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Visitor profile of enological tourism in Slovakia: Implications of the regional analysis of the demand for wine-themed experience stay

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CITATION

Bíziková V, Psotová E. (2024). Visitor profile of enological tourism in Slovakia: Implications of the regional analysis of the demand for wine-themed experience stay. *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development*. 8(11): 8072. <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v8i11.8072>

ARTICLE INFO

Received: 19 July 2024
Accepted: 26 August 2024
Available online: 15 October 2024

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Abstract: In recent years, enological tourism, also known as wine tourism, has emerged as a globally popular tourism product. The role of wine tourism in Slovakia is similarly significant, given the country's favourable conditions for the development of wine tourism products. The objective of this study is to analyze the current demand for wine-themed experiences among tourists in the Nitra region. This paper presents a characterization of wine tourism based on an analysis of secondary sources. Following the processing of the initial findings from a demand-oriented questionnaire survey, the authors endeavor to delineate the profile of the wine tourism visitor by examining the demand for wine tourism from the vantage point of domestic consumers. It is the authors' contention that an understanding of the profile of the wine tourism visitor is beneficial in optimising the provision of wine tourism products and stimulating the development of tourism infrastructure.

Keywords: enological tourism; Slovakia; Nitra region; demand; wine-themed experience stay

1. Introduction

Wine tourism plays a pivotal role within the tourism system, contributing to destination attractiveness, product diversification, revenue generation, cultural preservation, environmental sustainability, and tourism marketing and promotion efforts. The integration of wine tourism into the broader tourism system serves to underscore its importance as a driver of economic, social, and environmental development in wine-producing regions across the globe. The globalization of wine consumption and the concomitant rise of wine culture as a lifestyle choice have contributed to the growth of wine tourism worldwide. Wine regions began to market themselves as tourist destinations, capitalizing on the distinctive terroir, cultural heritage, and culinary traditions that define them. Wine festivals, events, and accommodations with a wine-themed focus have become increasingly prevalent. Wine regions across the globe have made significant investments in infrastructure and marketing initiatives to attract visitors, which has resulted in the development of wine trails, wine routes, and wine-themed resorts. Furthermore, technological developments have enabled the creation of online booking platforms, virtual wine tours, and wine-related applications, thereby enhancing the accessibility and appeal of wine tourism.

Wine tourism has undergone a significant transformation, evolving from a niche activity largely confined to traditional wine-producing regions to a global phenomenon embraced by both wine enthusiasts and casual travelers. The growth of this sector is indicative of broader trends within the travel industry, including an increased demand for experiential tourism, culinary tourism, and sustainable travel experiences. In the 20th and 21st centuries, authors began to investigate the

incorporation of the wine industry into the tourism sector. As Kotur (2023) notes in his work, authors approach the study of enological tourism from a variety of perspectives. The initial perspective entails an examination of the supply side of enological tourism. The subsequent perspective examines the demand for enological tourism. The subsequent perspective on enological tourism pertains to the development of an experience for visitors. The final perspective concerns the development of enological tourism products. Furthermore, it documents the rise in the number of specialized publications on enological tourism since 2001. In the nascent stages of enological tourism research, attention was directed towards elucidating the interconnections between key actors, visitor behaviour and the tourism destination. Subsequently, the impact of various factors on the development of a favorable enological tourism experience was examined. In recent years, the impact of enological tourism on sustainability and destination image has been the subject of study.

In light of the growing importance of wine tourism and the need to develop products tailored to this sector, we initiated a research project to gain a deeper understanding of the significance and contribution of wine tourism in Slovakia. The objective of the present study is to examine the demand and preferences of domestic tourists with regard to wine tourism in Slovakia, with a particular focus on the selected Nitra region. The objective is to ascertain the profile of the visitor to enological tourism. The findings of this study can inform the development of wine tourism products that prioritize experiential stays and the optimization of the tourist offer. Prior research has concentrated on more general aspects of enological tourism, yet has not addressed the particular requirements and profiles of tourists in Slovakia. This paper aims to address this gap by conducting a comprehensive investigation into the demand of domestic tourists and their preferences in the field of enological tourism, with a particular focus on the Nitra region in Slovakia. By focusing on this specific region, we have provided valuable insights into the current state and role of wine tourism in an area that has excellent prerequisites for the development of enological tourism products, but lacks an in-depth understanding of visitor preferences. The objective of our research was to contribute to the creation of new knowledge that could support efforts to develop wine tourism products with a focus on experiential stays and optimization of the tourist offer in the Nitra region. In light of the aforementioned content, the article's objective is to provide an introduction to the theoretical background of wine tourism. Subsequently, an examination of the current state and role of wine tourism in Slovakia will be undertaken. In this section, we present a portion of the findings from our methodology research. Subsequently, we present our conclusions, discuss the implications of our research, and identify potential avenues for future inquiry.

2. Theoretical foundation

2.1. Winegrowing in Slovakia: Current status and trends

Wine tourism has been demonstrated to confer significant economic benefits at the national level, extending beyond the individual wine-growing regions to the broader national economy. The sector contributes to the development of rural areas, increases employment, and provides support to small and medium-sized enterprises in

the region. Viticulture and winemaking are becoming integral components of tourism packages, contributing to the influx of both domestic and international tourists and, consequently, to the overall growth in tourism revenue. Furthermore, the sector’s non-economic contributions, such as the creation of landscape architecture, are also significant (Euroekonom.SK, 2024).

Enological tourism represents a fascinating and attractive form of travel that encompasses visits to vineyards, wineries, and tasting rooms, where tourists can engage in the discovery and appreciation of diverse wine varieties. In recent years, there has been a notable expansion in the field of enological tourism. The growth of enological tourism is indicative of the advancement of the wine industry in a given country (Cambourne et al., 2000). The potential of enological tourism lies in its capacity to forge connections between the agricultural, wine-producing, and tourism sectors, thereby underscoring the distinctive and competitive attributes of wine regions (Salvado, 2016). However, the extent to which these facilities are available varies considerably from country to country and also from region to region. The concept of “winescape” represents an additional attribute that attracts visitors to a destination and appeals to the human senses, as wine is inherently capable of doing (Kubát et al., 2024). At the beginning of the 20th century, enological tourism was in its infancy in other European Union countries in comparison to the rest of the world (Mitchell and Hall, 2006).

Despite the Slovak wine industry’s historical prominence in the region, the current state of viticulture and winemaking in Slovakia is not auspicious. As illustrated in **Table 1**, the total area of registered vineyards has exhibited a downward trend since 2015. The Slovak wine-growing region is comprised of six distinct viticultural areas situated along an east-west axis in the southern portion of the country. These regions are distinguished by particular natural characteristics and a distinctive historical background. The aforementioned areas are subdivided into 40 wine-growing districts and 603 wine-growing municipalities.

Table 1. Change in the total area of vines in wine-growing areas.

Year	Area [hectare]	Absolute Increase	Growth Coefficient
2015	18,437	-	-
2016	17,598	-839	0.95
2017	16,610	-988	0.94
2018	15,415	-1195	0.93
2019	15,358	-57	0.99
2020	15,080	-278	0.98
2021	14,642	-438	0.97
2022	14,364	-278	0.98

(Own elaboration, 2024 based on Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture in Bratislava (2023)).

The largest part of the Slovak wine region, as listed in **Table 2**, consists of the South Slovak wine-growing region with an area of 4782 hectares. The second in order is the Malocarpathian wine-growing region with an area of 3879 ha and in third place is the Nitra wine-growing region with an area of 2671 ha. With an area of 1485 ha, the

Central Slovak wine-growing area follows, followed by the Tokaj wine-growing area with an area of 891 ha and the list is rounded off by the Eastern Slovak wine-growing area with 656 ha, which is the smallest.

Table 2. Area of registered vineyards by region in 2022.

Wine-growing region	Area (hectare)	Percentage share (%)
Malocarpathian region	3879	27
South Slovak region	4782	33
Nitra region	2671	19
Central Slovak region	1485	10
East Slovak region	656	5
Tokaj region	891	6
Total	14,364	100

(Own elaboration, 2024 based on Central Control and Testing Institute in Agriculture in Bratislava (2023)).

In the eighth edition of the World Atlas of Wine, Johnson and Robinson (2019) conducted an assessment of the current state of Slovak vineyards and concluded that the existing production capacity is insufficient to meet the demand for wine. Over time, there will be a reduction in the number of fruiting vineyards and in the quantity of grapes produced domestically, which is influenced by the prevalence of low-hectare authorities. In the present era, the area under vines has diminished due to the impact of pests and changes in lifestyle and subsequent urbanization. Additional factors contributing to the decline in production include the high costs associated with wine cultivation and production, complex legislative requirements, and the necessity for maintaining high hygiene standards. The situation is further complicated by the import of inexpensive wines from abroad and the lack of consumer awareness regarding the quality of Slovak wines, which has notably improved. The quality of Slovak wines is on par with that of foreign wines, and numerous wineries have been bestowed with esteemed local and international accolades. The majority of Slovak wineries and vineyards are oriented towards the local market, with exports occurring only in exceptional cases (Hronský, 2020). At this time, the fundamental challenge facing the industry is not the production of quality wine, but rather the effective marketing of that product.

In the survey, the territory is defined geographically as the Nitra self-governing region. This regional self-governing territorial unit is situated in the southwestern portion of the Slovak Republic. The selected territory is bordered to the east by the Banská Bystrica Region, to the north by the Trenčín Region, and to the west by the Trnava Region. The southern border of the Nitra Self-Governing Region also constitutes the state border with the Republic of Hungary (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic, 2023). The territory of the Nitra Self-Governing Region is bordered by the wine-growing regions of three distinct wine-growing areas: the South Slovak, Nitra, and Central Slovak wine-growing regions (Kompasová et al., 2023; Koprda et al., 2022).

The natural prerequisites of the Nitra region render it particularly suited to success in the field of enological tourism (Statistical Office of the Slovak Republic,

2023). The region's fertile soils, warmer climate, and sufficient water supplies reflect its considerable potential for agricultural production. Each wine-growing region comprises a number of wine-growing villages, which exploit the potential of the region in question. Of the total number of localities in the region, 271 are wine-growing villages, representing 76.55% of the total number of localities in the region. The considerable number of municipalities engaged in wine production is indicative of the region's significance within the broader context of the wine industry. The Nitra region, as shown in **Figure 1**, is home to 234 registered winegrowers, representing over 31% of the total number of wine-growing entities in Slovakia. Natural persons are the most prevalent legal entity, representing 50% of all entities. These are primarily small and medium-sized family businesses (Némethová and Krajčí, 2022). It should be noted that not all of the aforementioned entities engage in activities related to enological tourism.

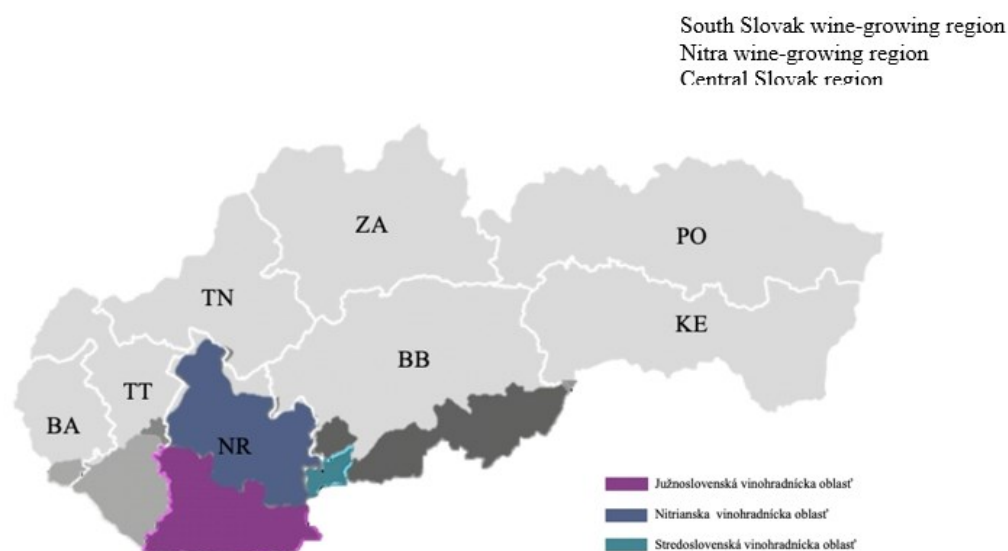


Figure 1. Wine-growing areas of the Nitra self-governing region on the map of Slovakia.

(Own elaboration, 2024 based on VinoGuru.sk (2016)).

Wine tourism, when managed responsibly, can contribute to the sustainable development of rural and agricultural regions and stimulate other types of tourism in the region, such as gastronomic tourism, rural tourism, cultural tourism.

2.2. Enological tourism in tourism classification

A survey of the literature shows that authors dealing with the issue of enological tourism or wine tourism classify this form of tourism under cultural tourism, gastronomic tourism, rural tourism or specialized tourism.

Hall (1996) defines wine tourism as visits to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and celebrations that include wine tasting and/or experiencing the wine region. This definition is supported by Gúčik (2020), who classifies wine tourism as a form of cultural tourism based on the motivation of the visitors in question. Kerekeš (2019) categorizes enological tourism as a form of rural tourism, which encompasses activities related to nature, agriculture, rural lifestyles and cultures, fishing, and

sightseeing. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) classifies enological tourism as a form of gastronomic tourism. Enotourism, a subcategory of gastronomy tourism, is defined as a form of tourism whose primary objective is to visit vineyards and wineries for the purpose of tasting, consuming, and/or purchasing wine, often at or near the source. In accordance with the UNWTO, the fundamental motivation of an individual engaged in gastronomic tourism is to participate in activities pertaining to the acquisition of knowledge regarding the local gastronomic traditions. The most common products include visits to local producers, participation in food festivals, attendance at cooking classes, and participation in other activities related to traditional or modern gastronomy (UNWTO, 2019).

Getz et al. (2007) classify wine tourism as niche tourism that is based on the desire to visit wine regions or where tourists visit wine regions and wineries while travelling for other reasons. This definition is complemented by Vystoupil et al. (2011), who link wine tourism to various forms of active tourism, such as hiking; cycling; visits to cultural, historical and natural sites; water stays and other activities.

In a recent study, Bem Maracajá et al. (2024) conducted a comprehensive analysis of the literature on enological tourism using the Web of Science database. They examined the number of publications on this topic between the years 2014 and 2022. The authors adopt a multi-faceted approach to the study of enological tourism, encompassing four key perspectives: wine segmentation, tourism experience, the sustainability of wine tourism, and the development of new theoretical frameworks for understanding wine tourism. The results demonstrate a clear increase in the attractiveness of the topic of wine tourism to researchers over time.

An overview of the exploration of enological tourism issues in previous studies is provided in **Table 3**. It briefly lists the authors and their research focus in terms of country, period of research, methodology and objective.

Table 3. Overview of authors in the field of enological tourism.

Authors	Period	Country	Methodology	Objective
Hall, C. M.	1996	New Zealand	Interviews	Analysis of wine tourism in New Zealand
Vystoupil et al.	2011	Czech Republic	Thirty-year results of the authors in geographical research	Geographic research on tourism
Kotur, A. S.	2020	India	Qualitative synthesis	Proposal of a conceptual framework for the wine tourism system
Krnáčová, P.	2021	Slovakia	Online survey	The benefit of linking winemaking with tourism, the attitudes of wineries towards enological tourism
Zhang, Y., Lee, H.	2022	China	Physical survey	Antecedents and consequences of co-creation experience in the context of wine tourism
Kubát, P., Králiková, A., Ryglová, K.	2023–2024	Czech Republic	Qualitative research	Definition of the concept of winescape in cooperation with wine tourism and wine destinations
Tafel et al.	2023	Germany	Online survey	Exploring the link between biodiversity and tourism in wine regions
Sthapit, E., Prentice, C., Ji, C., Yang, P., Garrod, B., and Björk, P.	2024	China	Online survey	Development of an alternative to Kim et al.'s (2012) model of memorable tourism experiences

(Own elaboration, 2024).

2.3. Demand for enological tourism and characteristics of the enological tourist

Demand can be defined as the aggregate of individual and collective requirements that motivate visitors to acquire goods and services. The strength of tourism demand is influenced by a number of factors. As Gúčík (2020) notes, tourism demand is contingent upon a number of factors, which are summarized in **Table 4**. These factors also exert a varying degree of influence on the decision to engage in tourism and the consumption patterns of tourists.

Table 4. Factors influencing tourism demand.

Criterion	Factors
Economic	GDP, personal income, prices of goods and services, savings and their stability, unemployment, inflation
Demographic	Family and its life cycle, gender structure, age structure
Socio-cultural	Leisure, education, culture, profession
Psychological	Needs, motivation, perceptions, interests, habits
Ecological	Living, recreational and working environment
Technological	Technological progress, transport, infrastructural facilities, information and communication technologies
Administrative-political	Administrative measures, health restrictions, war conflicts, political stability, security
Other	Transport, booking services, travel destination, length of stay, price, season, luggage, accommodation, meals, number of companions, motive

(Own elaboration, 2024 based on Gúčík (2020)).

Understanding the nature of enological tourism visitors is a prerequisite for the successful implementation of an enological tourism product in the market. Several researchers (Alant and Bruwer, 2004; Bruwer et al., 2017; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Hall et al., 2000; Kotur, 2020, Sthapit et al., 2024; Zhang and Lee, 2022) have found that the most important motivation for enological tourism visitors is to taste and subsequently purchase wine. Visitors' motivation for food, and therefore wine, varies in intensity. In **Table 5**, Hall and Sharples (2003) describe how visitor motivations change across different types and forms of tourism. It is important to note that the size of the market for visitors whose main motive for travel is food is small. Extensive studies have confirmed that visitors whose primary motivation during travel is food account for only three percent of all tourists. Significantly more visitors have a secondary or tertiary motivation.

Table 5. Consumption as a motivating factor in visitor decision making.

Type of Tourism	Interest in food	Number of tourists
Gourmet Tourism/Gastronomic Tourism	Great interest: Food is the primary motivation for travel. Almost all activities are associated with the highest quality of service in catering establishments, wineries or markets.	Low
Culinary Tourism	Medium interest: Secondary interest in food is held by culinary tourism visitors who, for example, by visiting a market, a food festival or a winery, make their stay at the destination more enjoyable.	Average
Rural/urban Tourism	Low interest: They see food-related activities only as a way to gain new experiences.	Rather high
Other Tourism	Low or no interest: Visitors perceive eating food only as fulfilling a biological need.	High

(Own elaboration based on Hall and Sharples (2003)).

Pratt and Sparks (2014) highlight that to increase the number of people interested in enological tourism, it is important to determine the factors that influence their participation in enological tourism. Kotur (2020) identifies push and pull factors that influence the size of demand for enological tourism. Push factors may include internal factors such as the need for learning, and rest, while pull factors may include external factors such as the reputation of the vineyard and current travel trends. Getz et al. (2007) and Kotur (2020) add intellectual motivation as one of the main drivers of demand for enological tourism. Other motivations of enological tourism visitors are gaining experience through entertainment, leisure and relaxation, socializing, learning about and making wine, and enjoying the scenery (Carmichael, 2005; Getz and Brown, 2006; Hall et al., 2000; Kotur, 2020). Garibaldi (2021) suggests that visitor motivations have changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, sustainability is more important to destination visitors (Ratković et al., 2022).

As asserted by numerous authors, including Krnáčová (2021), Perković (2020), Getz (2000), and Charters and Ali-Knight (2002), a proclivity for wine and food is a common denominator among those who engage in wine tourism. Additionally, they are receptive to novel experiences and perceive wine as a conduit for cultural enrichment. The authors posit that the wine tourist is typically well-educated and possesses a fundamental understanding of wine, or at the very least, a desire to gain such knowledge. In terms of demographics, the wine tourist is typically defined as a visitor aged between 30 and 50 years old, with a middle to high income. The wine tourist is distinguished by their status as an independent traveler, eschewing the services of travel agencies and tour operators. He is discerning in his selection of destinations and exacting regarding the caliber of services and amenities available at these locations. Harsányi and Hlédik (2021) have indicated that as visitors' knowledge of wine increases, they are more likely to seek out enological tourism products in lesser-known wine regions.

According to Bruwer and Lesschaeve (2012), there are differences between one-time and repeat visitors. For repeat visitors, the main motive for travelling is just to get to know the wine region. Repeat visitors prefer to live the experience of wine and food pairing, and usually have a greater need to purchase wine. Repeat visitors have a secondary motivation when participating in enological tourism. The authors found that first-time visitors who participated in enological tourism have a higher interest in spending their leisure time at the winery productively. They aim to acquire, as much expertise as possible in a short time. Hall and Macionis (1998) proposed 3 types of wine tourists, based on visitors' motivation and their interest in wine, as shown in **Table 6**.

Table 6. Types of wine tourists.

Type of wine tourist	Characteristics
A wine expert	Who is knowledgeable about the wine production process, watches specialist wine programmes, reads specialist wine articles and possibly also works with wine professionally.
A Wine lover	Who regularly attends wine tastings to learn as much as possible about wine.
A wine enthusiast	Who is interested in oenological tourism products, but has only basic information about wine.

(Own elaboration based on Hall and Macionis (1998)).

2.4. Experiential stay as a product of enological tourism

Enological tourism products are considered by many experts and wine producers as a value-added for vineyards and wineries; it is also a good strategy for businesses to increase their competitiveness, establish a stronger relationship with consumers and increase sales in a short time (Hall et al., 2000; Mitchell and Hall, 2006).

Thematic packages are part of the product of the destination and can be marketed as interrelated goods and services, e.g., accommodation, transport, attractions and other facilities for visitor activities (Michalkó, 2011). Manila (2012) refers to stay packages in the context of enological tourism as a combination of accommodation, meals and transport in vineyards. According to Getz (2000), it is rather a combination of accommodation, meals, tastings, vineyard tours and similar activities.

In her research, Krnáčová (2021) identified 30 products of enological tourism in Slovak wineries, which she subsequently divided according to their relation to the wine industry. One product that is not directly related to the wine industry is the experiential stay. Harsányi and Hlédik (2021) discovered that tourists typically spend two to three days in wine regions, particularly during weekends. Consequently, they advise wineries to develop stay packages for tourists. Garibaldi (2021) identifies experiential stays in wineries as a novel trend in enological tourism. Winery stays offer the convenience of accommodation in a picturesque vineyard setting, providing a novel perspective on vineyard tourism (Cable Wine Systems, 2020; Exotic Wine Travel, 2023). Garibaldi (2020) posits that overnight stays in wineries afford wineries the opportunity to more effectively showcase local wine culture and tradition. The objective of these stays is for visitors to gain a deeper understanding of the wineries, exploring various aspects such as enology, gastronomy, culture, and technology (Manila, 2012).

Harsányi and Hlédik (2021) found in their research that a high level of accommodation and catering facilities in wine-growing areas is important for tourists. Vystoupil et al. (2011) reported that wineries most often provide accommodation services in guesthouses, private accommodations or smaller hotels. According to Garibaldi (2020), accommodation facilities are decorated in 3 main styles, namely country-style, minimalist design or special design, which takes the form of luxury tents among vineyards or barrels.

The stay package includes activities that are directly or indirectly linked to the wine industry, such as tastings in the cellar or the vineyards, wellness treatments, dinners in the vineyards, and cultural activities that combine art with food. Many wineries also have chefs who prepare tasting dinners and ensure that wines are paired with the right food choices. They also offer various courses, such as sommelier courses, cooking courses, wine-making courses, dairy-making courses and others. Wineries also offer their guests access to collections of vintage wines in their cellars. During tours of the vineyards and vineyards, guests can learn about winery management and wine production. The scenery of the vineyards is suitable for relaxation, and with ample opportunities for sports and recreational activities such as hiking, horseback riding, cycling or practising yoga, guests can unwind (Byrd et al., 2016; Cable Wine Systems, 2020; Exotic Wine Travel, 2023; Garibaldi, 2020, 2021).

3. Materials and methods

The requisite information is gathered from both primary and secondary sources. The initial stage of the process entails a comprehensive examination of pertinent domestic and international literature, in addition to electronic documents. Theoretical research methods encompass a range of analytical techniques, including the analysis of primary and secondary sources of data, synthesis, induction, deduction (i.e., the evaluation of collected data), comparison (i.e., a comparison of the findings of primary research with the results of research conducted abroad), and analogy. The primary data for this article is derived from responses to a questionnaire completed by domestic visitors. The standardized, anonymous demand measurement questionnaire comprises 21 closed-ended questions. The questionnaire assesses the level of interest of respondents in wine-themed experiences and their preferences and motives for selecting such experiences. The sample was selected on the basis of the available respondents. The data were collected in person between July and September 2023. A total of 80 respondents participated in the study, with 47 identifying as male and 33 as female. Given the insufficient research sample, which represents a limitation of the study, the survey results are not representative of the population under investigation. The results obtained are illustrative and indicative in the context of a pilot survey or a pre-survey. In order to obtain valuable data and to increase the reliability and validity of the survey results, it is necessary to conduct a future survey with a larger sample size. The data obtained from the questionnaire survey were evaluated using Microsoft Office Excel and its RealStatistics add-in, which facilitates the analysis of complex data sets. Descriptive statistics were employed to enhance the transparency of the questionnaire survey data. In order to test the relationship between two categorical variables, we employed the use of a contingency table. In order to test the aforementioned relationship, we employed the Pearson chi-square test in conjunction with Cramer's V, which serves to quantify the effect size for the chi-square test. The results are to be interpreted as follows: Values between 0.1 and 0.3 indicate a small effect, while those between 0.3 and 0.5 represent a medium effect. Values above 0.5 signify a large effect. The Likert scale is a method of measuring attitudes and opinions expressed by respondents. In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement with a given statement on an odd-numbered scale. The questionnaire survey was constrained by the necessity of face-to-face data collection. In comparison to alternative data collection methodologies, this approach will ensure the credibility and timeliness of the data. The questionnaire survey was conducted with consideration of the geographical boundaries of the subject under study. In the process of data collection, our attention was directed towards events occurring within the Nitra self-governing region, where we postulated that there would be the greatest concentration of potential candidates for a stay package in a winery. It is unlikely that the results would have differed significantly if the data had been collected at alternative winery events.

4. Results

During the survey, the research group received 80 responses, out of which 58.70% were from males and 41.30% were from females. To construct the profile, we

sorted the data into a contingency **Table 7**.

Table 7. Gender and age of respondents.

	Between 18–30 years of age	Between 31–45 years of age	Between 46–63 years of age	More than 64 years old	Total
Male	10	10	18	9	47
Female	15	12	3	3	33
	25	22	21	12	80

(Own elaboration, 2024).

The results of the survey indicate that the age group most represented among men is 45–63 years old, while the age group most represented among women is 18–30 years old. A total of 81.80% of the female respondents were under the age of 45, while only 42.60% of the male respondents fell into this age category.

One crucial piece of information for identifying the visitors of wine-themed experiences is the place of residence. As the questionnaire survey was conducted within the Nitra Self-Governing Region, it is to be expected that the representation of residents from this region is the highest, at 30%. In descending order, the regions of Trnava, Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Trenčín, Košice, Prešov, and Žilina were ranked.

The economic status of visitors to wine-themed experiential stays is of significant importance, as the level of average monthly wage has a substantial impact on the decision to participate in tourism. As **Table 8** shows, a total of 56.25% of respondents indicated that they are currently employed. The second-highest representation is that of students, at 17.5%. The remaining 26.25% of respondents are unemployed, on maternity or parental leave, or retired. In 2023, the minimum wage in Slovakia was set at €700. Of the respondents, 28.75% indicated that their average monthly wage falls below the established minimum. A total of 31.25% of respondents indicated that their average monthly wage falls within the range of €701 to €1300, while 26.25% reported a figure between 1301 and €2000. A mere 13.75% of respondents reported earnings above €2001.

Table 8. Economic status of respondents.

	Characteristics	N = 80	Share in %
Economic status	Student	14	17.5
	Employed	45	56.25
	Unemployed	5	6.25
	On maternity/parental leave	5	6.25
	Retired	11	13.75
Average monthly wage	Up to €700	23	28.75
	€701–€1300	25	31.25
	€1301–€2000	21	26.25
	Above €2001	11	13.75

(Own elaboration, 2024).

Table 9 records the return of tourists engaged in enological tourism. A total of 72.50% of respondents indicated that they had prior experience with enological

tourism products. A total of 27.50% of respondents indicated that a visit to a wine event was their inaugural experience.

Table 9. Return of tourists of enological tourism.

Criterion	N = 80	Share in %
I regularly take part in such activities.	21	26.25
I have participated in such activities in the past.	37	46.25
I have never participated in similar activities before.	22	27.50

(Own elaboration, 2024).

Hall and Macionis (1998) defined 3 types of wine tourists: the wine expert, the wine lover and the wine enthusiast. In addition to these basic types, another type of wine tourist has been added who does not consider participation in enological tourism as primary. Based on these types, respondents placed themselves in the category with which they most closely identify. 16% of respondents described themselves as wine experts, who are well-versed in the production process and have expert knowledge of wine. 19% of respondents classify themselves as wine lovers, who regularly attend wine tastings to learn new information about wine. Wine enthusiasts account for 24% of respondents. This category is typical in that it does not have extensive wine knowledge, despite its interest in participating in oenological tourism. The largest group is made up of newcomers who consider enological tourism as a complementary activity during their travels and have no information about wine.

A majority (85%) of respondents indicated a favorable view of the prospect of engaging in wine-themed experiences in the Nitra region. A 15% minority expressed a negative opinion about the possibility of participation. It seems reasonable to posit that there is a correlation between the type of wine tourist and the level of interest in participating in wine-themed experiences. The relationship between the variables was tested using the Chi-square test at the $\alpha = 0.05$ significance level. The results in the **Table 10** indicate a correlation between the type of wine tourist and interest in participating in wine-themed experiential stays. Across all categories of wine tourists, the agreement option is the most prevalent, yet the findings indicate that as wine-related knowledge diminishes, there is a notable increase in the diversity of tourists' interests in wine-themed experiential stays in the Nitra region. Cramer's V is statistically significant, indicating a moderate relationship.

Table 10. Interest in experiential stays with a wine theme according to the types of wine tourist.

	Wine expert	Wine lover	Wine enthusiast	Newcomer	P-Value	Cramer V
Yeas	13	10	13	13	0	0.35
I don't know	0	5	4	10		
No	0	0	2	10		

(Own elaboration, 2024).

The objective of this study is to further test the existence of a relationship between gender and interest in wine-themed experiences. The relationship is assessed using the Chi-square test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. According to **Table 11**, the results

indicate that there is no statistically significant association between gender and interest in participating in wine-themed experiential stays. According to Cramer’s V, the strength of the association can be considered to have a small effect.

Table 11. Interest in wine-themed experiences by gender.

	Yes	I don’t know	No	P-Value	Cramer V
Male	27	13	7	0.6	0.11
Female	22	6	5		

(Own elaboration, 2024).

A key objective of the demand analysis is to identify the motives of visitors to experiential stays that influence their participation in enological tourism. The respondents were permitted to select a maximum of three options. The results indicate that 52.90% of respondents perceive wine tasting to be the primary feature of wineries’ offerings. Additionally, respondents indicated that touring wineries and vineyards is a significant aspect of enological tourism, with 33.80% of the answers. Socializing, including interactions with family and friends, was also identified as a key motivation, with 33.80% of the responses. The results of the survey in **Figure 2** indicate that participation in a wine tour and dining at a winery has the least significant impact on enological tourism participation.



Figure 2. Motives to participate in enological tourism.

(Own elaboration, 2024).

The questionnaire survey also sought to identify the factors that influence the leisure experience during the stay, as indicated in **Figure 3**. The respondents were permitted to select a maximum of three options. The responses most frequently indicated were directly related to wine tasting. The respondents indicated that the variety of wine choices available during the wine tasting experience is the most important factor. The second most significant factor is the presence of a pleasant and distinctive vineyard setting. A total of 30 instances were identified in which complementary activities not directly related to the wine theme were mentioned. Such activities include the primary offering of the Nitra region and the accompanying program during the stay. The ratings assigned by respondents to staff members are more strongly influenced by their expertise than by their behavior. The preparation and smooth running of the programme are not considered to be of particular

importance by any of the respondents.



Figure 3. Factors influencing the leisure experience during the stay.

(Own elaboration, 2024).

The package comprises a combination of enological tourism products, accommodation, and catering services. A stay at a winery typically entails the opportunity to spend a night in the winery’s accommodation facilities. A study is currently underway to ascertain the type of accommodation that is most popular with visitors on experiential stays, as shown in **Table 12**. A total of 44.12% of respondents indicated a preference for hotel accommodation. A total of 33.82% of respondents indicated a preference for a guesthouse. Among the various accommodation facilities, private accommodation is the most successful, with a 10.29% success rate. A significant proportion of respondents (up to 75%) indicated a preference for accommodation situated in close proximity to the winery.

Table 12. Interest in the type of accommodation during the experiential stay.

		<i>N</i> = 68	Share in %
Type of accommodation facility	Hotel	30	44.12
	Guesthouse	23	33.82
	Apartment house	6	8.82
	Accommodation in private	7	10.29
	Camping	2	2.94
Distance	Directly in the winery area	51	75
	Close to the winery	17	25

(Own elaboration, 2024).

We suppose that visitors of experiential stays have certain requirements for the quality, level and range of accommodation services in accommodation facilities. In the survey, we focus on the factors that influence respondents’ choice of accommodation, see **Figure 4** for more details.



Figure 4. Factors influencing the choice of accommodation. (Own elaboration, 2024).

A significant proportion of respondents (up to 50%) indicate that the cleanliness of the accommodation is a key factor in their decision-making process. Forty-one point two percent of respondents indicated that location is a primary consideration. The preceding question indicates that experienced visitors tend to prefer accommodation on the premises of the winery. Twenty-five percent of respondents indicated that catering services in the accommodation were an important factor in their decision-making process. A total of 33.8% of respondents indicated a preference for complimentary activities, such as wellness services or sports activities, as a factor influencing their accommodation choice. Price is identified as a factor by 30.9% of respondents.

The promotion of the tourism product is of paramount importance in the implementation of the product on the market. Wineries utilize marketing communication to disseminate information about their products or activities to the general public, enhance brand awareness, and stimulate sales. According to **Figure 5**, up to 41% of respondents indicated a preference for obtaining information about experiential stays at wineries via the winery’s website. A total of 34% of respondents indicated a preference for obtaining information from wineries’ social networks. The data indicate that these two online marketing communication tools have a notable advantage over the others.

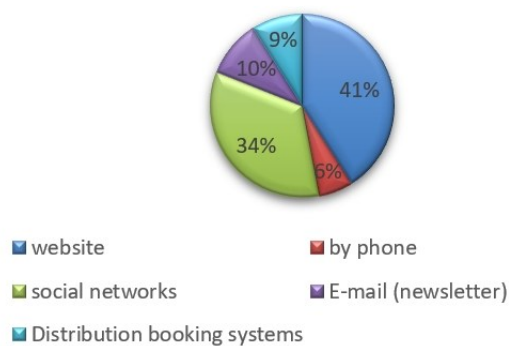


Figure 5. Preferred method of marketing communication. (Own elaboration, 2024).

The objective of this study is to ascertain the time of year during which

respondents are most in demand for experiential stays at wineries. To obtain comprehensive results, it is essential to provide detailed information regarding the season, day, and duration of the stay, as indicated in **Table 13**. The data indicates that 39.71% of respondents are interested in participating in summer winery experience stays. A total of 36.76% of respondents indicated a preference for participating in a winery experience during the autumn season. The majority of respondents (64.71%) indicated that they would prefer an experiential stay that would last between one and two days. Additionally, 73.53% of respondents expressed interest in participating over a weekend.

Table 13. Demand in terms of time for an experiential stay.

	Demand in terms of time	N = 68	Share in %
Season	Spring	13	19.12
	Summer	27	39.71
	Autumn	25	36.76
	Winter	3	4.41
Term	Weekend	50	73.53
	Working day	13	19.12
	Holiday (e.g., Valentine’s Day)	5	7.35
Duration of stay	1–2 days	44	64.71
	3–4 days	16	23.53
	5 days and more	8	11.76

(Own elaboration, 2024).

Wine-themed experiences are distinguished by the fact that up to 96% of respondents view them as an opportunity for social interaction. A total of 35% of respondents indicated a preference for spending a stay with a partner, while 27% expressed a desire to stay with friends. A mere 4% of respondents indicated that they would spend their stay alone. It seems reasonable to posit that the distance of the winery from the visitors’ residence may exert a potential influence on interest in enological tourism products. A total of 13.2% of respondents indicated a willingness to travel for enological tourism purposes only within a radius of approximately 50 km from their place of residence. A significant proportion of respondents (47.10%) indicated a willingness to travel more than two h to visit a winery. The survey also sought to ascertain the interest of visitors to experience stays in additional transport services. A total of 36.80% of respondents indicated interest in utilizing shared transportation. A majority of respondents (63.20%) indicated a preference for utilizing their own transportation to reach the winery, rather than opting for shared transportation. **Table 14** presents the number of occurrences of all combinations resulting from the combination of the two questions. The objective of this analysis is to ascertain whether there is a correlation between the distance of respondents’ residences from the winery and their inclination towards shared transportation. A Chi-square test was employed to ascertain the existence of a relationship between the variables in question, with a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The results demonstrate that there is no correlation between respondents’ distance from the winery and their

interest in shared transportation. According to Cramer’s V, the strength of the link can be considered to have a minimal effect.

Table 14. Interest in transport depending on distance from home.

	Yes, we would use shared transport	No, we would get to the winery with our transport	P-Value	Cramer V
Only in the neighbourhood of my residence	3	6	0.92	0.08
Maximum 1 h	6	8		
1–2 h	4	9		
More than 2 h	12	20		

(Own elaboration, 2024).

The survey results indicate that price is a significant factor influencing respondents’ accommodation facility selection decisions. The objective is to ascertain the amount of money respondents would be willing to pay for a single-person experience comprising a stay of two days and one night. A majority of respondents (up to 70.50%) indicated a willingness to spend up to €250 for an experiential stay. Wine experts and connoisseurs, the demographic most interested and knowledgeable about wines, are willing to pay between €251 and €400 for an experiential stay. Those with a lesser interest and knowledge of wine, including both enthusiasts and beginners, are willing to pay for an experiential stay in the range of €101 to €250. The survey results are presented in **Table 15**, which illustrates the combinations of variables. The objective of this study is to ascertain whether there is a correlation between the type of wine tourist and the amount of money spent on an experiential stay at a winery. The relationship between the variables is tested using the Chi-square test at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$. The hypothesized relationship between the type of wine tourist and the amount of money spent on an experiential stay in a winery was not confirmed. The Cramer’s V value indicates a relatively weak association between the variables.

Table 15. Amount of money spent on an experiential stay in a winery by type of wine tourist.

	Wine Expert	Wine lover	Wine enthusiast	Beginner	P-Value	Cramer V
Up to €100	3	4	4	9	0.09	0.27
€101–€250	3	5	10	10		
€251–€400	4	6	3	2		
Over €401	3	0	0	2		

(Own elaboration, 2024)

5. Discussion

It is important to know the demographics when identifying the visitor profile of winery experiences. After including the data in a contingency table, we found that the most common age of men who participated in the survey is 45–63 years old, and the most common age of women is 18–30 years old. Although none of the authors specified the age of wine tourists based on gender, according to the authors (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Getz, 2000; Krnáčová, 2021; Perković, 2020), the wine tourists

are 30–50 years old, who has a middle to high income. In comparison to the results obtained, it can be observed that the age of the female participants is notably lower than the universal characteristic of a wine tourist. With regard to the male respondents, their results fall within the upper half of the interval and exceed the upper limit. The economic situation of the experience visitors is favorable, as more than half of the respondents are employed. It is evident that the income level of the experience visitors falls within the medium and high ranges, as indicated by responses from up to 40% of the sampled population. It was observed that up to 60% of the respondents were receiving salaries that could be considered lower. These results can be attributed to the fact that 43.75% of the respondents are not currently engaged in economic activity.

It is reasonable to conclude that approximately one-third of the respondents currently reside in the Nitra region. It can be reasonably deduced that due to the geographical location of the region in Western Slovakia, individuals hailing from the Košice, Prešov, and Žilina regions will exhibit the lowest level of interest in visiting wineries. A significant proportion of respondents (47.10%) indicated a willingness to travel more than two h to visit a winery. Given the considerable number of competing wineries outside the Nitra region, it is recommended that a quality oenological tourism product be developed.

The authors (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Getz, 2000; Krnáčová, 2021; Perković, 2020) assume that the wine tourist has basic wine knowledge or is at least interested in acquiring it. Based on Hall and Macionis's (1998) categorization of wine tourist types, we found that up to 41% of respondents considered themselves novices. This is surprising since more than 72% of the respondents have participated in enological tourism products in the past.

The findings of the survey indicate that up to 85% of respondents are contemplating participation in wine-themed experiences. It is evident that there is a correlation between the classification of wine tourists and their inclination towards engaging in wine-themed experiential stays. Those respondents who identified themselves as wine experts exhibited a distinctive interest in participating in such a stay. Among respondents who identified as beginners, we observed the greatest indecision and disinterest in wine-themed stay packages.

Several researchers (Alant and Bruwer, 2004; Bruwer et al., 2017; Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Hall et al., 2000; Kotur, 2020) have found that the most important motivation for enological tourism tourists is to taste and subsequently purchase wine. Our survey confirmed that wine tasting is a priority for visitors to experiential stays at wineries, but only less than half of respondents consider purchasing wine. The intellectual motivation of visitors to experiential stays at wineries has a high influence on their decision, as most respondents are deficient in this area. Authors (Carmichael, 2005; Getz and Brown, 2006; Hall et al., 2000) mention rest, socialization, and vineyard scenery among the essential factors that influence their participation in enological tourism. Our research confirmed their importance for visitors to winery experiences. Respondents would like to take an experiential stay in the company of a partner, friends and family. These results are linked to the main motivation of experience stay visitors—socialisation.

According to many authors (Charters and Ali-Knight, 2002; Getz, 2000; Hall et al., 2002; Krnáčová, 2021; Perković, 2020), the typical wine tourist cares about the

quality of services and accommodation facilities in the destination. In our research, we found that visitors of experiential stays in wineries prefer to stay in hotel accommodation facilities that are part of the winery premises. These findings are in line with the offer of wineries in the Self-governing Region of Nitra. Even though catering services are part of the stay package at the winery, only a quarter of the respondents make them a priority in their choice. The price factor is important for less than a third. 70.50% of respondents are willing to spend up to €250 for an experiential stay of 2 days, which is in line with the offer. The relationship between the type of wine tourist and the amount of money spent on an experiential stay in a winery was not confirmed.

Marketing communication represents the primary source of information for visitors of experiential stays regarding the current products of wineries. It is reasonable to posit that the possession of basic digital skills is now a common occurrence. The assumption that social media accounts are exclusively owned by the younger generation was not borne out by the results, with up to a third of respondents indicating that they had one. Forty-one percent of respondents indicated a preference for learning about experiential stays on the winery's website. This result may present a challenge for wineries, as the demand analysis indicates that it is not a common practice for wineries to operate a website or social media profile. Gúčík et al. (2011) posit that enological tourism exhibits seasonal characteristics, a hypothesis that was corroborated by the analysis of the offerings in the Nitra self-governing region. The demand analysis corroborates the preponderance of demand for experiential stays during the summer months. Wineries may potentially extend their seasonality into the autumn period in the future. In accordance with the findings of the analysis, the recommended length of stay is limited to two days.

6. Conclusion

The conceptualization of enological tourism has not resulted in the establishment of a unified approach. Those engaged in enological tourism are a select group of individuals seeking distinctive and genuine experiences. By offering a distinctive wine-related experience, wineries can attract visitors to the Nitra Self-Governing Region, which can contribute to the promotion of the region and its attractions. A winery experience can facilitate the presentation of the region's primary and secondary tourism offerings. The provision of a winery experience will afford the winery a competitive advantage, enabling it to offer visitors a distinctive and specialised product. It is recommended that marketing communication be conducted through the winery's website and social networks.

The results of the enological tourism demand survey indicate a positive outcome, although nearly half of the respondents view enological tourism as a supplementary activity while traveling. This finding enables us to establish a connection between enological tourism and other forms of tourism, thereby expanding the potential market. The fundamental motivation of an experiential visitor is to engage in rest, relaxation, and socialization within the context of the vineyard landscape. It is anticipated that the demand for wine-themed experiential stays will continue to grow in the coming years, thereby stimulating the development of the necessary infrastructure.

It can be reasonably argued that sociodemographic characteristics, such as age, gender, education, income, marital status, and place of residence, exert a considerable influence on the development of wine tourism products. These factors serve to determine the preferences and expectations of tourists, thereby facilitating the more precise tailoring of products to their needs and interests. The pilot survey indicates that the profile of wine tourists is that of men of active working age and young women with a favorable economic situation, given their middle to higher income. The tourist is a resident of the region. The aforementioned factors exert a profound influence on consumer behavior and demand for wine tourism experiences. What implications do these findings have for the development of products in the destination? It can be posited that younger visitors may exhibit a proclivity for interactive experiences and creative, active involvement in wine-related activities. It may be posited that older tourists may prefer traditional wine tasting and leisurely vineyard tours with an emphasis on history and culture. It is possible that women and men may exhibit disparate preferences with respect to the types of wines or experiences they prefer. For instance, women may exhibit a stronger inclination towards wellness-related experiences (e.g., wine spas), whereas men may demonstrate a greater interest in the technical aspects of winemaking. Those with a high level of education may be inclined to seek out more comprehensive and specialized information on a range of topics related to wine, including terroir, winemaking techniques, technological aspects, infrastructure, and other relevant areas. Consequently, products designed for this demographic may include expert seminars or themed tours. The level of income has an impact on tourists' willingness to spend on more luxurious experiences, including exclusive tastings of rare wines, accommodation in boutique hotels situated in close proximity to vineyards, and personalised tours. It can be reasonably assumed that couples will seek romantic experiences, such as wine tastings coupled with sunset dinners. Conversely, families with children may prefer wine events coupled with family entertainment or activities for children. It is possible that domestic tourists may have different expectations than international visitors. While foreign tourists may seek authentic cultural experiences, locals may be more focused on local specialties or seasonal events. By taking these socio-demographic characteristics into account, wine destinations and businesses can better target their products and marketing activities, leading to higher customer satisfaction and better business success.

The implications of the research on enological tourism in the Nitra region of Slovakia are numerous and diverse. From a research perspective, the findings could contribute to the expansion of knowledge on enological tourism, particularly in the context of the Nitra region. The identification of visitor profiles and their preferences for wine-themed experiences could provide valuable insights for future research endeavors in the field of tourism and hospitality. In practice, the research findings could directly benefit tourism stakeholders in the Nitra region, including wineries, tour operators, hospitality businesses, and other touristic infrastructure, by enabling them to tailor their offerings to better match the preferences of enological tourists. An understanding of the visitor profile and demand for wine-themed experiences can inform the development of targeted marketing strategies, customized tour packages, and enhanced visitor experiences, which collectively contribute to the creation of a more competitive and compelling tourism product. From a societal perspective, the

research could contribute to the sustainable development of tourism in the Nitra region, thereby promoting economic growth, cultural preservation, and environmental sustainability. Further research could encompass an expansion of the study to encompass other wine-producing regions in Slovakia, with a view to comparing the findings with international enological tourism trends.

Author contributions: Conceptualization, VB and EP; methodology, VB; software, EP; validation, EP and VB; formal analysis, VB; investigation, VB; resources, VB; data curation, EP; writing—original draft preparation, VB; writing—review and editing, VB; visualization, VB; supervision, VB; project administration, VB; funding acquisition, VB. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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