing decision-making attributes*

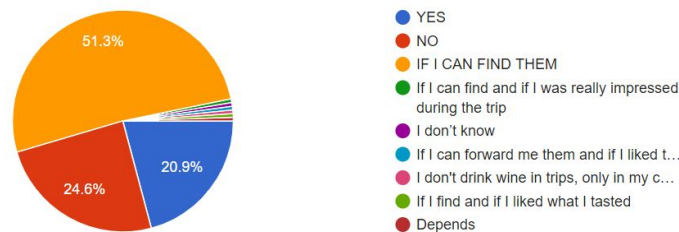
shows top extrinsic attributes: price, region of production, brand and interestingly, recommendations that included friend, influencer, internet, wine mobile application. But for the purchasing decision the outcome slightly changed giving priority to the advice of a friend,

influencer, internet, mobile application and only after looking at the price. These findings are interesting, because it shows the role of word-of-mouth in consumption choices, which is the one of the backbone parts of the proposed product in this paper. One observation should be mentioned, that when looking closer to the responses, non Georgian respondents tend to identify as main extrinsic driver to quality and consumption choice - denominations of origin, and also highlight the past wine tourism experience as an attribute. While Georgian consumers are not yet familiar with assessing the role of PDO for wine consumption, thus value more the past experiences and recommendations.

❖ Travel experience and consumer choices

The survey questioned the connection between tourism and consumption choices. 71% of respondents consider that travel experiences have an impact on consumption choices after a

When you are back from trip, do you buy the wines you tasted in your trip?
187 responses



trip. Majority of people stay loyal to products experienced during the trip, 26.7% replied yes and 53.5% indicated yes, if they find this product in their home country.

Figure 2. Wine tourism influence on consumption process

when specifying the question for the wine product, whether people buy the wine they tried during their trips, the same trend is seen, they tend to buy experienced wines after holidays if they can find them in their home destinations. On top, 92.5% of people tend to recommend wines they experienced and places they traveled to. Please see Appendix A1 (Research and Results).

Figure 2. Shows that

Where do you find/or have ever found the information on Wines?
188 responses

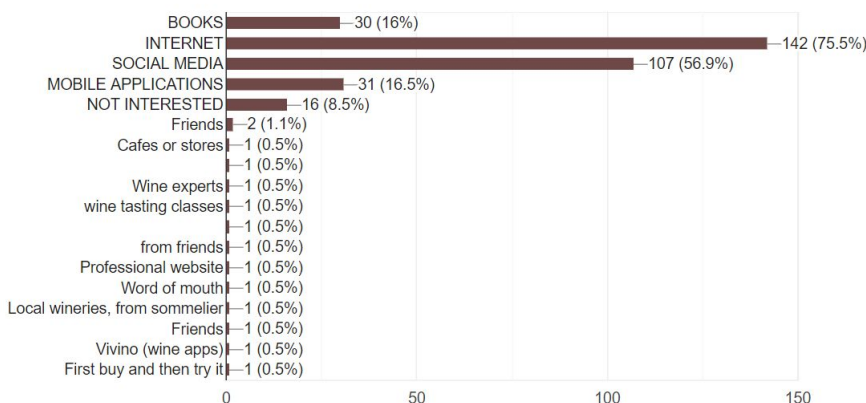


Figure 3. Channels for wine info search

❖ ICT and consumer choices

The third section of the survey related to ICT, social media and its influence. 61% of individuals say that social media affects their consumption choices, while 20.3% do not know.

Figure 3. Shows the top

three media to find the information on wines are: Internet, social media and mobile application. Top media remain Facebook, Instagram, Youtube. Therefore, once more the importance of digitization is observed.

❖ Familiarity to Italian wines

And the last part, identifies if respondents are familiar with Italian wines and where they mostly get the information on Italian wines. 25.3% consider themselves non familiar and 38.7% wish to know more. Majority of the audience could not name any source, where they can find the information on Italian wines online. The other answers were distributed among: Vivino, www.wineshop.it, Wine folly, www.enoitalia.it, Guilsomm, each DOCG separately, but with the overall impression that none of them are comprehensive. When looking precisely at the samples of each who could name any sources, those respondents are mostly related to the wine industry. Also, over-viewing each of these answers there are no sources that could provide in-depth information and show Italian wines as a collective brand. This gap fostered the idea of the proposed platform. For a full version of results, please see Appendix A1 (Research and Results).

3.2 INSIGHT IDENTIFICATION

Insight 1. The link between wine tourism and wine purchasing choice

In the interest to support the idea that wine tourism flow in Italy can be used as a channel for promotion Italian wines and create the demand abroad, this paper questions if there is any connection between wine tourism trips and consumer's wine purchasing decisions in their home country. The assumption is once more supported by the research that was conducted among wine consumers of Ireland. The goal of the study was to identify the connection between travel destinations and the consumer's wine consumption. Looking to the core of decision-making processes, according to the author there are three fundamental categories that affect consumer's wine choice. Starting with individual factors such as personality, lifestyle, attitudes, financial resources, etc. Following the environmental influencers, socio-cultural aspects or situations in the moment of decision-making. Lastly, the various psychological points matter, for instance, how consumers perceive information and experience in their past. This latter addresses the wine tourism activities that urges the wine consumers to move from the basic activity of drinking to actually experiencing the wine. Researches of this study suggest that there is a great influence of wine tourism on the future wine buying pattern in the home countries of wine tourists. The study also showed a strong link of wine to its place of origin. The link between perception of wine quality with its terroir, is more expressed in the 'old world' of wine countries. The result demonstrated consumers

having a particular image about the region of production affecting the perception of wines. Especially for a premium product like wine, place of origin information has an importance for the consumer's decision-making process and interestingly it does not depend on the level of expertise in wine. Furthermore, tourists who become consumers tend to frequently and actively promote the wines of the destinations visited, in other words advocate and stand as personal brand ambassadors for the experienced wines. Consumers' travels have an impact on purchasing patterns. The enjoyable wine tourism experiences from their past and information obtained during this event formed their wine choices after holidays. Another interesting outcome is that no matter whether they are wine experts or not, people tend to share recommendations and spread a word-of-mouth on wines from their wine tourism experiences among their friends and contacts. And lastly this phenomena has a long-term effect on loyalty, the study stresses the impact of wine tourism on consumers' attachment to the wines and their place of origin. Wine tourism often makes tourists co-creator of experiences, they feel that even returning from holidays they can recreate those memories by simply buying those wines and enjoy again at home (Connolly, 2019).

Insight 2. The power of comprehensive and engaging information

The 2020 pandemic accelerated the importance of the digital world. Now more than ever every industry or individual should direct the vision towards the online business making, as well as the power of information and storytelling (*UNWTO Webinar: Wine tourism post Covid-19*, 2020). The document discusses the existing issues around information available online in regards of Italian wines and the importance of the proposed product in response to this matter. The question is, if there is a comprehensive source of information on Italian wines online. To imitate the process of search, consumers would use digital search engines. There are several keywords around Italian wines, according to the keyword generator website (keywordtool.io, 2020), the top results are: Italian wines, Italian wine regions, Italian wine merchants, Italian wine center, Italian wine brands. In a response to these words systems like Google give the top answers, that are mainly non Italian wine websites. Among them are: www.winemag.com, www.winefromitaly.com, www.wine-searcher.com and italianwinecentral.com. Absence in these topmost searches clearly is the source for the official websites, that represent the Italian wines comprehensively as a collective brand. For the keyword "Italian wines official website" the results displayed are again italianwinecentral.com, which is an education platform in English-language recognized as a key spokes medium for Italian wines in the United States, mainly for professionals with partially free access. The other up shots are different non official websites, hence this issue could stand as the conceptual bridge to address the insight number one and link wine and

tourism industries and serve the ultimate goal to raise awareness of the excellence of Italian Wines.

3.2.1 DIGITAL ERA - COMPETITIVE OVERVIEW

Today's technologies enlarge wine tourism experiences, it can skip the physical destinations. For instance, virtual tours of cellars, online tasting reviews and many others. The use of technologies for different means enriches the wine tourism offers (Sigala, 2019).

Ongoing crisis urged online platforms to provide all the features demanded in the digital era, story-telling techniques adopted to digital in the form of online tours to tourism destinations, cellar visits and much more (*UNWTO Webinar: Wine tourism post Covid-19*, 2020).

Referring to Italy the widely used digital programs are, Enosocial is an Italian mobile application, used for wine tourism, allowing wine tourists to find nearby wineries (Hemming, 2020). Also, Gambero Rosso Italian Wines - ratings and wine database, mainly for wine lovers, as well as Veronelli that provides detailed information for each wine-producing region, with pictures of geography, climate, viticulture, wine-making and recommendations for the best places for food and wine (wooweiduan, 2015). Another such kind is Vini Italiani Online positioned as the official mobile application of Vinitaly Wine Club. Enables its users to look for particular wines, wineries and regions. Interaction within the community and even wine purchase is also available through integrated online stores (Mastio et al., 2016).

Wine-searcher and Tripadvisor remain powerful media for information. Big data available on these medias is a tool for analytics, giving possibility to perfect information flow and way of communication, effectively retain consumers and reinforce the awareness.

Apart from all the progress and technological advancements, wine and tourism industries still miss the comprehensive knowledge on providing digital solutions, even besides the forecast considering the current pandemic crisis, it is obvious that these sectors will be negatively affected by the drop in spending or less travels. But without an exact date prediction of revival the economy will start to revert. The focus will be on ICT like never before and the platform proposed within this paper could stand as a powerful tool for coming out from the crisis. This paper raises the question, what if Italy as a country could use a digital approach in promoting the wines and wine tourism, linking these two divisions on a large scale to create a collective brand. Thus catching the two outcomes at the same time, promoting the excellence of wines and boosting the image of destination, reflecting the readiness to receive tourists after the crisis. Using technological advancement, creating a digital platform inside the country that contributes to a bigger picture of strengthening the image of Italian wines and directing the demand of value wines abroad.

3.2.2 PRODUCT PROPOSAL

ITALIAN.WINE.IT innovative project is a multidimensional digital platform dedicated to making accessible official information on Italian wines. The concept is creating an official and comprehensive source that will be media, addressed to several stakeholders of Italian wines. The hub gathers consortiums, individual wineries, wine influencers, professionals and wine tourists, they all co-create the eye-catching content. The channel provides an engaging interface and strong mobile responsiveness, for the users who are not willing to use the application.

The multidimensional digital platform focuses on wine tourism and uses the wine tourism as a tool for raising awareness of Italian wines, focusing on the designations of origins. It enables users to map the understanding of Italian wines in a framework of regions and their denominations of origins. Also, allowing tourists to engage in creation and in a way form a wine social media, applying the wine tourism content.

The prime purpose is to build the knowledge on Italian wine excellence. Using the linkage between wine tourism destinations to classifications. Thus wine tourists having a consistent knowledge of denomination of origin visited during the trip and the wineries included in the particular PDOs. As discussed above in this paper, within this pattern of experiencing the wine country would reinforce the understanding of Italian wines, foster the demand after holidays and last for long-term loyalty. The website will provide users with the backbone general information on regions, denominations, also precise look to geo location, terroir, grape variety, wine styles, food pairing, etc. In order to get more information, by clicking a particular DOC/DOCG user is led to the particular wineries existing in the areas, shown as a feed of the gallery. For each winery the content must be rich texts, pictures, videos in a manner of being appealing to customers and contact information, with redirecting links.

Naming: ITALIAN.WINE.IT represents one of the important issues recently solved by Federdoc, specifically the use of the domains .wine and .vin, that is now available for only official wine industry representatives.

Addressing the insight - Strategic differentiation of the excellence of Italian wines using the outlook of wine tourism content. Thus strengthening the link between wine and tourism sectors through the power of information and digitization. The hub of digitalized official information will manifest the raise of awareness for different target groups from consumers to commercial merchants. The platform can address new market segments or redirect tourists drawn to a destination to wine tourism and transform wine tourists to dedicated long-term consumers (Carlotta & Alampi, 2014).

As the product stands as a mutually beneficial tool to the wine and also tourism. James A. Downing and Dan Parrish address the importance of differentiation by giving a sense to territories. Wine tourism destinations could be differentiated on various levels, the region as an umbrella identity of geographical area, the classification of wine-producing sites and the wineries as individuals. Therefore, the platform focuses on storytelling for wineries, while denominations of origins emphasize technical characteristics such as soils and climate, the factors that are drivers for the quality of wines. The collective approach to create authenticity, an electronic way of sense-giving brings the effect of differentiation of the country and its regions as a collective brand (Downing & Dan Parrish C S, 2019).

The target audience: the core outcome of the digital platform is to use wine tourists/wine consumers inside and outside the country as a target audience, by digitalizing the consistent information and readdressing to specific representatives of the wine and tourism industries.

- The base target is no profound wine knowledge, novice consumers and explorers of Italian wine regions, therefore having the will to obtain the basic understanding of Italian wines.
- Wine professionals or merchants, this type of target audience looks for more technical data such as technical characteristics, statistics or even contacts for commercial aspects.
- There is the third player who is the key driver of the platform, which is the winery. Benefits interesting for individual wineries range from self-promotion to accessing the big data.

Therefore, the three above-stated dimensions of digital space will create a hub comprising a trustworthy source of information.

UI (user interface) of the platform:

The paper continues to describe the product, its primary features and illustrates the possible impact on the customers' awareness on Italian wines. The key attributes of the website (and mobile application) include several dimensions, each having the diverse focus.

Access: platform displays the basic information on the feed, but in order to enable all the functions, users should register with very simple steps by social media, or email authentication. Registration will have more steps for wineries and merchants, as they will have to provide more info and credentials.

Creative features:

- Design - high resolution visual content to be impressive on the entry step and keep throughout the website. Consistent key visual guideline, that will be sent to wineries to follow the brand essence

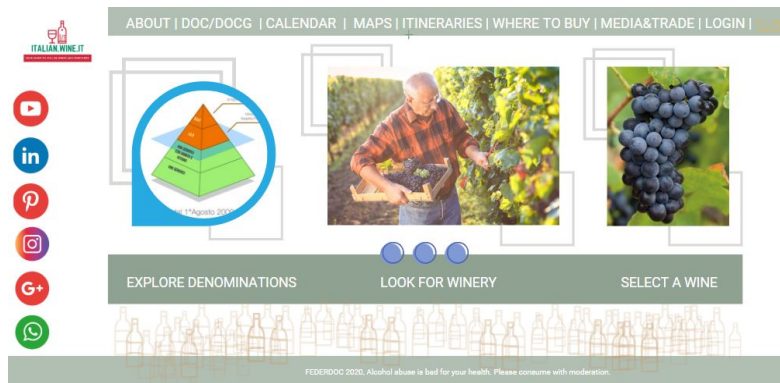


Figure 4. *Mockup of UI landing page*

levels of data to enable different targets to specific user paths through the website, available in several languages according to main touristic markets of Italy (different languages can be added eventually). Figure 4. Shows the mockup of the landing page, displaying the concept of Italian designations of origins and other key features.

- Fractured by sections of DOC/DOCGs, entering the category page contains brief information about characteristics of particular DOC/DOCG such as terroir, grape, wine style and shows the contact website of consortiums with the option to redirect to their channels. The unit also includes feed of wineries available in that particular area, with the necessary information. Every cellar provides its own introduction, grape variety, wine styles and contact info with the link to website or social media
- Education - brief topics about terroirs, wine-making styles, wine tastings and pairings with the focus of Italian wines and cuisine
- Calendars of events and tastings, constantly updating by wineries through their content management system. User can filter by location and time
- Maps and itineraries - arranging the best route according to tourists' area. Location based system gives several suggestions of wine routes from the database of the official wine routes of Italy
- Where to buy - the address of shops, information where people can buy the Italian wines in Italy and in their home countries
- Information for professionals - registered and given special access to the digital space with broadened data of characteristics in a deeper sense of technical factors, news and various statistics
- Wineries - individual wineries will have access to different kinds of data analysis, researches and digitized version of Infodoc - wine industry updates that Federdoc obtains on its current website

- Simple user interface for easy navigation: information obtained by simple clicking and scrolling, providing consistent interface on every page, more visuals content than text

- Mobile friendly - technically strong; fast loading

Available information:

Informational structure has multi

Socialising:

Social media channels are most often used by mobile devices (Trifonova, 2018), having the mobile application format is very important for this platform. To encourage sharing the word that strengthens the brand messages and builds the brand loyalty, socialising features of the product is a way of empowering people having their opinions expressed.

- Visual content - according to many studies pictures were mentioned as the most powerful and attention catching tool in research of social media impact (Cuomo et al., 2016). Allowing users to co-create content is nowadays an important feature of the product, as it lets users be able to create profiles and feeds, share the pictures of landscapes or wines. Having the autonomy to build their space by choosing the content they want to see and display
- Sharing - tool to encourage sharing theirs or others' experiences that will be aggregated as a display, like a feed of pictures where people can comment and like others' pictures
- Following - the option to follow influencers, friends or random users
- Ratings and comments - the platform allows registered users to rate and comment the wineries
- Community and forums - the space for discussion of different themes, e.g. topic of "ask a wine-maker"

Content management:

- Wineries will be able to easily update content on their profiles including pictures, texts and contact info via a content management system, they will have access to after registering, users will be able to independently add or co-create new content within their profiles
- Promotion section will display seasonal promotions and coupons provided by wineries if any. Incentives and special offers - encouraging wineries to give special offers to the guests using the platform, such as extra wine to taste, or meeting the winemaker. This should be in a format of added value to once more emphasize the premium quality of Italian wines and keep Italian wines brand essence
- Wine addresses - will contain the list of on and offline shops that sell Italian wines - provided by wine representatives
- Interactive location based system and navigation mapping with prominence on the site to be more easily accessible to users. Option of suggestive feature upon location of the user
- Booking system - sending website made bookings to wineries

- Event Calendar - regularly updated by wineries through content management system
- Search and filter functionality upon time and location
- Data analysis - long-term database use for potential campaigns, big data sharing for wineries

Professional section (wineries or wine executives):

- PDF and graphic file document management and display - for vintage notes / press releases / acco - lade sheets (Andres, n.d.).
- Info doc - monthly updates of wine industry
- Production and commercial statistics of Italian wine industry
- Networking and information sharing possibilities with wineries
- Webinars and lectures on winery management topics
- Wine Educator: free/paid options of online certification and training possibilities for new staff members
- Big data - access to analysis obtained by user-generated content

3.2.2.1 SWOT

The product model is oriented on a long-term competitive advantage, it is not just an alternative approach of promotion but the system that creates value for various stakeholders. Thus the platform needs to be seen from various angles, understand how well it will fit the purpose, market, tourists and consumers, what challenges and threats may occur on the horizon.

Table 1. *SWOT*

Strengths	Weaknesses
a. Innovation on Italian market b. User-centric vision simple interface c. Credible information thus high loyalty d. Promoting excellence of quality e. Addressing three main target of wine sector f. Powerful marketing platform g. Data analysis - 'big data' analysis h. Image recovery - from crisis f. Empowering small PDO and wineries	a. Execution of this platform needs strong marketing team and budget b. Platform needs promotion after execution c. Most wineries are still unfamiliar with technologies d. Older generation may not find it as effective as young one e. Impact on culture - using technologies instead of escaping them f. Overlapping tourism institutions

Opportunities	Threats
a.Small and medium wineries discovery b.Increased wine tourism revenue - better directing traffic for wineries c.Creating demand on Italian wines abroad d.Digitalization of knowledge on Italian wines F.Readdress tourist flow to less famous PDO	a.Scam from wineries - only DOC/DOCG wineries authorized to the platform b.Data Security c.Mobile app abundance after completing the trip to Italy d.Maintenance risk - constant management needed e.Big wineries and PDO overlap small ones

Table 1. illustrates the value proposition as part of its strengths and opportunities sections, why is the platform beneficial for several stakeholders and what is the role of Federdoc? Why should wineries be interested? As an association for nearly all the consortiums, Federdoc will appear as an intermediary for exchanging services electronically. Recent years deals with tour operators was still a powerful model, however recent pandemic highlights the importance of differentiated channels of sales and promotions, therefore the urge of focusing on digital models. This gap could be obtained by ITALIAN.WINE.IT platform and become the official e-intermediary linking demand to supply on informational and service levels. Federdoc will be equally credible for consortiums, wineries, professionals and consumers. The case of UberVino, when Uber became a transport provider in wine regions of Australia and therefore appeared as an intermediary, showed how different kinds of service exchange could be beneficial for backend users: wineries, tourists, regions. Sigala mentions this type of model as a producer of credibility utilities. Owning specialized knowledge, image and being a trustworthy source, imposing the quality. As stated by author of the case study of UberVino, as wine consumers and wine tourists progressively operate with digital devices to form their choices, it is apparent that wine companies, as well as wineries need to rapidly collaborate with possible e-intermediaries for better targeting and directing information (Sigala, 2019). In order to wrap up the benefits that platform brings for the wine and tourism industries, a few important points should be stated:

- ❖ Understanding the difference between classifications and strengthen the excellence of Italian wines

There are many people who are against Italian top level classifications but any attempt to generalize it under PDO fails. As discussed in this paper, many times using this model appeared as successful strategies of marketing (Scozzafava et al., 2018). But the topic still

remains complex for tourists and consumers (Ganzaroli, 2018), hereby the platform could help raise the awareness by providing information in a simple and entertaining way.

- ❖ Shared knowledge

The possibilities to exchange information and sometimes know-how, common knowledge that will be available in the digital ecosystem, thus eventually enhancing expertise of each region.

- ❖ Empowering small wineries

When consortiums take decisions, they are mostly beneficial for the big wineries and as it happens many times, small cellars stay unheard (Ganzaroli, 2018). Giving the voice to SME, this platform can not bring any legal leverage but gives the effective tool for business development in various ways: whether it's attracting tourists, keeping long-term relations with consumers, making useful contacts or getting common knowledge, training and reports for their use.

- ❖ Reload and readdress tourists flow - benefit to sustainability

In the case of Prosecco, the category recognition attracted tourists to Veneto region (Boatto et al., 2013), through the platform the flow can be directed to less known areas and PDOs.

- ❖ Image of recovery from the pandemic crisis

As mentioned many times in this paper, Italy was severely affected by the virus Covid-19. The wine and especially tourism sectors were heavily affected. In order to gain the previous strengths, the industry needs a boost and the platform can be the helping hand. Again, transmitting the message of readiness and attracting tourists.

- ❖ Big Data and smart tourism

Technological applications currently capture a huge amount of data which if appropriately analysed and used can significantly help wine and tourism boards, firms to better identify and learn about their market segments. For instance, the wine and grape association of McLaren Vale made an application focused on smart wine tourism. The members have access to the system that has shared, exchanged information, the big data to analyze the demand, trends and behaviours of wine tourists in their region. Having the insights of where, when and what visitors buy, eat, visit and other behaviours in McLaren Vale. Sharing and after sorting out big data develops competitive wine tourism experiences to the right target audience (Sigala & Robinson, 2019). The importance of big data and research on this concept is also met in the case study of Barcelona. Analyzing tourism data using massive user generated content. As Estela Marine-Roig and Salvador Anton Clavé state, the idea of big data gathers massive information and various platforms exploit this data. Destinations, cities or countries with smart systems can have access to instant business intelligence. Authors stress rapid growth of

user-generated content, the importance of social media and e-WOM in the tourism industry, in the construction of destination image through the e-WOM. Effectively using it in tourism, destination marketing and management, as well as leading branding. Within the smart tourism destination frame, it enhances tourist experience through the information and communication technologies. Improving the six A sections of tourism: attractions, accessibility, amenities, available packages, activities, and ancillary services (Marine-Roig & Anton Clavé, 2015). In relation to the proposed product, the platform creates the possibility to become the source of big data that can be analyzed in future for various purposes. Also developing smart tourism directing the resources to enhancing the aspects of six As of destination, for instance, pushing forward attractions, developing accessibility with maps, encouraging wineries for better packages and offers.

Table 2 illustrates the blueprint of the key value propositions of the platform, classified by each stakeholder for the wine and tourism industries.

Table 2. *Blueprint of value propositions for each stakeholder*

Features and content	Consumer/tourist	Winery	Professionals
Information on DOC/DOCG. 1 - Redirect to consortium websites 2. Showing existing wineries by DOC/DOCG	Use the platform for better understanding Italian wines and denominations of origins of the places they are travelling to	Promote their wineries and offerings, address target audience and acquire new consumers/visitors through better targeted media	No need to contact several sources, access to consolidated and official information
Calendars/Maps: 1.Submission option of events for wineries and Federdoc 2.Centralised booking system for visits and events	Easy search, construct personalized itineraries, get suggestions by location and be updated about the ongoing events	Additional powerful tool to promote activities, communicate events, benefit from location based system and better direct visitors to wineries	Update on what is happening in the wine industry of Italy. Festivals, exhibitions, tastings and other events
The address list of wines: 1.Where to buy Italian wines	The further retention and conversion from wine tourist to wine consumer and having	Indirectly driving sales in the countries they export wines to or even inside the country. This	Merchants who are interested to find the sales points of their

2.The option to filter by merchant and location, inside and outside of the country	the ability to find the wines they tasted in their own countries trade spots or online shops	feature gives extra sales boost and also fosters the long-term loyalty with consumers	wine preferences whether it be obtaining wines for tastings or any professional use
Media & Trade: 1.PDF and graphic file document management and display – for vintage notes / press releases / tech sheets 2.Info docs - updates & insights of the industry	Ordinary users may get this information in case they are interested to get a more profound understanding of the Italian wines Be informed about wine and tourism news worldwide	Access to credible information and statistics that could be used in a beneficial way for business. Being updated on the wine industry inside and outside the country. Analyzing competitors and taking the insights	Access to credible information whether it be checking statistics of production, export. Being updated on industry news
Wine Educator: free/paid online certification for wine lovers and professionals	Novice wine consumer who wants to get basic or advanced knowledge of Italian wines	This feature would be attractive for wineries as they can easily use it for staff training	Use for the industry beginners or industry related professionals
Social media features: 1.Submission option of profiles and personal space 2.News feed; photos 3.Comments; shares 4.Forum:expert advice	Individual voices of users are empowered, consumers having their opinions expressed, interacting and co-creating the content	The power of e-WOM, strengthens the brand messages and builds community and brand loyalty. Analyzing user generated content	The possibility to share the opinion, become influencer and brand ambassador of Italian wines

Addressing other key strengths points of the platform, being an innovative model is good for differentiating the product. Looking at past wine tourism trends, wine industry representatives started to acknowledge the multi level socio-cultural character of wine tourism. Innovation in wine and tourism is not straightforward only a technological approach. Alternatively seen are progressive strategies, novel processes, forms of proposals or the way it is promoted and

communicated (Sigala & Robinson, 2019). Speaking relatively to innovative aspects of this platform, they are several. As a backbone, the new approach stands in content management. Using wine tourism oriented products and acknowledging the strong bond of wine and tourism industries and power of the digital world. Validating the strengths of e-Wom and social media. Giving the content free flow and possibility to be generated by users.

3.2.2.2 LIMITATIONS

Despite the positive sides, as in every project, there are challenges that need to be addressed.

❖ The gap in generations and knowledge

The understanding of advantages of digital development for the wine and tourism industries. Also, a lack of knowledge in wine tourism, entrepreneurial skills, marketing or design. There are still many older people in business, who are not familiar with the digital world, but this observation is rapidly changing, additionally the recent crisis will urge the sharp change and adaptation to ICT. The daily base use of smart devices, mobile applications, engagement in social networks and community formations, furthermore the online opinion leaders are present in the digital world, that is immensely helpful to reach out wine tourism experiences (Alonso et al., 2015). However, as the case of UberVino shows, many wineries still are not familiar with the potential of digital marketing, as well as content generation, thus using the platform's content management system can be challenging for some wineries and affect overall content quality of the platform (Sigala, 2019). In response, looking to the influence of pandemic 2020 online sales and marketing moved to the next level. The wineries will be pressured to follow up the trend, thus the proposed project and available resources, educational or promotional, can be a great stimulus for this matter.

❖ Collaboration and creating a collective brand

The project ITALIAN.WINE.IT aims to have a positive impact on the Italian wine awareness and sales worldwide through wine tourism content generation and bringing together stakeholders of the industry. As discussed above, the platform addresses the issues across the Italian wine industry of awareness and promotion distribution. The document states as a priority the adaptation of consistent information into the digital world. Hence, the content is gathered from many players. The collaboration of consortiums and also wine industry individuals, showing engagement in content generation is essential. Expressing massive reluctance for participation can become a major limitation. On the other side, the platform can be viewed from a different angle. Federdoc creates a channel, where wineries should be

willing to participate on their own due to many benefits or simply for promoting their businesses, and on a large scale this will form a collective brand of Italian wines.

❖ Overlapping tourism bodies and websites of consortiums

When looking closer to the platform features, it appears as a system able to manage various services simultaneously. But what will be the reaction from tourism boards and consortiums who made the effort to make strong digital channels that can handle maps, calendars, itineraries. They can see the platform as a threat or as an opportunity. It will stay a matter of discussion per individual case and in order to sustain everyone's interest, if needed the system could be redirecting to their websites and just sourcing the traffic to their channels.

❖ Funding

Traffic of users will drive the interest of wineries to participate, therefore the project needs thorough promotion in various channels, not considering this stage could become a limitation for long-term fulfillment. Moving to the last restraint - the budget. Creation, promotion and maintaining the platform will require the funding, not having enough resources can damage the image of the product and threaten the failing of the entire project. Thus the financial support from the consortiums and government is crucial for this initiative.

3.2.2.3 TECHNICAL DISCUSSION AND BUDGET

When looking at the tech industry, the recent digital advancement leaves no question of “how” to carry out the product. To further rectify the concept, the curiosity is taken to Information and Communication Technology. The discipline that gives instruments to unite information data and management processes. Štefan and Jurinčič (2006) define the work process of the platform proposed in four categories of operating systems. The core utensil is Geographical Information Systems, which is the setup that stores, analyzes geographical data. This tool is crucial to assist users in finding the wineries and understanding PDO by regions. Another category of ICT consists of two important systems: Management and Decision Support Systems, that manipulates specific requests, such as filtering, or managing the profiles of users. The more advanced the platform gets the more complex the ICT becomes and the last set of administration are blocks and modules, needed for multi and interdisciplinary features, in particular social media attributes, forums and dimensional access to information based on the profile of the user, whether it's consumer, tourists, merchant or winery. The Integration Framework System conducts a set of standards, supporting tools, models and Decision Support Systems that works as a one system and in a simple view is a co-hub for many different sources.

In order to give an in-depth view, around the execution of the platform, the custom software development company Wandio was consulted. The agency consists of a highly qualified team of experts and operates internationally, head office based in Georgia. In personal communication with the company spokesperson Ms. Naino K, technical aspects and budget range were discussed. The outcome was that every feature of the product can be easily implemented, mentioning various approaches, such as a content management system, geographical information systems, API - system allowing the access to the data of an operating system or services simultaneously. This means the platform can have its own database but also be linked to other systems or websites at the same time. The features can be prioritised and executed by phase, eventually developing. This depends on the client's time and budget. Speaking about the cost of work with all the features mentioned, the budget can range from 50 000 - 80 000 Euros, but here should be mentioned that tech companies in the EU could have different prices than Georgia, because of the higher human resources costs and taxes. The timeline of the execution can vary 3 to 6 months, considering database formation and testing (Kashibadze, Naino, Marketing Director Wandio, 2020). Another aspect is marketing budget, to find the range budget of branding, Saatchi&Saatchi international creative agency was consulted. The scope of branding, launching campaign and key visuals was discussed, stating the approximate range 50 000 to 70 000 Euros, but here again this can vary if an agency based in the EU will be chosen (Gigineishvili Rusudan Managing Director, 2020). Lastly there is one more component, that includes marketing team costs and below discussed promotions, that makes it hard to define the total budget of the project at this stage.

3.2.2.4 PROMOTION OF THE PRODUCT

This far in this document the importance and creation of the platform was discussed. As mentioned in the SWOT analysis, the product needs thorough promotion. To ensure the success of the platform Federdoc requires investment and the use of different channels for communication. Italian wines as a brand bringing the new model of wine and tourism digital co-hub to the world, needs to share with the trade and media the benefits of the product.

Vision: Through Federdoc and regional Consortiums collaborative efforts Italian Wine excellence will be communicated and preserved using wine tourism as a major tool.

Goal: Position and champion Italian Wines as the image of excellence and premier wine destination.

Table 3. *Summary of Promotion plan stakeholder, strategies, addressed activities and outcome*

Target Audience >> Addressed Activities>>Outcome
<p>Wine professionals & media: Engagement of wine professionals and media from key markets world-wide</p> <p>a. Communication and presence at top wine trade events/fairs</p> <p>b. Creating network of ambassadors who actively promote the platform</p>
<p>Tourists: Engagement of consumers and champion the platform as the main source of information</p> <p>a. Partner with tourist organizations & institutions</p> <p>b. Digital marketing: Search engine optimization, tourism/wine website referrals, consortium & winery websites, paid partnerships</p> <p>c. Visual presence airports, railways</p>
<p>Consortiums and wineries: Participation and contribution towards platform</p> <p>a. Meetings and communication on importance of collaboration and benefit of the platform towards Italian Wines and individual wineries</p> <p>b. Ensure media and public attention through partnerships and membership of the platform</p> <p>c. Maintain consistent open and direct dialogue with consortiums and wineries</p> <p>d. Focus outreach efforts in different regions</p>

3.2.2.5 FUNDING

One of the key matters is funding, when developing a new product or project. No matter how financially strong association is, every project needs funding in order to sustain its viability. Finding and diversifying sources is an essential phase for this platform. The questions are several: where the investment will come from for the kick start of the project, will the platform be sustainable commercially, will it have any fees for members.

The objective is clear: the project needs to be executed and maintained for a long-term. The funding can be collected from different bodies and means, such as membership fees, subsidies, EU funds, sponsorships, profitable events and other activities. The scheme developed in this paper shows the blueprint of phases and possibilities.

❖ Phase 1. Initiating the project:

Figure 5. illustrates the starting capital possibilities could involve the partial contribution of consortiums. The rest of the investment should be financed by governmental institutions. Articulating the project as the essential tool for promotion of excellence of Italian wines.

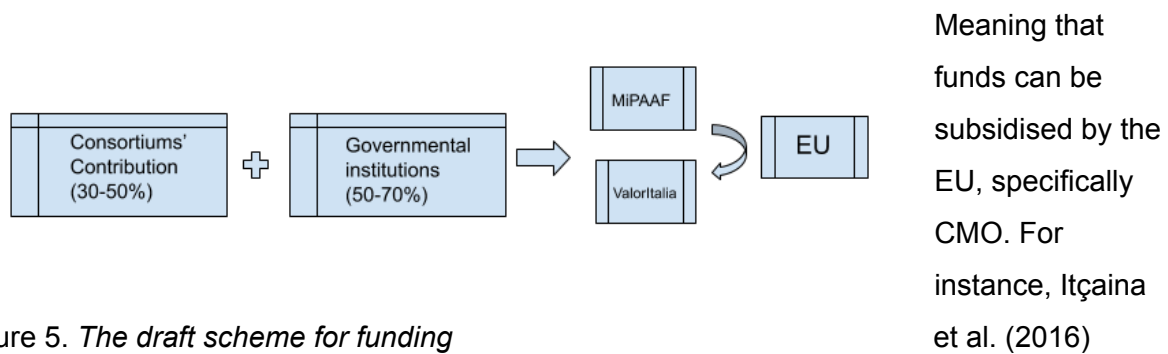


Figure 5. *The draft scheme for funding*

discussed how marketing funds were collected from CMO to form the collective brand of Bordeaux - mobilizing resources on national and EU levels. Additionally, to have the idea of funding scopes in case of consortiums of Italy, the reference of Chianti can be illustrated. When in 2012, Chianti played on all possible levels EU, national and also regional. Consortium reached the EU through Federdoc and was able to fund a 1.3 million project with half contribution of CMO, 20% regional and the rest bringing small and medium wineries together.

❖ Phase 2. Commercialization of the platform:

There is a clear benefit why the proposed product could interest the wineries: free and easy start without investment and joining fees, visibility and promotion of the winery to its community and the possibility of stimulating sales (Itçaina et al., 2016). However, obviously in order to balance between expenditure and incomes of the platform, as for every channel there could be some paid services that would generate the money flow. Commissions for booked visits or event tickets, promoting announcements for events, festivals, special offers. In this vein, the platform is media for promotional services with the passage to the target audience communities. Eventually, the product will become a full intermediary for wine and tourism marketing chains matching the promotion and sales points. The channel can also stand as a promotional arena to related services such as car rides or rentals, accomodation, food or various product PDOs. Channel unites different stakeholders, thus gives the possibilities of variations of paid services. Another source of revenue could be advanced training on Italian Wines, or specific analysis and research in the frame of big data that platform provides. This was a skim overview of the matter, much more opportunities could evolve in the work process that will guarantee the viability of the platform for long-term.

3.2.2.6 EXECUTION TIMELINE

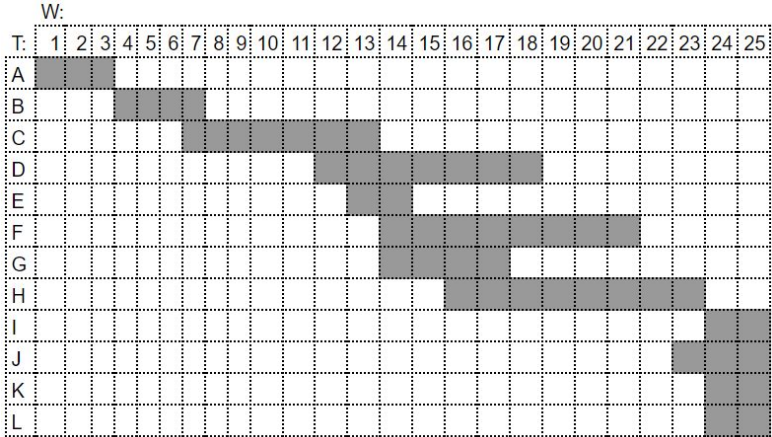
When proposing the new product, it is important to show the timeline of processes. In order to ease the project management, the paper brought in the Gantt chart (Goldmeier & Duggirala, 2015). The platform has multi-disciplines that need to be properly organized and

planned. Figure 6. shows approximately how long each stage of execution should take. Broadly the planner takes into account the existing and needed resources, and comes up with the steps in which sequence tasks are completed. Some works can be done in parallel and some processes are interdependent.

The phases of the project are defined and ordered alphabetically.

Proposal development stage:

A. Higher marketing professional or outsource, prepare project proposal, budget, presentation - 3 weeks



B. Present project and discuss the funding with MiPaaf, Valoritalia, Consortiums (wait for their decision to go ahead or not. Meet wineries and consortiums prescale assessment of the willingness to join) - 4 weeks

In case approval of the project, pre-execution stage:

Figure 6. Gantt chart of the platform (W:Weeks; T: Task)

C. Higher marketing team - 7 weeks
 D. In parallel with process C. Evaluate participation readiness on a larger scale. Meetings with consortiums and wineries to have their support and identify their needs and requirements to take into account for the platform planning - 7 weeks

Project execution stage:

E. In parallel with D and C. Preparing brief for third-party suppliers (with board review and approval): IT (information Technology) and creative agencies - 2 weeks
 F. In parallel of all tasks as soon as C is finished, starting collecting and organizing the database of the information: characteristics of regions and every denominations, featured content on wine education, history, styles, food pairings, statistical data on different languages, for the starting point it can be 2-3 languages (mostly consortiums already have informations on different languages) - throughout the project 8 weeks
 G. Only after task C and D are finished, starting working with agencies: working on user interface and design, working on storyline and launch plan - 4 weeks
 H. Starting execution of platform in parallel of task G - 8 weeks

Pilot stage:

I. Test the platform after H is finished - 2 weeks

- J. In parallel with I, secure wineries and users participation in pilot and develop guidelines for them - 3 weeks (notify a week before)
- K. Revision and finalization - 2 weeks

Production and launch stages:

L. After K is finished. Announce launch promotion campaign and after this stage starts the continuous marketing phase. Summarizing the workflow, the preparation process before launch would take approximately 25 weeks, which corresponds to 6 months of intensive work to fulfill this project.

4. CONCLUSION

The key features and benefits of the platform have been discussed so far. ITALIAN.WINE.IT is a Federdoc operated project, with the above-discussed goal to exploit the potentiality of ICT and smartphones to promote the high quality of Italian wines. Pushing the denominations of origin and wine tourism in compliance. The principal outcome of ITALIAN.WINE.IT is a system allowing to deploy the large numbers of wine tourists of Italy as a target audience of Italian wine consumers and align on the long-term demand direction world-wide, but considering uneven crisis caused by Pandemic 2020, another offshoot is seen. Firstly, the sharp need of digital developments of the industries, the boost of online business making and selling, thus promoting. The platform will be the kick-off for Italian wine and tourism recovery, showing the readiness to receive tourists. The benefit of e-WOM and the possibility of co-creation of the content and enjoyment of the additional information shared by the wineries and industry influencers will motivate the users. ITALIAN.WINE.IT platform, allows wineries to reach consumers and work on trustworthiness towards them, which is a long-term valuable linkage. Moreover, since the digital space unites several stakeholders of the Italian wine industry, it forms a multi-dimensional informational hub.

A brief dissemination action frame has been drafted for its promotion to ensure its full traffic exploitation. Thorough analysis of wine industry, digital competitors and references has been summarized in this document. Moreover, some wider function developments are discussed by creating the wine focused social network and users being able to share their experiences and get industry influencers' opinions on the wine in one space, in a very simple and collective manner. Since ICT is extensive in everyday life, wide variations of the improvement can be conducted further in the future for its great potentiality.

In conclusion, working on this Master Thesis and also the internship at The Wine Agency was important in several ways. The transition from a student level to a professional life is a

complex process. Various challenges faced in professional lives, especially when integration happens to an international and multicultural environment. The outline of the valuable experience acquired are several:

- ❖ Above-mentioned internship was shorter than planned due to Pandemic, but the major outcome was the inside view of the wine and destination marketing, having the clear idea how the business works. Knowing step by step the strategies that wine producers should take before appearing on wine fairs and understanding how to promote a wine-producing country as a collective brand. Discussions side by side with a professional in the wine and tourism industry is truly inspiring and motivating to further shape the plans for the future, where well-formed expectations meet the reality.
- ❖ On the other side, working on the particular Master Thesis topic was fulfilling in terms of obtaining specific knowledge of the sector. Understanding how PDO formation works and what challenges need to be faced can help in many ways during the career, whether it be destination promotion or management. Deeper look at consumer behaviour grasps the idea of what are the primary attributes to focus on in the future, while coming up with a new product or promoting it.
- ❖ On top of that, the importance carries some particular skill formation, such as strengthening communication skills, learning to work as a team and understanding how important it is to be proactive, show initiative and have the confidence to express the ideas. The Wine Agency and Federdoc gave the opportunity to networking, acquired contacts could become a helping hand in various ways.

In the end, being part of a professional team, brings the responsibility to contribute maximum effort and in the end is a driver towards accomplishment of career goals.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would say thanks to my Academic Supervisor Professor Pierre-Louis Teissedre at ISVV, University of Bordeaux for collaboration and directing my work throughout the process and always finding the time.

I would also like to address a special thanks to my Professional Supervisor Monica Minelli at Federdoc, who was very helpful, attentive and involved in the validation of this work.

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APPENDIX

A1. RESEARCH RESULTS

How would you define yourself from the following?

188 responses

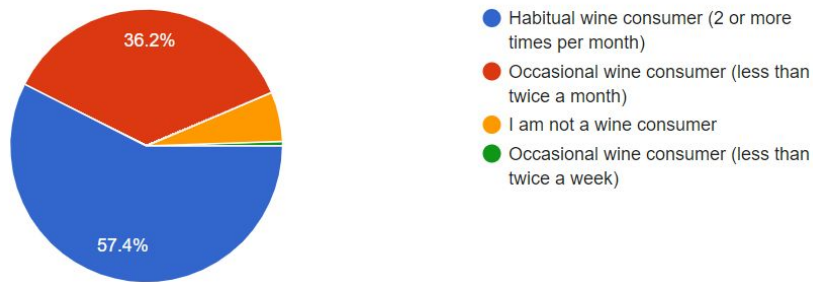


Figure. 1 *Frequency of wine drinking*

Are you related to wine industry? (study/work)

188 responses

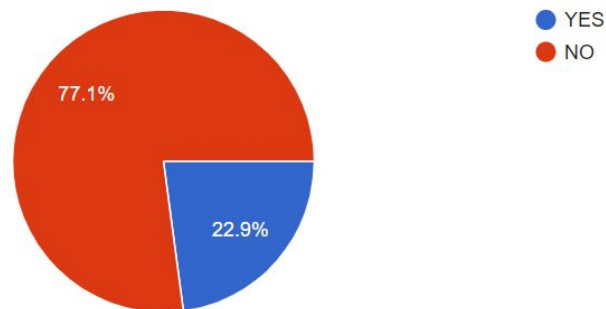


Figure. 2 *Professional or non professional detector*

How do you define the quality of wine?

188 responses

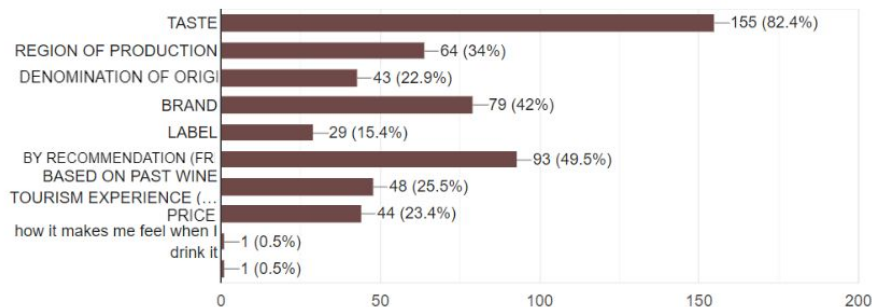


Figure. 3 *Perception of quality*

When making a decision on which wine to buy, I usually consider

188 responses

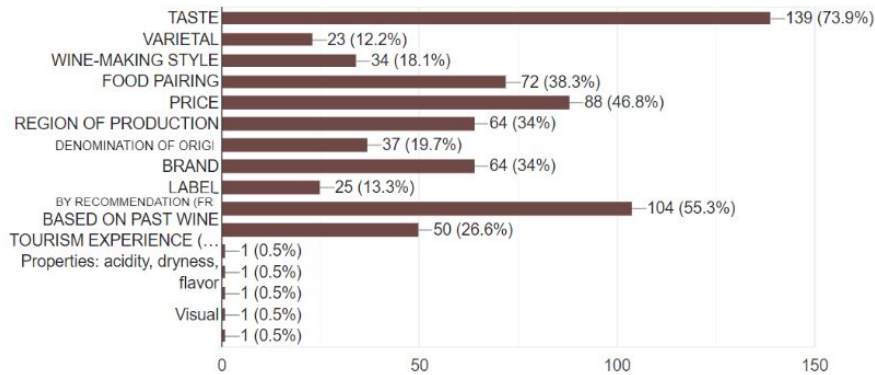


Figure. 4 *Purchasing decision-making attributes*

Does your travel experiences influence your consumption choices after the trip?

187 responses

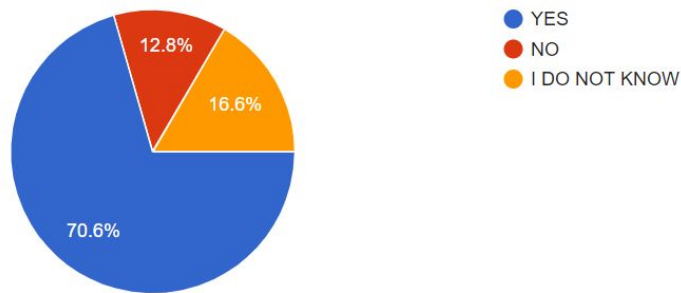


Figure. 5 *Tourism impact on consumption choices*

Do you stay loyal to the products experienced during the travel? (ex: wine, beer, hard spirits, cocktails, food, clothing brands)

188 responses

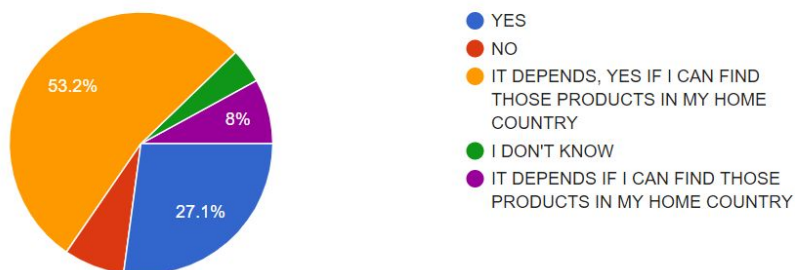


Figure. 6 *Loyalty relation*

When you are back from trip, do you buy the wines you tasted in your trip?

187 responses



Figure. 7 Wine tourism influence on consumption process

Do you recommend the places visited and wines consumed to others?

187 responses

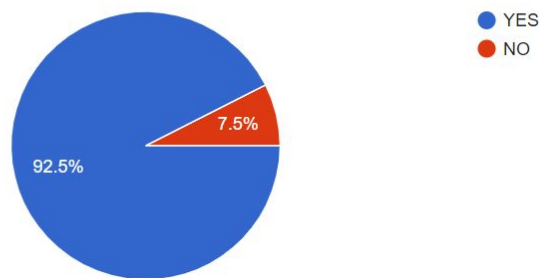


Figure. 8 Word-of-Mouth relatedness

Where do you find/or have ever found the information on Wines?

188 responses

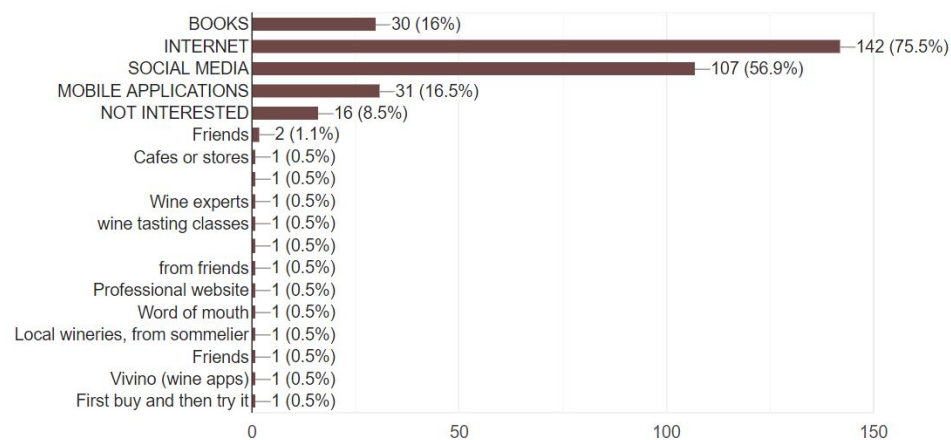


Figure. 9 Channels for wine info search

Does Social Medias influence you consumption choices?

188 responses

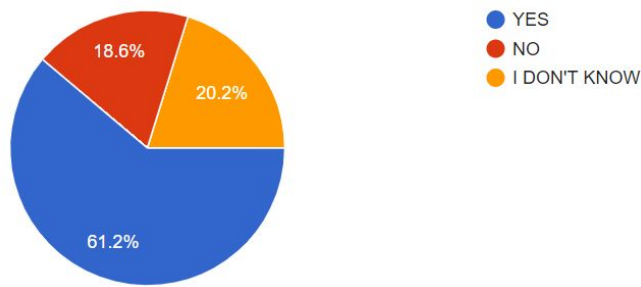


Figure. 10 Social Media impact on consumption process

Are you familiar with Italian Wines?

186 responses

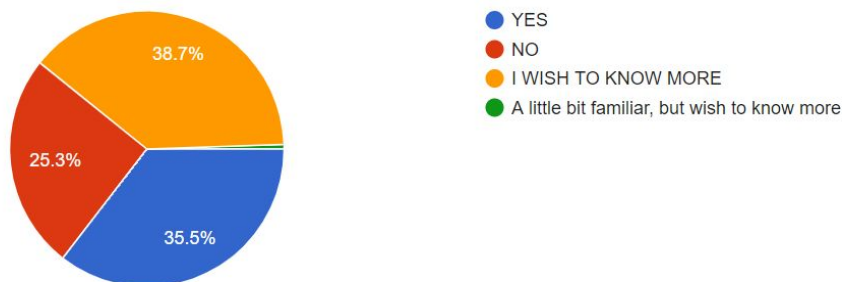


Figure. 11 Awareness of Italian Wines

Can you name any website or mobile application where you can find the comprehensive information on Italian Wines?

98 responses

https://www.enoitalia.it/enitalia/
Winefolly
Vivino
not really. some articles available at winefolly.com may have some interesting tidbits
NA
Unfortunately no 😞
https://www.wineshop.it/en/
I never tried to search for that specifically
Can't recall

Figure. 12 Recalling the info source of Italian Wines