

# WINE TOURISM AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY IN THE MUNICIPALITY OF AMYNTAIO

George Damianos  
Student of School of Rural and Surveying Engineering,  
Faculty of Engineering of the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki,  
THESSALONIKI, GREECE  
E-mail: [gdamiano@topo.auth.gr](mailto:gdamiano@topo.auth.gr)

&  
Dr. Electra Pitoska  
Assistant Professor, Financial Applications Department,  
School of Management & Economics,  
Technological Education Institute of Western Macedonia,  
KOZANI, GREECE  
E-mail: [ilpitoska@yahoo.gr](mailto:ilpitoska@yahoo.gr)

## ABSTRACT

Wine-tourism in Greece began to organize the last two decades. The international literature shows that Wine-tourism supports the local economies through better utilization of resources in rural areas and the consumption made in these. In order to reflect the contribution of wine tourism in local development, in June 2011, an empirical research was carried out. As field of the survey the Municipality of Amynteo was chosen. From the research findings have been recorded the benefits of local wine industries, the benefits of local communities and businesses and inhibitors for further development.

**Key Words:** *Wine-tourism, local development, rural areas*

## INTRODUCTION

Wine-tourism (or Oenotourism), which began in Germany in 1920, in Greece began to organize the last two decades. Important role in this development played the financial aid in the field through E. U. and national funding (Leader, Development laws, e.t.c.). The international literature shows that Wine-tourism supports the local economies through better utilization of resources in rural areas and the consumption made in these. The various benefits of wine tourism positively influence the professionals of both disciplines, wine and tourism and also the local community and economy.

In order to reflect the contribution of wine tourism in local development, in June 2011, an empirical research was carried out. As field of the survey the Municipality of Amynteo was chosen, because in this district operate 11 wineries, hotels, restaurants, an Environmental Center (Arcturus), and an office for alternative activities.

The survey was conducted through questionnaires completed by personal interview. From the statistical processing and analysis of 25 questionnaires have been recorded the benefits of local wine industries, the benefits of local communities and businesses and inhibitors for further development.

### 1. Wine tourism

Wine tourism as a discrete field of research is inchoate, yet there has been rapid development in this field since the mid 1990s.

Wine tourism is an area of growing interest because of its potential to contribute to regional development and employment at times of rural restructuring, particularly through the development of inter and intra industry networks (Hall M., Cambourne B., Macionis N., Johnson G., 1997).

There have been numerous definitions ascribed to Wine tourism in the international literature. (G.Peters 1977, Gary Johnson 1997, Brock Camborne 1999, South Australia Tourism Commission 1997, ect.)

The most common definitions of Wine tourism are highly connected to visitors' motives and experiences (Hall & Macionis 1998) and can be summarized as such: "Visits to vineyards, wineries,

ISBN: 978-960-287-139-3

events/festivals and wine exhibitions. In this context, wine tasting and experiencing a wine region are the main reasons Wine tourism is effected”.

Australia’s National Tourism Strategy (1998) expands this definition by focusing more on the experience: “Visits to wineries and wine regions in order to get familiarized with the Australian contemporary life style and combining at the same time the indulgence of tasting wine and whatever comes with it such as food, nature and cultural events”

The definitions that focus on the consumer are of great importance, since it is primarily the consumer that defines the product “wine tourism”. There are actually three dimensions that frame wine tourism: the wineries, the tourist agents (that represent wine regions) and consumers. According to that, wine tourism is a) a form of consumerist conduct, b) a strategy through which the wine destinations communicate and promote their tempting products, in relation to their wine and image and c) a marketing opportunity for wineries that is associated with public’s education and selling wine (Getz 2000).

## **2. Regional development and enhancement of agricultural tourism**

Wine tourism is a form of agricultural tourism and both are parts of alternative touristic industry. Tourstic industry aims to expand the touristic period and better utilize the natural resources of a region/country in order to reinforce the local economy (Logothetis 1999).

In Germany wine tourism was introduced in 1920, while in Greece during the last twenty years. This can be partly attributed to economic investment on this area of business through communal and national funds (Leader, developmental Law, ect.).

The European Union was troubled by the decreasing touristic activity and thus enacted laws to disperse the vacations period, since the middle of 1992. At the same time, major changes are realized in the rural areas of Europe. The creation of tempting living conditions in rural areas especially for young people highly depends on the effectiveness of the available resources.

Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> programming period (2000-2006), investments on agricultural tourism and wine tourism that satisfy the national and local priorities, were promoted through the Ministry of Agriculture: Communal Initiative LEADER+, Agricultural Development & Countryside Reconstruction and Complete Peripheral Programs (Ministry of Agriculture, 2003).

More particularly, culinary and accommodation infrastructure was improved, farmyards with available accommodation were created, educational, religious and curative tourism was developed, local centers that organize and promote agricultural tourism, pilot applications, professionals’ corporate networks were introduced. A number of services, products and activities are related to the development of agricultural tourism. They are provided by the local people and they are based on the best possible utilization of the local human, touristic, cultural and natural resources. The services provided are accessible to the visitors and are directly connected to the environment, the cultural legacy, the architectural structure and the life style of the local people.

## **3. Benefits from Wine tourism**

There are various benefits from wine tourism that positively affect the professionals from both industries, wine and tourism and also the local communities and economies. However, these benefits are not widely appreciated. There are many wine regions internationally where the wineries are skeptical about differentiating their wine product through tourism and thus the relationship between wine and tourism is not particularly recognized (Hall, Macionis, 2000). These circumstances are changeable if the benefits from wine tourism become comprehended, because “people change their viewpoints under the light of new information or data” (Piperopoulos 1999, pg. 125).

The benefits from the wine industry are related to the building of an image and a reputation, the increase of selling rates, consumers’ education and communication with them, the protection of the brand’s name credibility. Furthermore, the wine industry has the opportunity to attract a larger section of the market and develop exports, the wineries have bigger profits (which is especially important for small wineries). The benefits

are also related to the further improvement of cooperations in the wine trade (public relations), the establishment of new cooperations with hotels, folklore museums, restaurants, ect., and the tasting of new wines.

The places-destinations of wine tourism are benefited by the development and differentiation of their local economies, the best utilization of their resources, the establishment of a united and unique positive image and reputation, the increased number of visitors and profits and the attraction of new and permanent tourists during an expanded touristic period.

The hosting communities are benefited by the development of communication, the expansion of relationships and knowledge spectrum, the change of mentality, the attraction of new investments, the increase of entrepreneurship and employment, the evolvment of new products and services (restaurants, stores, ect.) and the boost of local people's pride.

#### **4. The region of the case study**

##### **4.1 Amyntaio wines**

In the prefecture of Florina, in Western Macedonia lies the Amyntaio plateau, one of the most important vine-producing zones in Greece. The cultivation of grapes in the region has its roots in antiquity, as attested by archaeological findings and the widespread worship of Dionysus. Mountains such as Vora and Vitsi, in conjunction with the lakes that surround the area, constitute a unique spectacle of beauty, and create ideal conditions for growing vines. The mild climate, with cold winters and hot summers, the high altitude and the sandy soil offer suitable conditions for producing wines of great flavour and rich colour. The vine-growing region of Amyntaio is situated at an altitude of 600-700 meters, and covers an area of over 70,000 acres. It is a zone that has been accredited the Appellation of Origin of Superior Quality (OPAP) classification, while as a general rule the wineries of Amyntaion avoid the use of pesticides. The area is dominated by the Xinomavro variety, a variety both exquisite and versatile, since it has the ability to produce different types of wine (red, white and rose), but it also produces other varieties, both international and local. Wine cultivation has a distinct significance for the local social and economic life: alternative tourism and particularly wine tourism is growing, as the wineries of the area to be visited provide visitors with the opportunity to discover the methods and history of wine production and to taste the local products.

##### **4.2. The Wine Route of the Lakes**

The route of the Lakes geographically coincides with the viticultural areas of Western Macedonia. The climate is characterised by low temperatures and significant snowfalls during the winter, whereas in the summer, there are frequent strong winds from the north. The wineries at the Wine Route of the Lakes are: the Amyntaion Co-op, Kir-Yianni S.A. and Pavlou Estate in Agios Panteleimonas, Alfa Estate in Amynteon and Vogiatzi Estate and Zande Winery in Velvento Kozani. In Siatista Kozani one can visit the winery The Two Friends whereas in the area of Kastoria participating wineries are: Domaine Stergiou and Maggel Winery. Lakes Vegoritida and Petres are the landmarks of the region. At the banks of Vegoritida lake, visitors can have a meal at the local taverns of Agios Panteleimonas, overlooking the lake or go for a walk along the lake's bank. There is plenty of accommodation options. The lake of Petres is a protected area under the European programme Natura, due to the presence of predatory birds and other rare bird species. The programme aims at the protection of the rare species of birds and the conservation of the wildlife sanctuary. The Municipality of Amynteon has planned the construction of observation posts at the region and has issued a special informative leaflet concerning the lake of Petres.

The tour of the area can be combined with a visit to Nymfaio, which is situated at a distance of 23 kilometres off Amynteon. Nymfaio is a traditional settlement offering visitors a chance to admire the magnificent view, stroll through the village's cobbled streets and visit the folklore museum. At a small distance from the village there is the E4 path, taking visitors to a beautiful route along the beech forest of Mount Nymfaio. There are also facilities for horse-back riding and hand-gliding as well as mountain bikes rentals. Finally, visitors should not leave Nymfaio without visiting the Information Centre and the Brown Bear Sanctuary of Arktouros, a non-governmental organisation founded in 1992, actively working for the conservation of large carnivores in Greece and the Balkans. At Nymfaio there are traditional hotels providing high quality hospitality.

#### **5. The empirical research**

## 5.1 Methodology

In June 2011, a study was realized in order to point out the contribution of wine tourism to local development. The study is placed in the Municipality of Amyntaio, where there are 11 vineyards, hotels, restaurants, an Environmental Centre (Arktouros) and offices for alternative activities. This region is an important part of the Wine Routes in Northern Greece, the so called “The Wine Routes of the Lakes” and the businesses there participate in the Wine touristic Company of Vitsi. Taking part in the ‘Programme for the Promotion of Wine to Third Countries (Russia)’ is the not-for-profit organisation ‘Amyntaion Wine’, which is based in Amyntaion in the Florina prefecture.

The study was conducted by questionnaires filled during personal interviews. The questionnaires were structured on four units and they included closed and open-ended questions. The first unit includes data for the interviewee and his/her business. The second unit documents the benefits of local wine businesses from wine tourism by asking 10 questions. The third unit evaluates the benefits of the local communities and economies from wine tourism by asking 10 questions. The fourth unit records the entrepreneurial profile of the area, explores how wine tourism affects economic profits and evaluates the contribution of wine tourism to the development of Wine Roads in Northern Greece and the Wine touristic Company of Vitsi. 25 businesses were chosen as a reliable sample that would meet the needs and aims of the study. All businesses are members of the Wine touristic Company of Vitsi. 25 questionnaires were completed.

## 5.2 The research findings

The participants vary from being young to being up to 70 years old. The majority of them are 41-50 years old (47, 82%).

Entrepreneurs seem to have a high level of education. 30, 43% of them are University graduates, 21, 73% are Technical Institutions’ graduates and 4, 34% have Master degree. 56, 50% of the interviewees have attended higher education, 39, 12% secondary education and only 4, 34% primary education. The level of education plays an important role to the entrepreneurial development in the touristic economy of the region. During the last twenty years, there have been important investments in the area and the local entrepreneurs are innovative and professional.

The participants show an equal distribution as far as the number of years they are engaged to their businesses is concerned. The options 1-5, 6-10, 11-15 years of being in the business are represented by exactly the same percentage 17, 39%. 26% of the participants count 16-20 years of entrepreneurial occupation while 13% are in the business from 21 to 25 years. On the whole, 52, 17% of the interviewees own their businesses from 1 to 15 years and 43, 34% from 16 to 30 years. Only one of the participants counts more than 30 years of entrepreneurial activity.

The participants cover a wide range of entrepreneurial activities. More particularly: guest houses (30, 43%), restaurants (26%), wineries (21, 73%), alternative activities (4, 34%), traditional products (4, 34%), Café and bars (4, 34%) local authorities and commissions (8, 68%). It should be reminded that all businesses are members of the non-for-profit organization “Wine touristic Company of Vitsi”.

All the participants (100%) agree that the establishment of accessible wineries has contributed significantly to the development of wine tourism.

The development of wine tourism in the Municipality of Amyntaio positively influenced the wine industry of the area.

1. According to the interviewees, wine tourism has averagely benefited (39, 13%), significantly benefited (39, 13%), very significantly benefited (21, 73%) the image and the reputation of the wine industries in the region.
2. When it comes to the increase of selling rates, 4, 34% of the participants think that wine tourism has barely benefited the local wine industries, 4, 34% think that it slightly benefited, 26% think that it averagely benefited, 39, 13% think that it significantly benefited and 26% think that it very significantly benefited the wine industries.

3. The benefits are also important in the area of consumers' education and communication with them. 60, 86 % of the interviewees think that the benefits are significant and very significant. 30, 43% of them think that wine tourism averagely benefits this area and only 4, 34% did not answer because they did not have an opinion for the matter.
4. When it comes to brand's name credibility (Region with wines Protected Designations of Origin of Superior Quality) the benefits vary from average (39, 13%) to significant (34, 78%). Only 13% of the participants evaluate the benefits as very significant and 4, 34% did not answer to the question because they did not have an opinion for the matter.
5. The development of wine tourism caused average increase to the attraction of new sections of the market and to export rates (43, 47%). 21, 73% evaluate this increase significant, 17, 39% insignificant and 13% very significant.
6. The development of wine tourism resulted in increased profits for the wineries. This is regarded as very significant by the 30, 43% of the participants, significant by the 21, 73% and averagely significant by the 30, 43%. Only 8, 68% think that the contribution is insignificant. 4, 34% did not answer because they did not have an opinion for the matter.
7. The majority of the interviewees think that wine tourism improved the cooperations in the wine trade and the public relations in general (56, 47%). 39, 13% consider this improvement average.
8. Wine tourism helped the establishment of cooperations with hotels, folklore museums, restaurants ect. Many of the participants consider this contribution very significant (34, 78%) and more consider it as significant (43, 47%). It should be noted that the "Wine Routes of Northern Greece" created such cooperations and increased the number of the members.
9. The possibility to taste new wines is considered significant by the 34, 78% of the participants and very significant by the 17, 39%. 26% of the interviewees are not particularly pleased as they consider this contribution of average importance.

Save from the local wine industries, the development of wine tourism has also benefited local economy in general.

1. 39, 13% of the participants answered that they consider significant the benefit from wine tourism to the differentiation of the economy and better utilization of natural resources. 34, 78% consider this benefit of average importance and 17, 39% very significant.
2. The development of wine tourism has significantly contributed to the establishment of a united and unique image and reputation for this destination. Very significant contribution: 30, 43%, significant contribution: 39, 13%, average contribution: 26%.
3. The development of wine tourism has also caused considerable increase to the amount of visitors and to the economic resources of the area. The percentages in this unit are: very significant contribution: 34, 78%, significant contribution: 52, 17% and average contribution: 13%.
4. The development of wine tourism and the emergence of accessible wineries with different activities have attracted new and recurrent tourists. The percentages in this unit are: very significant contribution: 13%, significant contribution: 43, 47% and average contribution: 39, 13%.
5. It can be also concluded that the development of wine tourism is partly responsible for the expansion of the touristic period. The percentages are: significant contribution: 43, 47%, average contribution: 30, 43%, insignificant contribution: 17, 39% and very significant contribution: 8, 69%.
6. As far as the contribution of wine tourism to the establishment of new businesses is concerned, the interviewees were rather skeptical as the economic crisis has already affected entrepreneurship in the region. Even though many businesses have been established during the past twenty years, the current economic situation is disappointing. The percentages in this unit are: significant contribution: 21, 73%, average contribution: 21, 73%, slightly significant contribution: 17, 39%, insignificant contribution: 13%, very significant contribution: 26% and significant under certain circumstances: 8, 69%.

The development of wine tourism has influenced the local community of the Municipality of Amynaion. Here are the study results:

1. The hosting communities are benefited by the development of communication, the expansion of relationships and knowledge spectrum and the change of mentality. 47, 82% of the participants answered that wine tourism significantly contributed to this development. 13% considers the contribution very significant and 39, 13% averagely significant.
2. In this unit, the majority of the participants (39, 13%) think that wine tourism played an important role to the attraction of new investments and the development of entrepreneurship. 30, 43% considers this contribution of average importance and 21, 73% of very significant importance.
3. The vast majority of the interviewees (73, 91%) think that wine tourism contributed very significantly to the emergence of new products and services (restaurants, stores, ect.). It should be mentioned here

that one of the participant businesses was established as complementary to wine tourism and gastronomy.

4. It seems that the development of wine tourism and related activities made the local people proud in a significant degree (47, 82%) and in a very significant degree (21, 73%).

#### Entrepreneurial Profile-Factors

1. It worths mentioning that the entrepreneurs have developed cooperative relationships among them (39, 13%) and 21, 73% feels that the level of competition is low while 30, 43% feels that the level of competition is higher.
2. Entrepreneurs of the area believe that the Wine Roads of Northern Greece have contributed to the development of wine tourism. More particularly, 34, 78% answered that the development of wine tourism should be mainly (60-75%) attributed to the Wine Roads of Northern Greece.
3. 21, 73% think that the Wine tourism Company of Vitsi has less contribution (30-45%). Equal percentage thinks that the Company has greater contribution (45-60%) and 26% of the participants consider the Company's contribution even higher (60-75%).
4. Finally, this is how the participants evaluate the contribution of wine tourism to the general activity of the local businesses. From 1-15% (17, 39%), from 15-30% (39, 13%), from 30-45% (30, 43%) and from 60-75% (13%).

According to the interviewees, the main factors that inhibit the further development of wine tourism and the region in general are:

- Poor road network (100%)
- The annulment of the railway line that connected the region to the big urban centers since 1900 (100%)
- The organized promotion of the region and its wines (85%)
- The emergence of numerous energy production units with lignite that, except from the environmental burden, deform the natural landscape with the huge chimneys.

The majority suggests the following:

- Improvement of the road network
- Refunction of the railway line
- Implementation of new promotion methods

## 6. Conclusions

After the review of the literature and the statistical processing and analysis have been recorded the following conclusions:

- During the past twenty years, the Municipality of Amyntaio has been a place for not only agrotourism investments but also for wine tourism development.
- The wine tradition and the natural environment were utilized and combined with investments through European business programs (Leader, ect.).
- The entrepreneurs of the area are of high educational level, which undoubtedly plays an important role for the development of the touristic economy. During the past twenty years, this region has been a zone of high level investments, innovativeness and professionalism.
- The development of wine tourism in the Municipality of Amyntaio significantly benefited the local wine industry.
- The positive influence wine tourism caused on the consumers' education and the communication with them is very important. Furthermore, wine tourism resulted in higher profits for the wineries, improvement of the wine trade cooperations, promotion of new cooperations with hotels, folklore museums, restaurants, ect. The opportunity to taste new wines is also considered important.
- The beneficial impact of wine tourism on the image and reputation of the local wine industry is rated average. Also average is considered the impact on the selling rates, the protection of brand's name credibility and the attraction of new sections of the market.
- The local economy has been considerably improved since the number of visitors increased, the local economy differentiated and developed by better utilizing its resources and a united and unique positive destination image has been established.
- The impact on the attraction of new and recurrent visitors and on the expansion of the touristic period is considered average.

- The participants evaluated the contribution of wine tourism to the establishment of new businesses rather skeptically. During the study, the economic crisis had already influenced the entrepreneurship of the region. Even though many businesses have been established during the past twenty years (wineries, restaurants, ect.), the current economic situation is disappointing.
- Wine tourism also influenced the local community of Amyntaio. The development of wine tourism influenced the community in terms of communication, expansion of relationships and knowledge, change of mentality, emergence of new products and services and boost of pride for their community. Wine tourism also played an important role to the attraction of new investments, increase of entrepreneurship and employment.
- The entrepreneurial profile is rather good and the entrepreneurs collaborate well together. The Wine Roads of Northern Greece play an important role to the development of wine tourism and cooperative relationships. The Wine touristic Company of Vitsi plays an important but secondary role.

### Bibliography – References

- Getz Donald (2000), *Explore wine tourism: Management, Development & Destination*, Cognizant Communication Corporation 2000
- Hall M. & N. Macionis (1998), *Wine tourism in Australia and New Zealand*, R.W.Batler
- Hall C. Michel, Sharples Liz, Cambourne Brock and Macionis Niki, 2000, *Wine Tourism around the World- Development, Management and Markets*, Butterworth Heineman
- Hall M., Cambourne B., Macionis N., Johnson G., (1997), *Wine Tourism and Network Development in Australia and New Zealand: Review, Establishment and Prospects*. *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, ISSN: 0954-7541
- Johnson G. (1997), “*Surveying wine tourism in New Zelend*” from the edition *Proceedings of the first national Tourism Students- Conference (p.61-66)- Tourism Club*
- Logothetis M., (1999), *Tourism & Vialable development*
- Peters Gary (1977), “*American Winescapes- The Cultural landscapes of America’s Wine country*”.
- Piperopoulos G. (1996), *Επικοινωνώ άρα υπάρχω, Ελληνικά Γράμματα, Αθήνα ISBN 9789603441915*
- South Australian Tourism Commission (1997), *Wine and tourism: A background research report*. Adelaide
- Stevenson Tom, *Sotheby's Wine Encyclopedia: Fourth Edition, Revised, 2011*
- Wine Producers Association of Vineyards in Northern Greece