

Opportunities and challenges in the contribution of wine routes to wine tourism in Italy – A stakeholders' perspective of development[☆]

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ABSTRACT

Wine tourism in Italy, the largest wine producing country in the world, has achieved outstanding performance over recent years. However, various institutional, managerial, and professional delays in the field impede Italy from developing its full potential as a wine tourism destination, most likely because of the still unsatisfactory engagement of all possible stakeholders. A recent step forward has been the specific amendment regarding wine tourism provided by the 2018 Budget Law, anticipating regulatory norms for the sector. In this scenario, Italian wine routes, established by Law No. 268/1999 and consolidated by the law on vines and wine (Law No. 238/2016), should play a key role in the governance and management of the local wine tourism industry. However, the state of the industry presents opportunities and (above all) challenges. Our research contributes to exploring this scenario, providing evidence from the field and potential guidelines for development through territorial stakeholders' engagement.

1. Introduction

Italy has emerged in recent years as the most important country in the world for volume of wine production. In 2016, a remarkable figure of nearly 50 million hectoliters was reached (sources confirming these data, albeit with slight differences, include ISTAT, Assoenologi, Coldiretti, International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV), and other institutions). More generally, however, there has been a decline in world production, calculated in 2016 at approximately 260 million hectoliters (OIV), with significant reductions in the production not only of France but also of Argentina, Chile, and South Africa. Worldwide consumption is calculated to decrease slightly (less than 1%) on a consolidated over time quantity of approximately 240 million hectoliters (International Wine & Spirit Research).

Regarding the 2017 harvest, however, evidence is indisputable as concerns the significant drop in Italian and international production because of the climatic issues, most likely due to the process of global warming. In fact, estimations were approximately 40 million hectoliters for Italian production (Assoenologi), which, regardless, has still been by far the most influential in the world. Other nations have also been influenced by the climatic issues (for 2017, OIV estimated less than 250 million hectoliters globally). Ultimately, normal climate conditions in

Italy should have provided a large harvest (estimations predicted more than 50 million hectoliters).

Table 1 and Table 2 highlight the worldwide trends of wine production and consumption from 2014 to 2017, respectively, with evidence of the differences between Old World and New World wine countries. In fact, with all the limitations of a generalization, Old World countries have been increasing their production (as abovementioned, 2017 was a very unusual season), while New World countries have been increasing their consumption. Clearly, this is true also for Italy, for which a well-known framework remains valid, i.e., production at very high levels in absolute and/or relative terms and internal consumption declining or at best stagnating (source: oiv.int, n.d) generate a need to 'invent' new markets beyond the domestic one, with a consequent push towards exportation.

In the search for new opportunities for wine markets (Galati, Crescimanno, et al., 2017; Galati, Tinervia, et al., 2017), growing importance is attributed to wine tourism, which has now become a successful phenomenon, as shown by the estimations of the XII National Report on Wine Tourism by the National Association of "Wine Cities". More than 14 million accesses (including overnight stays and excursions) were predicted for 2016, with a total turnover of approximately 2.5–3 billion euros, with even more optimistic expectations for the

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Table 1

Worldwide wine production trends from 2014 to 2017. Million hectoliters. OIV data from italianwinecentral.com.

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017
Italy	44.20	50.00	50.90	42.50
France	46.50	47.00	45.20	36.60
Spain	39.50	37.70	39.70	32.50
USA	23.10	21.70	23.70	23.30
Argentina	15.20	13.40	09.40	11.80

Table 2

Worldwide wine consumption trends from 2014 to 2017. Million hectoliters. OIV data from italianwinecentral.com.

Country	2014	2015	2016	2017
USA	30.60	30.90	31.70	32.60
France	27.50	27.30	27.10	27.00
Italy	19.50	21.40	22.40	22.60
Germany	20.30	19.60	20.10	20.20
China	15.50	16.20	17.30	17.90

Table 3

Foreign arrivals in Italy from 2015 to 2017. Million tourists. UNWTO data from onint.it.

Foreign arrivals	2015	2016	2017
Worldwide	1195.00	1239.00	1323.00
Italy	50.90	52.50	58.70

period from 2017 to 2018. Visits to the cellar are not only a compelling way to promote wine products (Than and Kirova, 2018) but also a profitable type of retailing (Lee, Madanoglu, & Ko, 2016), if considering the increase in foreign tourist arrivals in Italy, as shown in Table 3 (CISSET - Ca' Foscari estimated 65 million tourist arrivals in Italy for 2017).

In developing wine tourism, a central role is clearly reserved for the territory, from the *hardware* point of view (landscape, cultural heritage, etc.) and from the *software* point of view (services, utilities, etc.). From this perspective, the contribution of the institutions in general and the local communities in particular, combined with the entrepreneurial energy of the wine tourism sector, could and should provide the impetus for the further development of wine tourism in Italy.

For these reasons, in 2017, the National Observatory on Wine Tourism of the National Association of "Wine Cities", which normally investigates municipalities, developed research with a specific focus on wine routes (mentioned in the 2017 Italian Consolidated Law on Vine and Wine). The investigation was conducted with the scientific supervision of the staff of the Postgraduate Course in "Wine Business" at the University of Salerno (of which "Wine Cities" is the Official Partner).

The research that follows has further elaborated on the main results emerging from the investigation, with a specific focus on the necessary/opportune involvement/engagement of the territorial stakeholders (Pucci, Casprini, Galati, & Zanni, 2018; Santini, 2019; Shams, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c, 2017). A final contribution presents implications and directions regarding wineries, wine-related firms, other wine tourism operators, public institutions, and other stakeholders involved with different roles in the Italian and even European wine-tourism chain, given the increasingly important role of "Wine Cities" in "RECEVIN", the European Network of Wine Cities.

2. Relationships and interactions of wine routes with territorial stakeholders: A brief outline

Territory – and even more in particular *terroir* when considering

wine – is one of the most important elements for wine business (Ciasullo & Festa, 2012; Ciasullo & Festa, 2014; Festa, Ciasullo, et al., 2016; Festa, Cuomo, et al., 2016; Pucci, Faraoni, Rabino, & Zanni, 2016; Pucci, Casprini, Rabino, & Zanni, 2017). Thus far, most likely, it has been more important for the old world of wine (Italy, France, Spain, and Europe in general) rather than the new world of wine (USA, Chile, Argentina, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand) and clearly rather than the third (Banks & Overton, 2010; Maizza, Fait, Scorrano, & Vrontis, 2017) world of wine (China, India, and so on). Similarly, territory and *terroir* play an important role in conceptualizing, designing, and managing wine routes (Brás et al., 2010; Brazil Marques & Santos, 2014; Pérez-Calderón, Ortega-Rossell, & Milanés-Montero, 2016).

Although Italy is the largest wine producer in the world, its success in markets, most of the all at the international level, still has a large margin for improvement, particularly considering the average price for a liter (Festa, Ciasullo, et al., 2016; Festa, Cuomo, et al., 2016; Festa, Cuomo, Metallo, & Foroudi, 2017). Similarly, better performance is also possible for Italian wine tourism, which currently has not yet reached full development, especially considering the potential of the country (Festa, Vrontis, Thrassou, & Ciasullo, 2015; Tommasetti & Festa, 2014). Similar problems have also arisen for wine routes, most of the all because of their frequent governance and the related engagement/responsibility, normally a wide public/private collaboration, is not clear, or at least is not shared (Bregoli, Hingley, Del Chiappa, & Sodano, 2016), even though this problem is also common for all wine routes throughout the world (Hassen & Tremblay, 2016; Kunc, 2010).

Nonetheless, despite the abovementioned problems, wine routes are still potential vehicles for wine tourism development (Lanfranchi, Giannetto, & Dragulanescu, 2013; Loiodice, 2015). In fact, their nature of amplifiers of the interaction between wine business and wine tourism (Bruwer & Alant, 2009; Lavandoski, Vargas-Sánchez, et al., 2016) can exploit the growing success throughout the world of tourist orientation towards wine and food preferences (Ellis, Park, Kim, & Yeoman, 2018; Eşitti & Buluk, 2018; Peira, Paruzzo, Pairotti, & Bonadonna, 2017). Similarly, by virtue of wine routes, great achievements are possible not only for territories (as tourism destinations) but also for wines (del Campo Gomis, López Lluch, Sales Civera, & Agulló Torres, 2010). In fact, the function of wine routes as vehicles of brand identity (Bruwer, 2003; Bruwer & Johnson, 2010; Lewis, Byrom, & Grimme, 2015; Vlachvei & Notta, 2009; Vlachvei, Notta, & Efterpi, 2012) can increase wine notoriety, consideration, and reputation (Faraoni, Pucci, Rabino, & Zanni, 2017; Pucci et al., 2016), but, naturally, only if a coherent positioning is acquired (Zanni, 2004).

Thus, in an important wine country such as Italy, it is crucial to understand the strengths and weaknesses of wine routes, so to (re)use them as further amplifiers for even greater expansion of wine tourism. In this respect, considering the natural connection between wine routes and related territory, great contribution comes from the involvement/engagement of territorial stakeholders (Bregoli et al., 2016; Carrà, Mariani, Radić, & Peri, 2016; Salvado, 2016a, b; Del Chiappa, Bregoli, & Kim, 2018; Santini, 2019).

More intense interaction, collaboration, and value cocreation among stakeholders of the wine routes is decisive in particular for the Old World of Wine (Contò, Vrontis, Fiore, & Thrassou, 2014; Lavandoski, Pinto, et al., 2016; Liasidou, 2018; Metodijeski & Micev, 2018; Thach & Cogan-Marie, 2018) – and in general for the whole wine sector (Wongprawmas & Spadoni, 2018) – but is also important for the wine routes of other countries. For example, wine routes' stakeholders' cooperation seems crucial for Canada (Hassen & Tremblay, 2016), Mexico (Fernández, Ruiz, & Gómez, 2018), Chile (Hojman & Hunter-Jones, 2012), South Africa (Bruwer, 2003), Australia (Soontiens, Dayaram, Burgess, & Grimstad, 2018), and many others.

The following investigation, conducted in 2017, is to the best of our knowledge the most recent survey about the global perimeter of Italian wine routes, aiming at understanding their state of the industry and even proposing some considerations for their relaunch. In particular,

specific steps of the field research have concerned “the perception of the perception” (Scorrano, Fait, Iaia, & Rosato, 2018) on behalf of the stakeholders about the functioning of the wine routes.

3. Scope and method of the research

Three essential reasons have moved our attention to focusing on a specific survey on wine routes in Italy. First, the wine routes were established by Law No. 268/1999, and thus, they are an institutional vehicle for wine tourism in Italy, leading to a possible first research question (“What are the results and achievements after all these years?”). Second, they have been the object of specific mention in the wine tourism context by Article No. 87 of the Consolidated Law on Vines and Wine No. 238/2016, leading to a possible second research question (“What about their state of the industry currently?”). Third, the widespread sensation of the experts in the field, collected by the authors in numerous empirical feedbacks, is that many Italian wine routes – probably most of them – are simply not working, thus leading to a possible third research question (“What about their strategic and operative near future, with specific regard to stakeholders' relationships?”). From these considerations, a global research question has arisen, most likely the most important in this context:

“What are the new possibilities/opportunities of development for Italian wine tourism from the point of view of Italian wine routes, with specific regard to stakeholders' relationships?”

The nature of the research is clearly explorative. However, the research methodology that has been adopted is quantitative and descriptive, in particular to obtain a complete analysis of the state of the industry for all the Italian wine routes, with a specific focus on stakeholders' theory and practice, according to a practical/theoretical framework from the institutional point of view of what a wine route should be. Naturally, only some Italian wine routes have provided useful responses to the survey; thus, the extension of the current results to other wine routes is not possible from a statistical point of view, the sample of investigation being based on convenience (and not random) criteria. At the same time, however, considering that the respondents are ‘probably’ the most active wine routes in Italy, they could also be considered as case studies (Yin, 1994) and extreme cases in particular (Eisenhardt, 1989). If so, the adopted research methodology could be described as ‘blended’, since it investigates extreme cases (sampling from a qualitative point of view) with a descriptive approach (investigating from a quantitative point of view). The fundamental elements of the research methodological process that has been adopted are set out below.

- 1) The investigation was conducted on the wine routes that are listed by “Wine Cities” and distributed throughout Italy. All the wine routes listed in the “Wine Cities” database were contacted (133) and requested to respond first to e-mails and then to telephone reminders. At the end of the survey, 25 responses were collected: the extent of the investigation, in conclusion, concerned 25 of the 133 wine routes (18.80%). From these considerations, it is evident that the data collected in the field derive from a sample selected on a convenience basis.
- 2) The questionnaire was designed by a research group pertaining to the postgraduate course of “Wine Business” at the University of Salerno and structured in a single section with 16 questions (cf. Appendix). Responses were not based on previous scales but on empirical evidence, given the explorative nature of the research. Thus, questions and answers were constructed inductively through interaction with a focus group on “Wine Cities” (Morgado, Meireles, Neves, Amaral, & Ferreira, 2017). Prior to the survey in the field, the questionnaire was tested on a pilot sample of 3 wine routes listed in the “Wine Cities” database (obviously, without involving them again in the main survey).
- 3) The questionnaire was administered in online mode using a

computer platform that generated the links to the questionnaire, the web masks for compilation (accessible from computers, tablets, and smartphones), and the spreadsheet displays to simplify the compiling of the fields, the accuracy of the answers, and the subsequent setting up of the database.

The data for the resulting findings were subjected to descriptive statistical calculations, which have been the object of process mainly through automatic procedures (the software application for the online interviews also provided internal operations for numbers and graphs). Specific subjects, instead, have been the object of further investigation, when necessary, through standard spreadsheets, to have full control of the data analytics, process, and calculation. It should be noted that for reasons of mere approximation/rounding of percentages, some calculations in the database do not add up perfectly to 100% but to 99.99% or 100.01% instead (Figs.2–5).

4. A possible theoretical/practical framework for Italian wine routes

To better understand and finalize the field investigation, a systemic vision of what an Italian wine route should be has been the object of detailed analysis. The most important reason at the basis of this reflection concerns the essential nature that the legislator had in mind when defining at the institutional level the wine routes' concept in Italy. That is also why the following scheme is an organic representation of what an Italian wine route should be. In fact, the components of the framework have been extracted through the detailed analysis of Italian Law No. 268/99, from a practical point of view, and then they have been interconnected through a speculative effort of social and economic engineering, from a theoretical point of view, to frame a wine route (in Italy).

From the detailed analysis of Law No. 268/99, four main components are necessary for a wine route in the provision of the Italian legislator, namely, territory, grapes/wine, values, and activities/services, with all four – with the exception of the territory, which naturally includes all territories – providing particular categories of sub-components (cf. Fig. 1). This theoretical/practical framework seems to constitute a valuable representation of the necessity/opportunity of interaction, collaboration, and value cocreation on behalf of the various stakeholders insisting on a territory for pursuing and achieving the social and economic success of an Italian wine route. Most likely, however, the same reflections are quite extendable to other wine routes throughout the world.

5. Main evidence arising from the field investigation on wine routes perception by territorial stakeholders

5.1. Name of the wine route and province of reference

- 1) Strada dei Vini Doc della Murgia Carsica (Bari)
- 2) Strada dei Vini e dei Sapori dei Colli di Forlì e Cesena (Forlì-Cesena)
- 3) Strada dei Vini e Sapori dei Colli di Rimini (Rimini)
- 4) Strada dei Vini Etrusco Romana in Provincia di Terni (Terni)
- 5) Strada del Barolo e Grandi Vini di Langa (Cuneo)
- 6) Strada del Franciacorta (Brescia)
- 7) Strada del Prosciutto e dei Vini dei Colli di Parma (Parma)
- 8) Strada del Prosecco e Vini dei Colli Conegliano Valdobbiadene (Treviso)
- 9) Strada del Sagrantino (Perugia)
- 10) Strada del Torcolato e dei Vini di Breganze (Vicenza)
- 11) Strada del Vino Cerasuolo di Vittoria (Ragusa)
- 12) Strada del Vino Colli Euganei (Padova - Padua)
- 13) Strada del Vino dei Colli di Candia e di Lunigiana (Massa Carrara)
- 14) Strada del Vino dell'Etna (Catania)

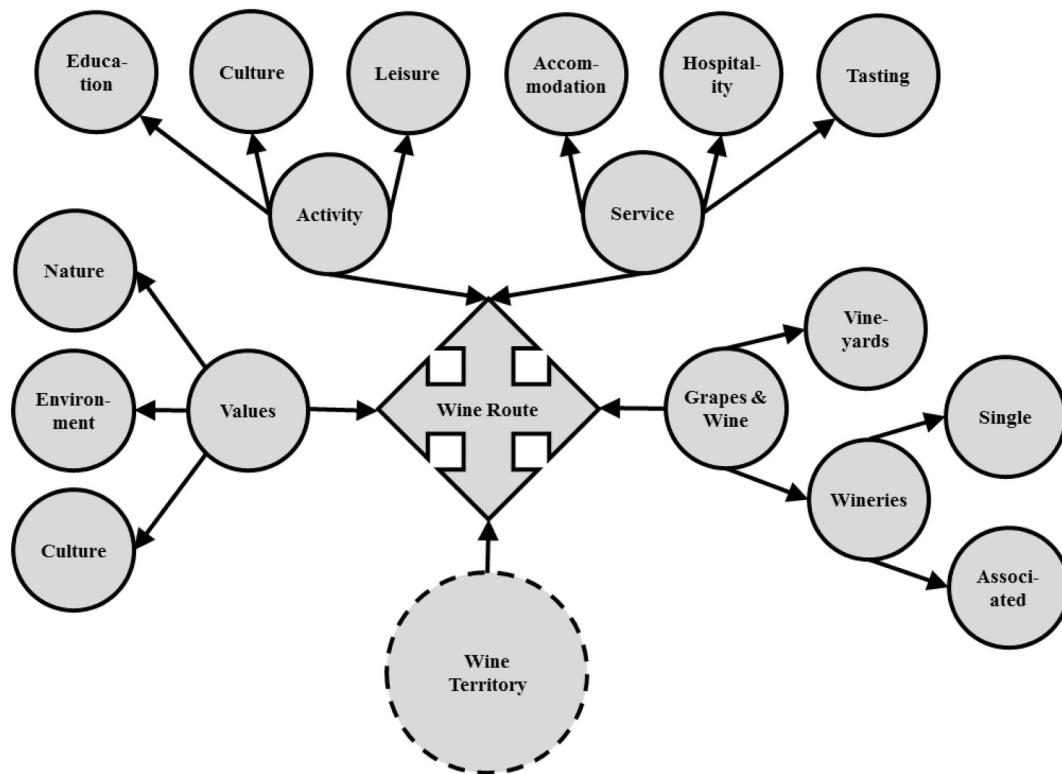


Fig. 1. – Theoretical and practical framework for the institutional description of an Italian wine route.



Fig. 2. Geographical distribution of the respondents.

- 15) Strada del Vino e dei Sapori del Trentino (Trento)
- 16) Strada del Vino e dei Sapori Val di Mazara (Trapani)
- 17) Strada del Vino e dell'Olio Lucca Montecarlo e Versilia (Lucca)
- 18) Strada del Vino Terre di Arezzo (Arezzo)
- 19) Strada del Vino Val di Noto (Siracusa - Syracuse)
- 20) Strada del Vino Valpolicella (Verona)
- 21) Strada del Vino Vernaccia di San Gimignano (Siena)
- 22) Strada dell'Olio e del Vino del Montalbano - le Colline di Lenardo (Pistoia)
- 23) Strada della Romagna (Ravenna)
- 24) Strada Reale dei Vini Torinesi (Torino - Turin)
- 25) Strada Vini e Sapori Colli d'Imola (Bologna)

The responses came from 9 out of 20 regions (consequently, no responses from 11 out of 20 regions). The concentration of the response distribution has a clear focus on the northern and central parts of Italy. This result seems in line with the overall production of wine in Italy; in fact, all the most important regions, from a quantitative and/or qualitative point of view, have provided at least one response (Veneto, Emilia-Romagna, Apulia and Sicily from one side and Tuscany and Piedmont from the other). Thus, from a 'geographical' point of view, the responses are quite representative.

5.2. Highlights from the survey that specifically concern territorial stakeholders

Wine routes are perceived by wine tourism operators (wineries, restaurants, hotels, etc.) as an important entity for the good functioning of wine tourism on the territory in 84% of cases (while for 16%, they are not). This outcome seems to be encouraging evidence for continuing investments in wine routes.

Wine routes are perceived by the residents of the territories belonging to the wine routes as an important entity for the good functioning of wine tourism in the area in 68% of cases (while for 32%, they are not). Even with the evidence from the previous response, a good perception about the wine route is also present on this occasion (more than 2 out of 3 residents). This result constitutes an evident sign and could be the starting point for communicating more accurately and efficiently about the existence and the functioning of the wine route at least initially, throughout the territory of reference. In many cases, many 'assets' of the local territory are unknown to local inhabitants at first. A major awareness of these resources (Galati, Crescimanno, et al., 2017; Galati, Tinervia, et al., 2017) could undoubtedly contribute to the global success, both internal and external, of wine routes (Table 4).

Interaction between the wine tourism industry and the public entities involved in the promotion of the territory (at the provincial, regional, national, and/or international level) was considered insufficient (5.48 on average on a 0–10 scale). This result is most likely one of the

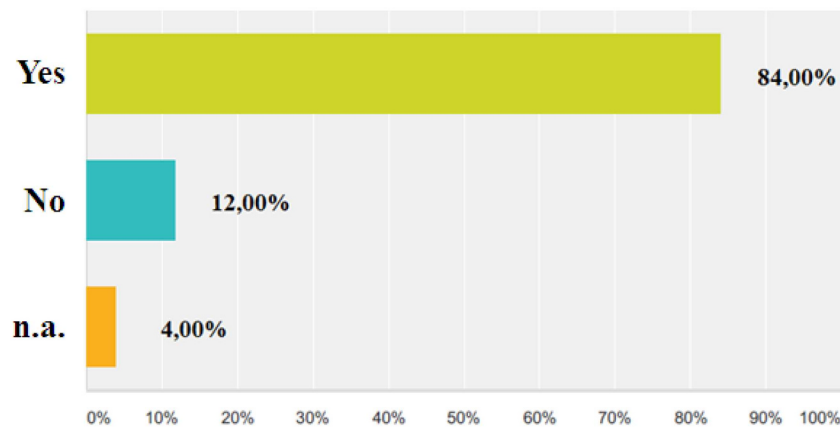


Fig. 3. Do wine tourism operators (wineries, restaurants, hotels, and so on) perceive your wine route as an important organization for the good functioning of wine tourism in the territory?

most important that has emerged from the overall field investigation. Quite likely, the responsibility of this missing interaction is perceived as due above all to the public side, considering that the private operators along the wine route could have only commercial benefits from the satisfactory functioning of the wine route. Thus, a strong intervention in this respect, most of the all from a cultural point of view, is indispensable. A comparison with the following question/response, however, is even more interesting.

The municipalities belonging to the wine routes are collaborative and proactive with the wine routes as institutional entities for 58.33% of the respondents, while unfortunately, 41.77% are not. Compared with the previous question/response, clearer evidence emerges, i.e., in general, the interaction between wine routes and municipalities is perceived as good (almost 6 out of 10), even though improvable. Thus, some problems concerning interaction, collaboration, and value co-creation seem much more evident with other public entities, at the provincial, regional, national, and/or international levels, but not so much with the municipalities of the territory. Even though they are travel stakeholders from a geographical point of view, they could be interesting partners indeed; especially considering the urgent problems that municipalities, primarily smaller ones, i.e., those under 5000 inhabitants, have in the Euro area with the Fiscal Compact Agreement.

5.3. Other fundamental highlights emerging from the explorative survey

- Approximately 36% of the wine routes that responded to the survey are spread along a territory that includes between 11 and 20 municipalities.
- Approximately 96% have a website; however, assuming that the

responding wine routes can be considered at least as having ‘good practices’ (being contactable and willing to contribute to the survey), 4% of them have not (yet) created a website.

- Very interestingly, 24% of the respondents have already created an app.
- Approximately 44% of the responding wine routes organized more than 3 events in 2016 on their own.
- Wine tourists arriving in their territory, as a percentage of the global revenues of the wineries, seem to account on average 19.08%.
- Wine tourists arriving in their territory, as a percentage of the global revenues of the other operators of the wine tourism industry (restaurants, hotels, other local manufacturers, etc.), seem to account on average 22.21%.
- The quality of transportation infrastructure in the single areas of interest is considered insufficient (4.83 on average on a 0–10 scale).
- For more than 90% (of the respondents), arrivals in the wineries and wine tourism revenues have increased or at least remained stable with regard to the previous estimations of “Wine Cities” (approximately 14 million accesses for wine tourism in 2016, with a turnover between 2.5 and 3 billion euro).
- Approximately 70% of the respondents are aware of the introduction in 2017 of the Consolidated Law on Vines and Wine: those who know it judge it as being more than sufficient (6.21 on average on a 0–10 scale).

6. Discussion of the results

The most evident answers to the global research question of this study (“What are the new possibilities/opportunities of development

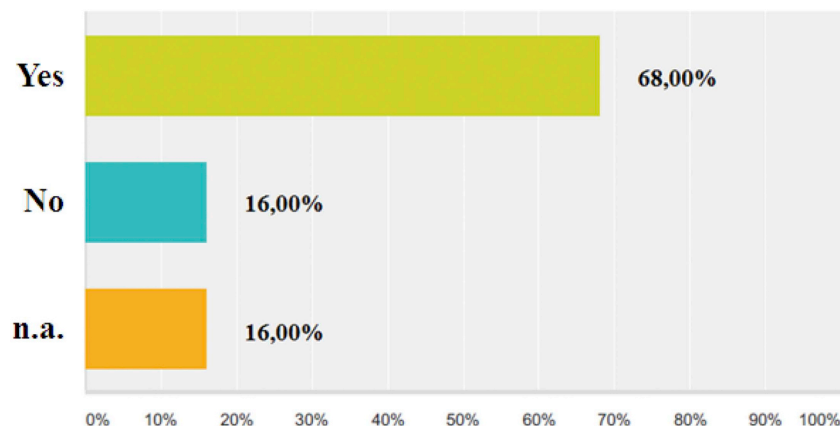


Fig. 4. - Do the residents of the territories belonging to the wine route perceive it as an important organization for the good functioning of wine tourism in the area?

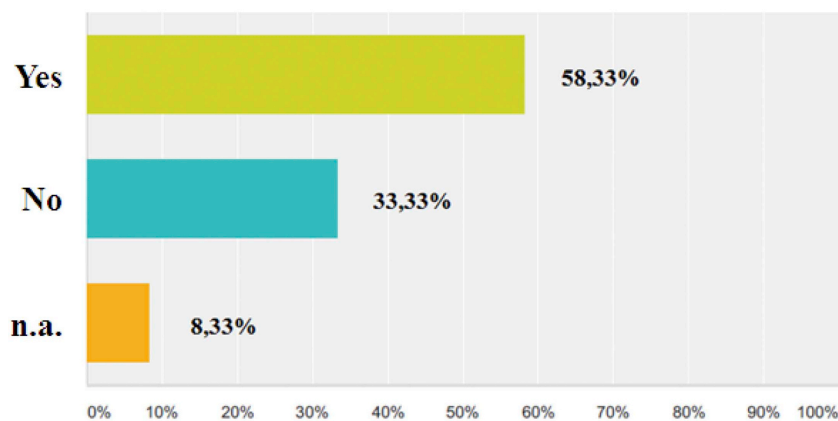


Fig. 5. - Are the municipalities belonging to your wine route collaborative and proactive with the wine route?

Table 4

- How do you evaluate, on a scale from 0 to 10, the interaction between the wine tourism operators, the municipalities belonging to your wine route, and the other public entities (provincial, regional, and national) involved in the promotion of the territory? (Sufficient = 6.0. Weighted average resulting from the survey = 5.48).

Mark from 0 to 10	Percentage
0	8,00%
1	4,00%
2	0,00%
3	8,00%
4	0,00%
5	16,00%
6	20,00%
7	32,00%
8	12,00%
9	0,00%
10	0,00%
	100,00%

for Italian wine tourism from the point of view of Italian wine routes, with specific regard to stakeholders' relationships?") are as follows:

- Widespread use of new technologies (websites, apps, and so on);
- Strong engagement in organizing wine-based events on their own; and
- In-depth interactions with wine tourism operators (less with public entities).

However, the investigation on Italian wine routes has revealed opportunities and challenges. The most important evidence emerging from the survey is a widespread perplexity about the phenomenon at the standard level: for example, even though it could be very strange to imagine and accept, the main difficulty of the investigation concerned finding current contacts because since their start-up, many wine routes had ceased, or had not updated web/e-mail/phone contacts, or, perhaps, had never actually started their activities.

7. Limits of the research

The main constraint of the current research concern is first, the dimension of the universe and second, the selection of the sample. As concerns the dimension of the universe, this is a factual problem because currently it is not possible to know exactly how many wine routes in Italy are actually in existence; from our evidence, in fact, most of the 133 wine routes that are listed in the database of the National Association of "Wine Cities" should not be available. Without this

number, even the calculation of a sample (25) is coherently impossible, or at least misleading (i.e., the number of respondents in this investigation could be an representative number from a statistical point of view for a universe of 133 elements, but only if all the other wine routes worked). Regarding the selection of the sample, in this investigation, it was chosen on a convenience basis and not on a random basis; thus, the statistical representativeness of the sample cannot be valid/reliable.

8. Future directions of study

For the refinement of the research, acquiring evidence of the precise number of the wine routes that truly work, most likely by adopting proxy criteria (if a phone call has no response within a fixed time, if an e-mail message has no response within a fixed time, if the website is not online, and so on), is essential. Otherwise, statistical representativeness would always arise as a considerable obstacle for scientific validity and reliability.

For the development of the research, further studies should also concern the comparison between Italian wine routes and foreign wine routes regarding their structure (composition, organization, and governance) and their activity (marketing, production, and promotion). Such an investigation would allow the obtaining of evidence of the most important elements of the wine routes competitiveness in general, with a specific focus on stakeholders' relationships, governance and management.

9. Scientific and managerial implications

From a scientific point of view, the main findings emerging from the investigation – adoption of new technologies, wine-based events organized directly by the wine routes, and involvement/interaction with wine tourism operators – suggest that value cocreation with territorial stakeholders, and a prevailing bottom-up perspective, is an essential pattern for conceptualizing, designing, and handling wine routes. In practice, a successful approach to governing and managing wine routes, from the findings/evidence emerging from the 25 respondents, insists most of the all on the service that has been developed according to a systemic vision, and this is possible only in the presence of collaborative strategies among the different operators that belong to the wine route. These implications derive evidently from the results of the study and by virtue of the theoretical/practical theory that has been used but are also supported by abundant scientific literature (Tommasetti & Festa, 2014; Festa et al., 2015; Salvado, 2016a, b; Salvado & Kastenzholz, 2017; Shows, Albinsson, & Stoddard, 2017).

A clear finding, which has emerged from the survey and is strictly linked to the above considerations, highlights that, from the point of view of wine route managers, involvement and engagement of wine tourism operators, residents of the territory, and incoming tourists with

the wine route is noteworthy. Instead, involvement and engagement are not adequate in the interaction with the public entities involved in the promotion of the territory (at provincial, regional, national, and/or international levels), while examples of effective collaboration exist with the municipalities ‘belonging’ to the wine routes. Thus, greater efforts should be made in general on behalf of both parties – public and private – to establish, enable, and enhance public-private partnerships concerning a promotion of the territory. This promotion would be concretely oriented to generate value for all the subjects involved in wine route functioning, also for attracting useful public funds from institutions other than the municipalities, whose investment possibilities, in the euro area, are tied by the Fiscal Compact agreement. These implications derive evidently from the results of the study but are also supported by abundant scientific literature (Bacal & Brega, 2013; Carrà et al., 2016; Cornelissen, 2017; Kesar & Ferjanic, 2010; Visser & Hoogendoorn, 2011).

10. Conclusion

The investigation on the Italian wine routes, as aforementioned, has revealed various opportunities and challenges. In particular, the survey has generated serious concerns about the functioning of the wine routes: for example, the main difficulty of the survey has been the retrieval of updated contacts because a specific wine route had ceased working, had not updated web/email/telephone details, or perhaps, had never actually started its activities. For these reasons, the 25 respondents can be considered at least good practices, greatly appreciable for their efforts, but unfortunately sporadic, and thus, not completely representative of the universe of Italian wine routes.

Nonetheless, these entities are as follows:

- Institutionally established by Law No. 268/99;
- Still present in the Italian territory even though with different organizations and results;
- Subjects specifically responsible, in theory, for contributing to the territorial governance of wine tourism, and this has also been reaffirmed in practice by Article No. 87 of the Consolidated Law on Vines and Wine (Law No. 238/2016).

Moreover, wine tourism has been affected by a specific amendment in the 2018 Budget Law, and this change, mainly focused on tax administration relative to wine tourism activities, can be envisaged as anticipatory to regulating the sector (and this has been happening already in part).

Finally, combining the results of the survey with the above considerations, in-depth reflection on behalf of all the entities involved in organizing and promoting wine routes in Italy is undoubtedly necessary, focusing as much as possible on governing wisely and managing fruitful relationships with all the territorial stakeholders. This focus seems mandatory to understand whether and how to resume and revive these wine tourism vehicles, which currently comprise too many contradictions emerging more generally from one Italian region to another, and more specifically from one Italian territory to another.

Compliance with ethical standards

Yes.

Author's contribution

The article is the result of the joint opinions of all the authors. In the editing phase, the “Scope and method of the research” section, the “A possible theoretical/practical framework for Italian wine routes” section, and the “Main evidence arising from the field investigation on wine routes perception by territorial stakeholders” section were written by Giuseppe Festa. The “Introduction” section and the “Discussion of

the results” section were written by Riad Shams. The “Scientific and managerial implications” section and the “Conclusion” section were written by Gerardino Metallo. The “Relationships and interaction of wine routes with territorial stakeholders: a brief outline”, the “Limits of the research” section, and the “Future directions of study” sections were written by Maria Teresa Cuomo.

Declaration of Competing Interest

None.

Appendix A. Appendix – Questionnaire

1. Name of the wine route

2. Province of reference (acronym)

Text box (max. 2 letters).

3. Role of the person answering the survey

4. How many municipalities ‘belong’ to the wine route?

Up to 5.

From 6 to 10.

From 11 to 20.

From 21 to 50.

More than 50.

5. Have you created a website for the wine route?

Yes

No

I do not know/No answer.

6. Have you provided an app for the wine route?

Yes

No

I do not know/No answer.

7. In 2016, how many events were organized directly by the wine route?

0

1

From 2 to 3.

More than 3.

8. Do wine tourism operators (wineries, restaurants, hotels, and so on) perceive the wine route as an important entity for the good functioning of wine tourism in the area?

Yes

No

I do not know/No answer.

9. Do the residents of the territories belonging to the wine route perceive the wine route as an important entity for the good functioning of wine tourism in the area?

Yes

No

I do not know/No answer.

10. On a 0–10 scale (6 is sufficient), how much would you rate the quality of the interaction between the wine tourism industry, the municipalities of the wine route, and the other public entities (at the provincial, regional, national, and/or international level) that are involved in the promotion of the territory?

Scale from 0 to 10.

11. In your opinion, what is the impact, as percentage of the revenues of the wineries in the area, due to wine tourists who arrive in the territory of the wine route?

Scale from 0 to 100.

12. In your opinion, what is impact, as percentage of the revenues of the other firms that are involved in the wine tourism industry (restaurants, hotels, other local producers, and so on), due to wine tourists who arrive in the territory of the wine route?

Scale from 0 to 100.

13. On a 0–10 scale (6 is sufficient), how much would you rate the quality of the infrastructure connections in the area of the

wine route?

Scale from 0 to 10.

14. Are the municipalities 'belonging' to the wine route collaborative and proactive with the wine route?

Yes

No

I do not know/No answer.

15. The XII National Report on Wine Tourism estimated the number of wine tourist arrivals in Italy in 2015 (considering altogether trips and overnight stays) as approximately 14 million. In your perception, has the number of wine tourist arrivals in your territory increased, decreased, or remained stable in 2016?

Increased.

Decreased.

Remained stable.

I do not know/No answer.

16. The XII National Report on Wine Tourism estimated the total turnover of wine tourism in Italy in 2015 as approximately 2.5 billion euro. In your perception, has the total turnover of wine tourism in your territory increased, decreased, or remained stable in 2016?

Increased.

Decreased.

Remained stable.

I do not know/No answer.

The questionnaire is complete. Thanks for collaborating.

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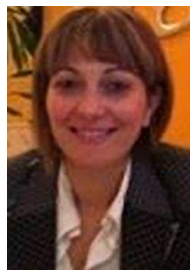
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