

**ANTHROPOGENIC RESOURCES - OPPORTUNITIES
FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF WINE TOURISM IN OLTENIA**

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ABSTRACT

The paper presents some viticultural centers in Oltenia, where viticulture, once well-represented, has seen a decline in terms of cultivated areas and interest in using grape production through winemaking (e.g., Brabova, Brădești, Plenița). The paper aimed to highlight the history of the place, the evolution of vineyards in the area, as well as recent activities focused on the capitalization of the economic potential of the localities that are the viticultural centers. With the launch of the Wine Route concept, tourist interest in wine-producing and historical areas has increased, especially since wine tourism offers interesting experiences through wine tastings, gastronomic dishes, and the beauty of the places. For this reason, the long-term tourism development of the Oltenia region should also consider oenotourism resources, which ensure the diversification of the local economy and the creation of new job opportunities for the community, with an impact on improving the quality of life for residents.

INTRODUCTION

The Oltenia region as a whole, has been less explored from an oenotourism perspective, with most references made in a broader, national context to other wine regions with a tradition in this field of activity. Oenotourism or wine tourism is a form of tourism that focuses on discovering wine regions, their specific winemaking products, and integrating them into the tourism circuit by capitalizing existing or potential tourism resources and services and highlighting traditional culinary arts. First it appeared in the 1970s-1980s in the USA, then wine tourism has rapidly expanded. The Grands Vignobles Capitals Network plays a significant role in this field by highlighting initiatives in the wine sector through the annual Best Of Wine Tourism competition.

Benefiting from native grape varieties, exceptional wines, and the millennium-old viticultural tradition of the country, in recent decades, a new generation of winemakers have been making efforts to revitalize wine tourism and put Romania on the world map as an important wine tourism destination, with the contribution of European funds. Law no. 164 of June 24, 2015, on vineyards and wine in the common organization of the vitivincultural market, establishes the general legal framework for the operation of the vitivincultural sector in Romania. Another step forward is represented by Law 79/2019, which designates the first Sunday of October as the "National Day of Gastronomy and Wines in Romania".

Oana Bărbulescu (2017) appreciates that the transformation process affecting the global wine industry is being felt cautiously in the Romanian market, with wineries employing biodynamic cultivation and winemaking techniques and showing a tendency to engage in wine tourism as a means of promoting wine. A paper dedicated to this subject (Giugea et al., 2020) classifies the forms of tourism and the resources involved in practicing wine tourism. It presents both "natural resources" capable of "providing an ecologically viable (economically exploitable) framework" and "anthropogenic" resources that "support participation in tourism activities" in a region.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

The study aims to evaluate the anthropogenic resources with a potential for oenotourism/wine tourism in less popular viticultural centers in Oltenia and to highlight the interest in this activity in those areas. The research methodology was based on several stages. In the first stage, a review of the relevant literature was conducted, followed by the filtering of pertinent information in the field of viticulture in the Oltenia region. Both traditional and web-based sources were used, including documents from the Dolj County branch of the National Archives.

The second stage of the research involved obtaining information through visits to the viticultural centers under consideration. The final stage was focused on gathering data by applying a questionnaire. The questionnaire was applied online to a sample of 50 persons with different ages and occupations from the studied viticultural centers.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The obtained results were structured according to the study's objectives. In terms of anthropogenic resources, importance was given to the history of the area, the presence of vineyards and wineries.

The viticultural center of Brădești includes the following localities: Brădești, Scăești, Coțofenii din Dos, Almăj, Melinești, and Goiiești. Within this area, Brădești itself holds a special place, being a settlement with ancient traditions in grapevine cultivation. The historical evolution has been uninterrupted. Historical research has demonstrated human activity dating back to the Stone Age (6000 – 2500 BC), continuing through the Thracian-Getaic, Dacian-Roman, Roman, and Byzantine eras. The locality was first documented in 1582, in a decree issued by Mihnea Turcitul, the ruler of Wallachia (1577-1583 and 1585-1591). In terms of historical landmarks, Brădești includes a significant number of historical monuments.

Viticulture in the locality of Brădești is a tradition documented since 1864: "Vineyards are found on the property of the inhabitants; they yield good red wine" (MDGR, vol.I., 1898).

Within this viticultural center, the company Vinaltus Ltd has recently developed, located in Almăj locality. The vineyard area is bordered by the Jiu, Amaradia, and Almăjel rivers, which provide favourable conditions for viticulture, manifested through the air flows that pass through the locality, prolonged solar radiation exposure, and soil rich in clay and gravel. For over 15 years, the company has managed 9 hectares of grapevine, developing a range of wines such as: Demeter, Corvus, Picote, and Galla.

The Brabova viticultural center is large and includes the following localities: Secu, Seaca de Pădure, Predești, Breasta, Gogoșu, Botoșești Paia, Brabova, Grecești, and Cernătești. Among these localities, two have stood out in the field of viticulture: Brabova and Breasta.

The history of the Brabova locality is known from ancient times, dating back to the 1st and 2nd centuries when these territories were under Roman rule. In the village of Voita, the Dacian fortress located in the eastern part of the village is documented, where handcrafted and wheel-thrown ceramic fragments have been discovered. The defensive wall located on the southern side of the fortress measures 55 meters (Ciucă 1988). Additionally, the Brabova locality preserves other historical landmarks such as Cula Isvoranu, built by the nobleman Barbu Isvoranu in the 18th century, which later, in 1841, came into the possession of nobleman Radu Geblescu and was inherited by his son Constantin Geblescu. There is also the church of "Sfintii Voievozi," built in 1885. Regarding viticulture, the locality has an area of 55.50 hectares, which in 1890 produced 65.99 hectoliters of red wine and 1044 hectoliters of white wine (MDGR 1898, vol. I).

The terrain profile led the communist authorities to establish new vineyards in Brabova, starting in 1960, on a reddish-brown soil. Under these conditions, it was mentioned that "establishing vineyards represents the fairest and most economical use of these lands, which benefit from excellent sun exposure throughout the year" (SJAN Dolj, S.C. Agroind Brabova fond, file no. 3/1962). Therefore, in 1961, there was an area of 57 hectares with vineyards in Brabova, which doubled to approximately 107 hectares in 1965. Ten years later, in Brabova locality, there was an area of 300 hectares cultivated with diverse grape varieties such as Afuz-Ali, Sauvignon Blanc, Italian Riesling, and Muscat Ottonel.

The viticultural tradition of Breasta locality dates back to around 1887 when there was an area of approximately 15 hectares cultivated with grapevines belonging to General Ioan Argetoianu: "Vineyards cover about 15 hectares, on the estate of General Argetoianu; each resident has about 1/2 or 1 hectare of vineyards, which yield reddish-white wine, as they harvest mixed grapes" (MDGR 1898, vol. I). In 2009, the company Sanvino Prod. Ltd was established, which revitalized viticulture in Breasta and rehabilitated and modernized the wine cellar built in the 19th century, which had belonged to the politician Constantin Argetoianu. From 2010, over 31 hectares of grapevines were replanted with grape varieties such as Fetească neagră, Merlot, Cabernet Sauvignon, Syrah, Fetească albă, Tămâioasă românească, and Sauvignon. The Breasta wine cellar developed the 7ARTS wine brand, which is highly regarded by connoisseurs and has put Breasta locality back on the wine maps of the country.

In Breasta, another company continues the viticultural tradition, starting in 1999 with the regeneration of the old plantation. Subsequently, the cultivated area increased to 35 hectares, with grape varieties including Fetească albă, Fetească regală, and Sauvignon (www.domeniilebaniei.ro). The wines obtained from the Breasta grapes are marketed under the brands *Innocenția* and *Crama nouă*.

The Plenița viticultural center is located in the western part of Dolj County, approximately 65 km far from the city of Craiova. The commune was first documented in a record from 1562 during the reign of Petru cel Tânăr, ruler of Wallachia, who confirmed a document from the time of Dan I (1383-1386), the brother of Mircea cel Bătrân (1386-1418), as indicated in the work "Plenița,

vremuri, datini, oameni – studiu monografic" (Plenița, times, traditions, people - a monographic study) compiled by Elisabeta and Constantin Saliu.

The delimited area associated with the Plenița viticultural center includes the following localities: Plenița, Caraula, Vârtoș, Izvoare, Perișor, Giubega, Vela, and Radovan. In the past, Plenița was known as an important wine-producing region. The mayor of Plenița, Puiu Călăfățeanu, mentioned in an article "Plenița, a lively commune," that "after a phylloxera attack at the end of the 19th century, the first grapevine was brought to Plenița from Negotin, Yugoslavia. Nearly 50 years later, vineyards in Plenița covered 550 hectares, mostly planted with valuable varieties such as Pinot, Italian Riesling, Treminer, Muscat Ottonel, Muscat Hamburg, Cabernet Sauvignon, as well as Romanian varieties like Tămâioasa românească, Fetească albă, and Fetească neagră. At that time, wine production reached 450 wagons" (<https://cvlpress.ro/19.02.2014/plenita-o-comuna-vie>). The peak of the Plenița viticultural center was during the period from 1964 to 1991, during the communist era, when the vineyard area expanded, and Plenița wines were well-known across extensive regions. Since 2012, S.C. Pomiviticola Ltd has successfully planted an area with table and wine grape varieties in Plenița, reaching approximately 50 hectares at present. There are plans to build a winery in the future.

Respondents' profile.

The questionnaire was conducted online and administered to a diverse sample of 50 individuals hailing from various age groups and professional backgrounds within the studied viticultural centers. This approach ensured a broad spectrum of perspectives and insights into the subject of wine tourism and its potential hindrances. By including participants with differing ages and occupations, we aimed to capture a comprehensive understanding of the community's sentiments regarding wine tourism, its developmental challenges, and the opportunities it presents. This diverse cross-section of respondents allows for a more robust and well-rounded analysis of the region's views and experiences related to wine tourism, laying the groundwork for informed strategies to promote its growth and prosperity.

In terms of demographics, the percentage of female respondents (56%) was slightly higher than the percentage of male respondents (44%). According to their self-reported education levels, 50% had completed high school, 40% had higher education, and 10% had completed primary school. In terms of age groups, the largest share of respondents was of 20-50 years age range (approximately half of the respondents), followed by the 50-60 years age group. There was an equal number of respondents aged over 65 and under 20 years.

Results of the questionnaire.

The question "Do you know the meaning of wine tourism?" was likely important and placed as the first question in your questionnaire because if a significant portion of respondents indicates that they do not know the meaning of wine tourism, it highlights an opportunity for education and awareness-building. This information can inform future marketing or promotional efforts related to wine tourism in the region. (Figure 1).

This group of respondents (who answered „No” to the question mentioned in the figure above) appears to have little to no understanding of the concept of wine tourism. They may not be familiar with what it entails or may have misconceptions about it.

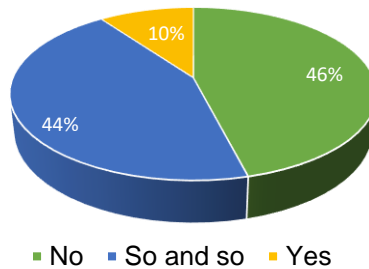


Figure 1. Do you know the meaning of wine tourism?

There is also another group of respondents who seems to have some awareness or partial understanding of wine tourism. They might have heard of it or have a vague idea but may not have a comprehensive understanding. The smallest group of respondents, only 10%, have a clear understanding of what wine tourism means. They likely know that it involves traveling to vineyards or wineries to learn about and enjoy wine production, tasting, and related experiences.

Interpreting these results, it's evident that there is a considerable portion of the surveyed population (46%) that lacks knowledge about wine tourism. This could suggest an opportunity for education or promotion of wine tourism in the area or among the target audience. The fact that 44% have a vague understanding indicates some level of awareness, and efforts could be made to provide more information to deepen their knowledge. The 10% who are already familiar with wine tourism could be potential enthusiasts or potential customers, making them an important target for wine tourism-related businesses or initiatives.

Overall, these results suggest a range of awareness levels about wine tourism, and strategies for promoting and educating people about wine tourism could be tailored to these different groups to increase its popularity and understanding.

Regarding the results of the question "Do you consider Oltenia to have wine tourism potential?" (Figure 2) the majority of respondents (58%) indicating "no" may suggest several sociological factors at play. It's possible that there is a lack of awareness about the wine tourism potential in Oltenia among this group.

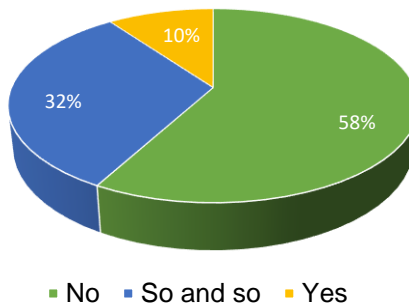


Figure 2. Do you consider Oltenia to have wine tourism potential?

They might not have heard of or been exposed to wine tourism opportunities in the region. Additionally, it could indicate a negative perception of Oltenia or its

wine tourism offerings, possibly due to factors such as limited marketing or negative stereotypes associated with the region. The 10% who responded positively and believe that Oltenia has wine tourism potential likely have certain sociological characteristics. They might be more informed about the region's wine tourism offerings, have had positive experiences, or have a favorable perception of Oltenia. These results can be explained as a combination of factors such as awareness, perceptions, personal experiences, and cultural attitudes. To enhance wine tourism in Oltenia, it would be important to address the factors influencing the "no" and "so and so" responses. This could involve better promotion and education about the region's wine tourism potential, improving the quality of experiences, and addressing any negative stereotypes or misconceptions. Additionally, building on the positive perceptions of the 10% who responded positively can help attract more tourists and boost the region's wine tourism industry.

For the question *"Is the viticultural potential of the Oltenia region being sufficiently exploited"* (Figure 3) half of the respondents believe that the viticultural potential in Oltenia is not being sufficiently exploited. This response could indicate a perception among this group that there is untapped potential in the region for wine production and related activities. This might be influenced by factors such as limited visibility of Oltenia's wines in the market, inadequate promotion, or an impression that the region is not realizing its full capacity for wine production. About 22.2% of respondents believe that the viticultural potential in Oltenia is being sufficiently exploited. This group may have a positive perception of the region's wine industry, seeing it as well-developed and productive. Their sociological perspective could be influenced by exposure to successful wineries or wine-related events in Oltenia, leading them to believe that the region is making the most of its viticultural potential.

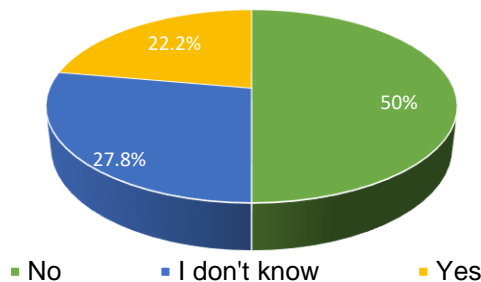


Figure 3. Is the viticultural potential of the Oltenia region being sufficiently exploited?

Regarding the question „Can you identify three weaknesses hindering the development of this type of tourism ”(Figure 4), we may observe that accessibility issues (36%) are a significant hindrance to wine tourism development. This may include inadequate transportation options to reach the wine-producing regions of Oltenia or poor road infrastructure. The lack of sufficient accommodation spaces (20%) in or near wine-producing areas can deter tourists. Wine tourists often seek accommodations close to wineries to fully enjoy the experience. The lack of interest or support from local authorities (14%) can impede the development of wine tourism. Government and local authorities play a vital role in promoting and regulating the industry. If they are not actively involved or supportive, it can hinder

infrastructure development, marketing efforts, and regulatory frameworks needed for a thriving wine tourism sector.

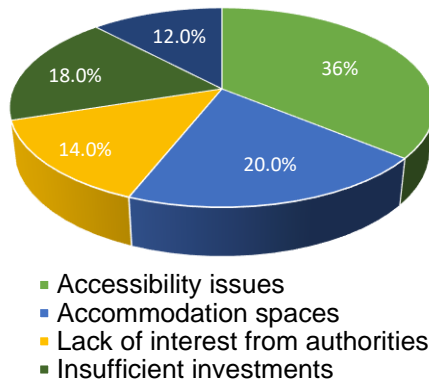


Figure 4. Can you identify three weaknesses hindering the development of this type of tourism?

At the end, in response to the question "What does wine tourism develop in subsidiary?", the highest number of responses were related to the fields of agriculture and tourism (Figure 5).

The question is important because it helps assess the broader economic and societal impacts of wine tourism beyond the immediate tourism sector.

Wine tourism often leads to the development of agriculture as a subsidiary industry. When tourists visit vineyards and wineries, they become exposed to the processes of grape cultivation and wine production. This exposure can create a demand for local products, including wines and related agricultural products. Wineries may also diversify their offerings to include products such as cheeses, or fruits produce. This can stimulate the growth of agriculture in the region, as farmers may respond to the increased demand by expanding vineyards or adopting sustainable agricultural practices to support the wine tourism industry.

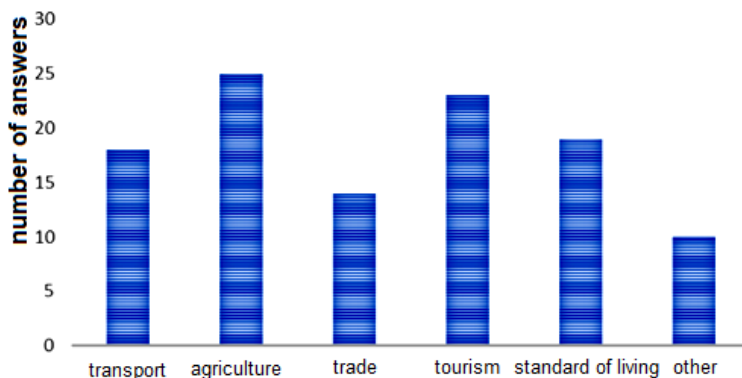


Figure 5. Responses to the question "What does wine tourism develop in subsidiary?"

CONCLUSIONS

By its geographical position, Oltenia is one of the most representative wine regions in our country and enjoys recognition both nationally and internationally. Wine tourism in the Oltenia region holds significant potential but has not been fully exploited. The inclusion of projects aimed at capitalizing the anthropogenic resources of Oltenia for oenotourism purposes in local, county, and regional development strategies could provide a viable solution for a better use of the existing resources. Therefore, it is imperative that the dialogue with the local community becomes an integral part of the decision-making process.

The survey findings provide valuable insights into the perceptions and awareness of wine tourism in the studied viticultural centers. Notably, a substantial proportion of respondents (46%) lack a clear understanding of the concept of wine tourism, highlighting the need for education and awareness-building initiatives in the region. This knowledge gap presents an opportunity for local authorities, businesses, and tourism organizations to enhance promotional efforts and highlight the economic and cultural benefits of wine tourism. While there is a diverse range of opinions about the viticultural potential of Oltenia, a significant number (50%) believe it is not being sufficiently exploited. This suggests a call for increased investment, marketing, and support from both public and private sectors to unlock the full potential of the region's wine tourism industry.

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