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# WINE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT IN NORTHERN GREECE

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Greece | Thessaloniki Project Site, Term D—2016

An Interactive Qualifying Project Report  
Submitted to the faculty of Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the  
Degree of Bachelor of Science  
By

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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Our team would like to thank the following organizations and individuals for their help and contributions to our project:

Dean Konstantinos Rotsios of Perrotis College for all his help, advice, insight, and organizing interviews and trips to various locations for our project.

Professor Robert Hersh and Professor Nicola Bulled of Worcester Polytechnic Institute for their guidance, while challenging us in our project work.

The people we interviewed at Domaine Gerovassiliou, Dalamaras Estate, Chatzivaritis Estate, and Thomaidis Distillery for their help and support throughout our project. This includes, but is not limited to: providing important information concerning tourism and their inputs on our recommendations, and continued insight into our project.

The employees we interviewed from Silver Holidays, Ambotis Air Tour Services, and Electra Palace Hotel for their professional input, experiences, and suggestions for our project.

The director of the Wine Roads of Northern Greece for his input, experiences, and suggestions for the direction of our project.

The Mayor of Thessaloniki and his consultant for taking time to speak with us and providing their input and experiences, and suggest the possibilities of our project.

Worcester Polytechnic Institute for establishing this project site and making this trip possible.

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## **ABSTRACT**

Wine tourism is a rapidly expanding yet nascent industry in Northern Greece. Despite extensive research on consumer segmentation, the motivations of the market, and the actions of small-medium scale wineries to reach their target consumer, inadequate information exists on the connections of these wineries and organizations involved in wine tourism. Through in-depth interviews and an analysis of information collected, recommendations were made addressing how to increase wine tourism through the linkages of the winemakers, organizations engaged in wine tourism, and potential consumers. This project will expand on the existing knowledge and understanding of issues related to alternative wine tourism and sustainable rural development for the American Farm School in Thessaloniki, Greece.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism combines the needs and interests of two different economic sectors – the wine industry and the tourism industry. It has been defined as “a trip related to the attraction of wineries and of a wine-growing area, a kind of market niche and way of destination development, and it is an opportunity for direct sales and a marketing opportunity for the wine industry” (Getz, 2000, p. 5). Carlsen (2004) reviewed past and current research regarding the two disparate sectors of wine tourism, which are wine production and tourism. The wine industry is characterized by “being supply-led, price-taking, producing a standardized, homogeneous product, cost-minimizing and reliant on capital growth to create wealth” while the tourism industry is characterized as “being demand-driven, price-making, heterogeneous product/service, profit maximizing and relying on profits to create wealth” (Carlsen, 2004). Being distinct economic activities, the winemaking industry and the tourism industry influence two different market forces. As such, in order for wine tourism to be successful, the integration of both economic activities is needed (Carlsen, 2004).

Wine tourism is a growing industry around the world. Collaboration efforts between wineries and local businesses in New Zealand and South Africa have formed marketing networks that have been beneficial to wineries, the associating businesses, and the region as a whole (Beverland 1998, Bruwer, 2003). A formation of this type of network, including accommodations, dining areas, tourist agencies and other tourist services, will act as strong motivating factors for travelers (Velissariou et al., 2009). Wineries in France and Spain partner with restaurants to not only promote their wine, but to promote the local cuisine. This partnership provides pathways to expand the marketing networks, and provides attractive offers for tourists, which in turn drives the economic development of that wine region (Charters, 2010; Lopez-Guzman et al., 2011). However, many wineries in developing wine tourism regions, such as Northern Greece, lack the resources, entrepreneurial knowledge, and the skill to market themselves as a tourist destination (Stefanos Hajimanoulis, Personal Communication, April 5, 2016).

Greece is continuing to improve and expand as a wine producing country and a wine tourist destination. More than 700 wineries operate in Greece. In the Macedonia region, some 80 wineries, primarily small and family owned, concentrate on producing high quality wines from unique Greek varieties such as Malagousia, Assyrtiko, and Xinomavro and have won many international awards for their excellent quality (Ritchie et al., 2015). While the quality of Greek wines and international recognition has improved dramatically in the last few decades, wine producers are now facing considerable pressure due to the economic crisis. Domestic wine sales and consumption have

decreased, causing winemakers to turn to the export market in the European Union and United States, which is arguably weakening the domestic market even more (Daniels, 2015). During this time, wine producers are still looking to increase direct sales while building a database of potential customers to visit their wineries. When selling wine directly, wine producers can sell at full retail price, as opposed to discounted. Selling internationally costs more for the wine producers with distribution costs, and the wine has to compete with 'New World' wines, which are more price competitive (Greek Wine Industry, 2008). While wine producers and tourism businesses are on different sides of the market, they have the same goal of increasing visitation to the area and "will need to work together and be more aware of what is happening in the rest of the wine world, something that is currently not happening to the extent that it should" (Greek Wine Industry, 2008). Significant research on existing and burgeoning wine tourism sectors has been conducted across the world (see Alebaki 2010; 2011; 2012; 2015, Getz 1999; 2000, Hall 2000, Fountain and Charters 2004, Mitchell and Hall 2004). However, more exploration is needed concerning stakeholder interactions in order to drive expansion of this unique economic sector successfully. A deeper appreciation for how wineries and tourism agencies might reach certain market segments can aid the industry to target consumers more effectively.

The overall goal of this project was to explore the perspectives of winemakers, organizations engaged in wine tourism, and potential consumers to provide practical recommendations to help wineries improve wine tourism in Northern Greece. Winemakers and tourism agencies were interviewed about their roles in wine tourism and the steps they have taken towards its development. In addition, recognizing the lack of research conducted examining motivations and perceptions of potential wine tourists, as opposed to existing wine tourists (via exit surveys), this project sought out interviews with 'neophytes,' individuals with limited experience consuming wine. Based on the information retrieved from these three sectors of wine tourism, specific recommendations were developed to be implemented by wineries and associated wine tourism agencies.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Wine tourism as an economic sector worldwide

Wine tourism has been defined as “visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and/or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors” (Hall et al., 2000). This definition is a market based approach, focusing on the many facets of the winery and the services offered there. However, it has also been defined in a way regarding the regional economy as “visitation to wineries and wine regions to experience the unique qualities of...lifestyle associated with enjoyment of wine at its source-including wine and food, landscape and cultural activities” (National Wine Tourism Strategy, 1998). The latter states that wine tourism is not confined to the product of wine itself, but rather it encompasses many other areas, including gastronomy and tourism, creating a package for wine tourists. Therefore, wine-producing regions have started to realize that the benefits of wine tourism extend to every part of the regional economy. Consequently, more effort has been made to research wine tourism at the regional level, to supplement existing understanding of wine tourism at the national level, in order to identify strategic research issues (Carlsen, 2004). Carlsen and Dowling (1999) researched wine tourism at regional and national levels, and defined what key factors are important in this research. In Table 2.1, the National Level refers to broader factors of wine tourism, such as taxation/regulation and funding, that require a higher amount of governmental support and involvement. The Regional Level refers to factors such as regional identity, image and branding, and infrastructure, which are much more important to individual wineries and wine regions, rather than the entire sector of wine tourism.

<b>National Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Marketing and branding</li> <li>• Export revenue</li> <li>• Tourism trends</li> <li>• Taxation and regulation</li> <li>• Funding</li> <li>• Industry integration, accreditation, and awards</li> </ul>
<b>Regional Level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional identity</li> <li>• Image and branding</li> <li>• Marketing and facilities audits</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Tourist expenditure</li> <li>• Role of local government</li> </ul>

**Table 2.1: Strategic Wine Tourism Research (Carlsen, 2004)**

The expansion of wine tourism internationally, nationally, and at a regional level, has stimulated conversations within various sectors around how to best develop this market segment. Wine tourism in Europe received help from the EU Leader II program, which provided funding for wineries and tourism associations to develop wine tourism in the EU states (Ritchie et al., 2015). Furthermore, governments in France and Italy encouraged the formation of hierarchical structure of associations to deal with wine tourism from the local level all the way to the national level. These associations received the subsidies and resources required to bolster the tourism industry as a whole (Charters, 2010; van Westering, 2003; Columbini, 2015).

Wine tourism is important for small and medium wineries to continue to grow and compete in the evolving wine industry. Long-term economic sustainability is a concern for the wine industry with the increase of competition from emerging countries and market shifts that could affect the demand of wineries' products (Poitras & Getz, 2006). Wine tourism has become an important topic of research because it encompasses the "promotion of wine regions and events through tourism, increased cellar door sales to tourists, added value to regional production and new business opportunities" (Carlsen, 2004). Alebaki (2012) examined 110 wineries in Northern Greece to analyze the presence of wine tourism in this region and concluded that wine tourism is one of the primary

factors leading to increased sales, as one of the most direct methods of promotion. Wine makers in Italy perceive that wine tourism has definite promotional advantages, including word of mouth promotion. Other benefits, as reported by wineries in Spain, New Zealand and Australia, are elevated sales from cellar door visits, and increased employment opportunities (Alonso et al., 2015).

Internationally, wine tourism is perceived by many of the major wine producing countries as a means of regional development. In the case of Italy, a survey done in 2012 by the Movimento del Turismo del Vino (Wine Tourism Movement), showed that for every 1 euro a tourist spent on wine, they spent 5 times as much on “eating, shopping, visiting museums, and generally speaking on any other attraction offered by the area” (Columbini, 2015, p6). Europäische Weinstrassen (1999) (as cited in Bruwer, 2003) states that regions with established wine routes provide the best framework for cooperative work between the government, private enterprises, the tourism industry, the wineries and the local council. “It is the productive power of all these stakeholders involved in regional development that leads to the economic benefits and job creation” (Europäische Weinstrassen, 1999). The following table highlights some of the work done by Columbini (2015)<sup>1</sup>, Beverland (2003)<sup>2</sup>, Sparks (2006)<sup>3</sup>, Charters (2010)<sup>4</sup>, Bruwer (2003)<sup>5</sup>, and Lopez-Guzman (2011)<sup>6</sup> with family owned wineries in Italy, New Zealand, Australia, France, South Africa, and Spain to analyze the structure of wine tourism in those respective countries. These studies provide important insight into the organization of wine routes, the roles of the wineries, the motivations of the tourists, as well as the roles of the different stakeholders. Additionally, research done by van Westering (2003)<sup>7</sup> expands upon the organizational structure of the French tourism sector and shows how the public sector is large stakeholder in the wine tourism industry. The most common factor in the wine tourism industries of all these countries is their goal of developing wine regions in order to increase direct sales. Working towards the goal, France, Italy, and Spain all have national associations dedicated to educating wineries and other stakeholders in proper marketing and business strategies (Columbini, 2015; Charters, 2010; Lopez-Guzman et al., 2011). However, it can be seen that all six countries receive heavy support from their respective government in forming profitable tourism industries. Wineries and local businesses collaborate to promote their regions. Providing the cultural experience to tourists is the driving force for the collaborative process to further increase the brand name of the region, thus leading to increased tourist influx and direct sales.

Country	Goals of Wine Tourism	Organizational Structure	Collaboration Methods	Educational Programs	Direct Sales Initiatives
Italy <sup>1</sup>	Promote wine culture by visiting the production sites	Regulated wine routes through <i>Associazione Nazionale Città del Vino</i>	Wine roads or "networks" host hotels, country-inns, and restaurants of good or excellent quality through contracts.	Themed tours with mini-courses on Viticulture	Small wineries utilize online sales to promote themselves
	Support the growth of tourism in all Italian regions	Regional committees overlooked by larger government administration	Wine Tourism Movement (MITV) uses brochures and pamphlets to advertise in Hotels and restaurants	Wine education and tasting with cooking schools to educate chefs	
New Zealand <sup>2</sup>	Enhance the image as well as the economic and employment outlook of the wine areas				
	Support rural and regional development of wine regions	Wineries and local business partner to promote the wine region and its wines	Main collaborative strategies revolve around forming market networks with supermarkets, distributors, and exporters to better promote the wine	Themed tours with mini-courses on Viticulture	Government has heavy taxation on domestic alcohol sales, placing focus on exports.
Australia <sup>3,5</sup>	Improve brand recognition internationally	Government initiated organizations to handle tourism and promote Australian wines worldwide	Currently still developing successful collaborative methods to further regional development	Themed tours with mini-courses on Viticulture	Lots of emphasis on direct sales and promotion to increase tourist influx
	Australian wines				
France <sup>4,7,8</sup>	Develop wine regions and direct sales				
	Promote wines of various regions	Ministry of tourism organizes committees and councils to overlook tourism on the regional scale	Local business and wineries collaborate under the legal guidance of the regional administration	Themed tours with mini-lectures on viticulture for visitors	Most small wineries have cellar door sales.
South Africa <sup>3</sup>	Increase direct sales in wineries with increased tourist flow				
	Development of wine regions	Cooperative associations formed between government, private enterprises and associations, tourism industry, wineries and local councils	Formal and informal agreements and contracts between wineries, tour operators, and the food industry	Institutions offer excellent education on wine production, marketing, and business strategies.	
Spain <sup>6</sup>	Increase brand recognition and cellar-door sales				
	Promote wine producing regions and improve infrastructure	Association of wine producing regions and improve infrastructure	Strong emphasis on combining wine and gastronomy of Spain. Local restaurants are heavily involved with local wineries to provide tourists with cultural experience	Wine education is not a top priority for wineries, however, wine tastings sometimes contain some educational aspects	Direct mail order lists, internet (E-commerce), newsletters, and wine club memberships are some methods used by wineries.
	Support the growth of tourism and the economic outlook of various regions	Asociacion Espanola de Ciudades del Vino established the training and methodology to make wine route tangible	Local restaurants are heavily involved with local wineries to provide tourists with cultural experience	Asociacion Espanola de Ciudades del Vino is responsible for education associating members (restaurants, hotels) about wine marketing	Spanish wineries utilize direct sales to gain loyal consumers internationally to counteract the low domestic sales

Table 2.2 International Examples in Wine Tourism

Traditionally, France, Italy, and Spain have dominated the wine tourism market providing established examples of successful initiatives. The rich history in wine production and their world-class wine regions, including Bordeaux (France), Tuscany (Italy), and La Rioja (Spain), have attracted visitors since the 17th century (Chaney, 2002; van Westering, 2003; Charters, 2010, Lopez-Guzman et al., 2011), but wine routes in France and Italy were not organized till the early 1990s (Columbini, 2015; Charters, 2010). Central governments have made substantial moves to enhance tourism and improve the image of various wine producing regions. Associations on the national level formed to organize wine routes and other local associations were created to handle tourism and commerce on the wine routes (van Westering, 2003; Columbini, 2015, Lopez-Guzman et al., 2011). For example, the Wine Tourism Movement in Italy focuses their efforts in helping restaurants, hotels, wineries, and other associated members gain a competitive business advantage by informing them on the best marketing practices (Columbini, 2015). A study conducted in 2014 by Columbini examining the current state of wine tourism in Italy, showed that wineries in Italy had almost doubled their direct-sales to about 16.6% of their production as a result of government efforts to promote tourism (Columbini, 2015).

Following the examples set by the established and successful “old world” countries of France, Italy and Spain, emerging wine sectors in Australia, South Africa, and New Zealand (the “new world”) began shifting their industry’s focus towards coordinated regional development. Bruwer’s (2003) study on the wine tourism practices in South Africa highlighted the formation of wine routes in collaboration with the tourism ministry and the local administration to drive tourist flow to rural areas with the goal of economic development. The biggest advantage that South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand have is that most of their wine producing regions are located outside metropolitan areas, and thus wine tourism played a vital role in regional and rural development, employment generation, corporate investment, business growth, and tourism (Bruwer, 2003; Beverland, 1998). Wine tourism creates clear and distinct economic advantages through the use of regional promotion to not only increase direct sales, but also create brand awareness, and development of the wine market (Columbini, 2015).

### **Expansion of Wine Tourism in Northern Greece**

In the 1970s and 80s, five large companies produced the bulk of wine consumed in Greece (Ritchie et al., 2015). Today, Greece is the 7th or 8th largest wine producer in Europe (FAS, 2014) and of the 700 wineries in Greece, around 80 of them are located in the northern region of

Macedonia (Ritchie et al., 2015). Out of these 80, over 60% of them are small, family owned enterprises with the goal of producing high quality artisanal wines. These wines are made using the array of varietals produced by the favorable soil and weather in Northern Greece. Many winemakers are cultivating ancient grape varietals that are not commercialized elsewhere, such as Malagousia, Xinomavro, Assyrtiko, and Negoska. Winemakers in this region understand that these ‘terroir-driven’ wines will help them stand apart from other countries, creating a “unique niche in the market for their wines” (Enterprise Greece, 2011). Greek wines have been achieving high ratings and winning awards in a variety of well-known trade magazines, such as Wine Enthusiast magazine and Wine Plus magazine (Enterprise Greece, 2011). Majority of these awards have gone to small-medium, family owned wineries in Greece. At the Decanter World Wine Awards in 2012, Lyrarakis, Estate Argyros, and Domaine Gerovassiliou took home Gold (Bachelor, 2012), proving how growing and talented winemakers are not only emerging in the Greek wine market, but in the international wine industry.



**Figure 2.1: Wall of important awards at Domaine Gerovassiliou**

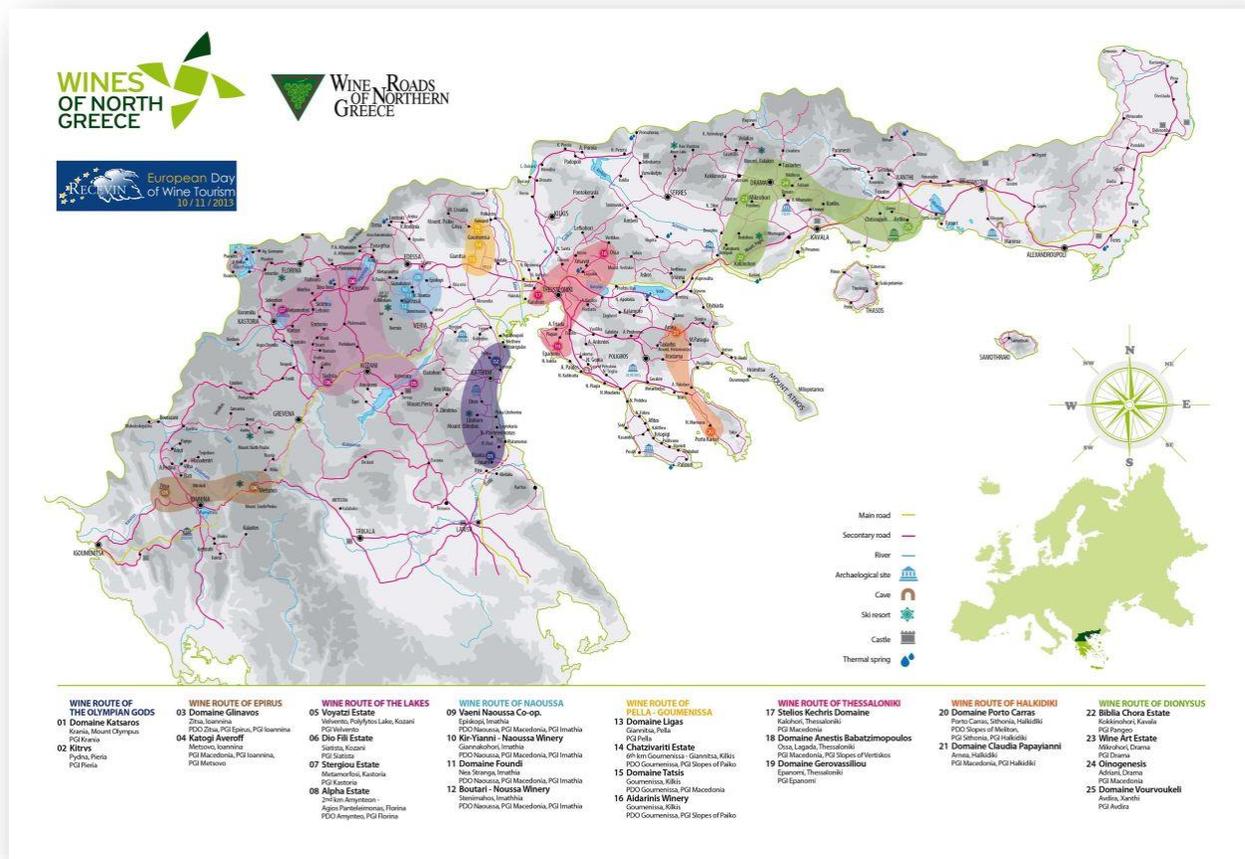
In the 1980s, there was a push to promote wine tourism in Greece to continue to grow wineries’ businesses along with working to make better wine to conquer new markets. Winemakers

had found that Greeks were becoming interested in the quality of Greek wine, but also discovered that Greeks did not know a great amount about their cultural heritage as a wine producing country, pushing them to provide a solution to the insufficiency of wine tourism (Ritchie et al., 2015).

Alebaki et al. (2012) examined 110 wineries in Northern Greece regarding the level of involvement in tourism activities. Sixty percent of wineries report being involved in wine tourism, and 59% of those have developed tourism facilities. Almost eighty percent of wineries do not hire new staff to conduct tourism operations and 63.6% do not keep any information on their visitors. Also, in the majority of cases (69.7%), the wineries have fewer than five employees. The results from Alebaki's (2012) study highlight that there is significant room for improvement in order for these nascent winemakers to succeed and prosper, particularly during times of economic crisis.

### **Efforts to develop regional wine tourism in Northern Greece**

The Wine Producers Association of the Northern Greece Vineyard is a non-for-profit, non-stock corporation whose aim is to support the tradition of winemaking and provide opportunities to visitors to discover vineyards in Northern Greece (Wine Roads of Northern Greece, 2016). The association consists of wineries, local authorities and enterprises, and other associations such as hotels and restaurants. They produce leaflets, DVDs, documentaries, and participate in international exhibitions in Germany and England. In May, they organize an Open Doors weekend where wineries are open and free for customers who can participate in both wine tastings and tours. The Wine Producers Association established the first wine route in 1993 (Vlachvei et al., 2009b). A wine route is defined as “a tourist route that connects several wine estates and wineries in a given area” (Vlachvei et al., 2009b) and is an accessible way for consumers to meet wine producers and visit other attractions in the area. The association has built and maintained a total of 8 wine routes, with 32 wineries representing almost all organized production in the region (Pitoska, 2008). Figure 1 below depicts these 8 wine routes and regions, shaded in different colors, and lists the wineries of each route that are a part of the Wine Producers Association.



**Figure 2.2: Map of the Wine Roads of Northern Greece and Macedonia**

<http://news.gtp.gr/2013/11/08/northern-greece-participate-european-day-wine-tourism/>

In order to gauge the effectiveness of the wine routes, Pitoska (2008) conducted a study including 25 wineries within the Wine Producers Association of the Northern Greece Vineyard, concluding that the actions of the Wine Roads of Northern Greece help to reach the goals of enhancing the promotion of Greek wine, increasing sales and exports, and contributing to regional/local development. These actions also contribute to “1) more efficient utilization of local resources, 2) stabilization of workplaces in the sector, the creation of workplaces and new professions and the integration of supplementary professions into the network, 3) creation of new local and standardized products, 4) development of a new tourism product and the differentiation/enhancement of “wine tourism”, 5) expansion of the tourist season and enhancement with new products, 6) development of wine and cultural tourism, 7) development of collective action, 8) residence of young people in rural areas, creation of new interests, 9) protection of the natural

environment” (Pitoska, 2008). Wine producers stated that the wine routes will be able to increase the potential of promotion and wine tourism in the region. Vlachvei et al. (2009b) explains that through the formation of the wine routes, the association recognizes that there is a unique opportunity to not only promote the wine sector, but other businesses and landmarks as well. Wine routes and the businesses associated with the routes are an important component of advancing wine tourism in the region, acting as a platform from which the winery can promote their vineyard as well as the many activities and events they offer.

Tourism agencies play an important role in providing excursions throughout Northern Greece. There are a total of 210 travel agencies in Thessaloniki alone (Travel Agencies Thessaloniki, 2016). Ambotis Air Tour Services and Silver Holidays are two tourism agencies, based in Thessaloniki, who provide wine tour opportunities for their clients (Stefanos Hajimanoulis, personal communication, April 5, 2016; Ambotis Air Tours Services, Personal Communication, April 8, 2016).

## Wineries

In an attempt to promote the image of Greek wine, sales, exports, and local development, small wineries have begun to engage in wine tourism and develop strategies that have otherwise been lacking over the past two decades (Alebaki et al., 2012, Yuan et al., 2004, Pitoska, 2008). An in-depth examination of 110 northern Greek winemakers’ involvement in wine tourism conducted by Alebaki and colleagues (2012) revealed that winemakers primarily wish to improve connections with customers and raise the profile of their wineries in the region. Table 2.3 points out the top five goals wineries have regarding wine tourism. Winemakers in northern Greece are offering tourism services, with over 90% providing wine tastings and guided tours of the winery, and 70% hosting guided tours of the vineyard and special events (Alebaki et al., 2012). Other tourism services offered by wineries are shown below in Table 2.4.

<b>Our winery is involved in wine tourism in order to</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>St. Deviation</b>
Get in contact with the customer	4.4	5.0	0.8
Improve the brand recognition of our wines	4.4	5.0	0.9
Raise the profile of the winery in this region	4.3	5.0	0.9
Become a pole of tourism attraction	4.2	4.0	0.9
Improve the brand awareness of local wines	4.1	4.0	1.0

**Table 2.3: Goals of wine tourism**  
**Modified from Alebaki et al., 2012**

<b>Product and Services Offered</b>	<b>Count</b>	<b>%</b>
Cellar door sales	65	98.5%
Wine tasting	65	98.5%
Guided tour in the winery	62	93.9%
Information brochures	57	86.4%
Guided tours in the vineyards	48	72.7%
Special events	46	69.7%
Other services (cooking classes, etc.)	25	37.9%
Hosting Social events	17	25.8%
Sales of other products	17	25.8%
Audio visual presentation equipment	16	24.2%
Total	66	100%

**Table 2.4: Products and services offered at wineries**  
**Modified from Alebaki et al., 2012**

Domaine Gerovassiliou, established in 1981 by Vangelis Gerovassiliou, is a family owned winery located in the village of Epanomi in Northern Greece. Over the years, this winery has developed many educational events and tools regarding Greek culture and history, in order to attract a variety and abundance of visitors (Ritchie et al., 2015). Although this is desired and attempted by

many wineries, most have not had the time to create successful wine tourism strategies. With 13.5 years being the average amount of time a winery in Northern Greece has been established, the wineries have not fully taken advantage of opportunities available to further expand and develop this aspect of their business (Alebaki et al., 2014).



**Figure 2.3: Domaine Gerovassiliou in the region of Epanomi, Greece**

### **Understanding Consumer Motivations and Expectations**

Developing an effective marketing strategy requires wineries to consider important consumption-related factors, such as market forces and demographic trends (Carlsen, 2004). In a 2015 study, Alebaki and colleagues examine why tourists participate in wine tourism activities. Visitors of twelve wineries located in Northern Greece were given a questionnaire when leaving the cellar door of the wineries. The four most important motivating factors for wine tourists are to taste the winery's products, to escape their daily routine, to enjoy the landscape of the winery, and to relax. Three out of these four factors are unrelated to the wine product itself. This is important for the wineries to keep in mind when creating marketing strategies to attract tourists, in order to publicize the assets that visitors are most attracted to. The consumers that participate in wine tourism can be segmented into groups based on demographics and their motivations to visit a

winery. Alebaki and Iakovidou (2006) conclude there are four types of wine tourists in Greece. “Wine lovers” tend to be affluent, well-educated consumers who visit the area specifically to go to the winery to learn about the wine, how it is made, and meet the winemaker. “Neophytes” are usually younger individuals including students without a major source of income visiting the winery because they have a special interest in wine. “Occasional Wine Tourists” do not necessarily want to learn about the history or production of the wine, but are attracted to the cooking and food of that particular area. “Hangers-on” do not consume wine and are not enticed by the opportunity to learn about wine or the making of wine. They view visiting a winery or going on a wine tour as another tourist attraction of the area.

Demographics, such as gender, age, income, and educational level, can change over time, as Alebaki et al. showed through studies from 2011 to 2015 where visitors leaving wineries in Northern Greece were given a questionnaire regarding this information. For example, in 2011 primarily males were visiting wineries in the region, however in 2015 gender did not seem to be a factor, being 54% male and 46% female. It is also important for wineries to understand which demographic of people they have yet to reach. With this in mind, Bruwer (2002), as cited in Carlsen (2004), stresses the importance of the next generation of wine consumers to the growing number of small wineries that they choose to visit.

### **Expanding wine tourism in Northern Greece**

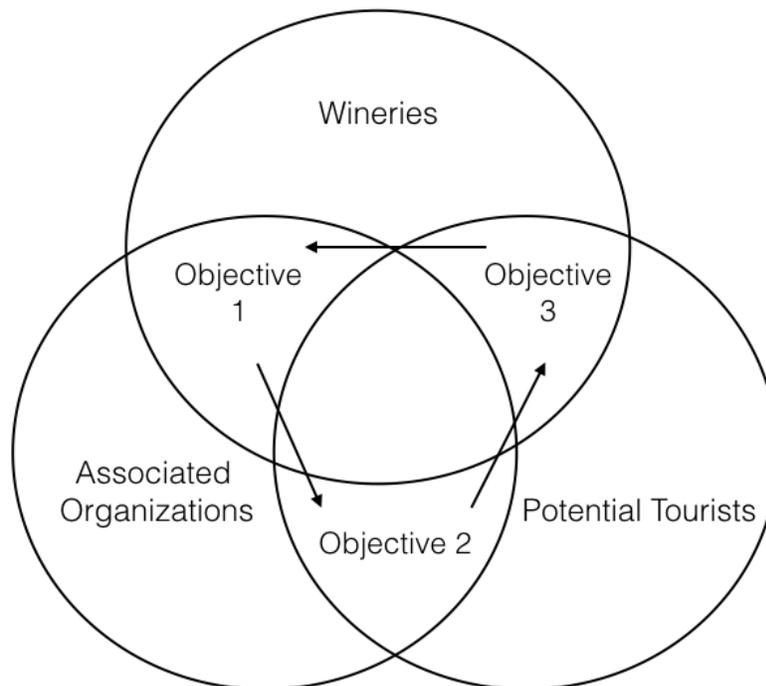
In Northern Greece, the majority of wineries are small, family owned enterprises that focus on producing high quality wines. Many producers began winemaking as a hobby, however in part due to the economic crisis, winemakers have turned to transforming their wineries into businesses. Increasing tourism can ultimately lead to a growth in sales and consequently production, yet tourism requires the combined efforts of various stakeholders and an understanding of wine tourism through all these stakeholders in order to increase the chances of “survival for small and medium wineries and the small tourism enterprises that cater for wine tourists” (Carlsen, 2004). These combined efforts include actions of the winemakers, tourism agencies, hotels, and others who promote and engage in wine tourism, and finally the potential tourists. Northern Greece faces the challenge of integrating wine tourism and consumer knowledge to fully package a wine tourism experience and promote itself as a wine tourism destination (Carlsen, 2004).

### 3. METHODOLOGY

Our project explored the perspectives of winemakers, organizations engaged in wine tourism, and potential consumers to provide practical recommendations to help wineries improve wine tourism in Northern Greece. To achieve this, we have identified the following objectives:

- Analyze current involvement of wineries in marketing and promotion
- Determine the current actions and efforts of organizations who engage and promote wine tourism in Northern Greece
- Identify what motivates and interests potential consumers to participate in wine tourism and explore how wineries could better reach them

The Venn diagram below illustrates the overlaps of the three stakeholders which this paper examines.



**Figure 3.1: Venn Diagram of Wine Tourism Stakeholders in Northern Greece**

#### Analyze current involvement of wineries in marketing and promotion

We conducted semi-structured interviews with winemakers from four small to mid-sized wineries located on the Wine Roads of Northern Greece. These included Ktima Gerovassiliou, Dalamaras Winery, Thomaidis Distillery, and Chatzivaritis Winery. Each of the interviews took place

at the winery's estate following a tour of the winery which included an explanation of the winery's history and winemaking process. See Table 3.1 for information regarding the interviewees and the wineries. Interviews were conducted in English, with all members of the research team present and covered the following themes:

- How the wineries are marketing their business, what they have tried in the past, obstacles they have faced, plans for the future
- What market segment the wineries are reaching. Is there a potential customer the wineries are interested in?
- How can wineries increase the number of visitors to their facility and utilize direct marketing?

A full set of interview questions can be found in Appendix A



**Figure 3.2: The four wineries interviewed**

Name	Interviewee(s)	Size, Type	Location	Production	Services Offered	Main Grape Varietal	Association Membership	Sell product from website
Gerovasilou	Alexandra, Magdalene, Thrass	Medium, 56 hectares Family owned	Epanomi	300,000-350,000 bottles	Wine tour Wine tasting Museum Lessons for children Lectures Seminars Kras tests Special events Musicians	Malagousia	Wine Producer's Association of Northern Greece	Yes
Chatzivaritis	Olga Iakovidou	Medium, 48.5 hectares Family owned	Goumerissa	70,000 bottles	Wine tour Wine tasting Events with local food and musicians Movie nights	Xinomavro Negoska Roditis Assyrtico	Local Association of Goumenissa, Wine Producer's Association of Northern Greece	Yes
Dalamaras	Kostis Dalamaras	Small, 6 hectares Family owned	Naoussa	30,000 bottles	Wine tour Wine tasting Museum Tsipouro distillery	Xinomavro	The Winemakers and Winegrowers Association of Naoussa	No
Thomaidis Distillery	Sotiris & Savvas Thomaidis	Small, Family owned	Piperies	-	Tour of the facility Tsipouro distillery	Amassi	None	No

Table 3.1: Winemaker Interviews

## Determine the current actions and efforts of organizations who engage and promote wine tourism in Northern Greece.

To better understand the current state of wine tourism in the region of Northern Greece, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the director of the Wine Producers Association of the Northern Greece Vineyard, a tourist agency operator at both Ambotis Tours Air Services and Silver Holidays, and the manager of a 5-star hotel, Electra Palace (see Table 3.2). Trips were made to five additional hotels in Thessaloniki, however no formal interviews were conducted with them due to their lack of participation in wine tourism. The interview questions focused on their experience in the industry, obstacles they have faced, and suggestions for improvement. Interviewees were chosen based on availability and willingness to participate in the study.

The Mayor of Thessaloniki, Yiannis Boutaris, and a special consultant to the mayor, Eleni Sotiriou, were interviewed at City Hall in Thessaloniki regarding wine tourism on a regional level. Boutaris worked for his family owned winery and then left the business to form the Kir-Yianni company. He is a founding member of the Wine Road's Association of Northern Greece and has supported tourism development projects, specifically focusing on gastronomy and wine tourism. Eleni Sotiriou was a consultant at Kir-Yianni winery, then left to form her own company, called Wine Plus. This company is dedicated to wine marketing, consulting, and educating consumers.

Overall the interviews investigated the following themes:

- What are the current efforts of the Wine Producers Association and what is its organizational structure?
- What other organizations are wineries a part of and how do they benefit the wineries?
- What are the relationships between wineries and these organizations and how are these relationships helping the development of tourism?

A full set of interview questions for each of the above mentioned interviews can be found in Appendices B-E.

Name	Association
Giannis Albanis	Wine Producers Association of the Northern Greece Vineyard
Stefanos Hajimanoulis	Silver Holidays
Alexandra Ermakova	Ambotis Tours Air Services
Alexandros Svyriadis	Electra Palace

**Table 3.2: Wine Marketer Interviewees**

**Identify what motivates and interests the potential consumer to participate in wine tourism and explore how wineries could better reach them.**

Interviews were conducted with potential wine tourists, specifically within the ‘Neophyte’ cluster. Interviewees included 22 students between the ages of 18 and 24 years old from Perrotis College and Aristotle University in Thessaloniki, Greece. The students interviewed are focusing on business, food, and agriculture in their studies. These potential wine tourists were chosen based on availability, access, and interest in winemaking and wine tourism. A Facebook event was created which included the date, time, and location for the interviews that students from Aristotle University could join to be part of the study. At Perrotis College, two group members approached students outside of residential and academic buildings to ask for their participation. Semi-structured interviews were held and included open ended questions related to their experience and history in touring a winery, the reasons for past visits, expectations and motivations to visit a winery and any obstacles faced inhibiting a potential visit. Interview questions can be found in Appendix F.

**Data Analysis**

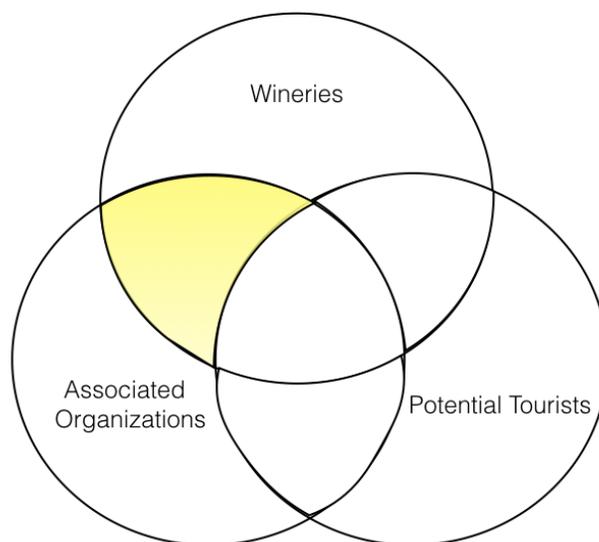
The data collected in this project consists of qualitative data from interviews and observations. During the interviews, notes were taken consisting observations made by group members. Observations included what was said, reactions to specific questions, and areas identified for future research. Each interview was recorded, as well as transcribed. The transcripts were sent to the respective interviewee(s) to review for errors, as well as to identify any information they wanted to keep confidential.

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the interview data. Thematic analysis is a commonly used qualitative data analysis method, and the purpose is to identify patterns across a set of data (University, 2016). In order to identify these themes and patterns, the process consisted of familiarization with the data, data coding, and searching for themes (University, 2016). There were several trends present throughout each set of interviews, which were organized according to our three objectives.

## 4. FINDINGS

Following an analysis of our interviews, our team compiled a set of findings, organized by objectives outlined in the methodology. We present our assessment of the current involvement of small-scale wineries in wine tourism marketing and promotion, determine the current actions and efforts of organizations who engage and promote wine tourism in Northern Greece, and identify what motivates and interests the potential consumer to participate in wine tourism. Within these sections, claims were made encompassing the major findings related to the efforts, aims, and challenges presented by each of the three stakeholders in wine tourism.

### Objective 1: Analyze current involvement of wineries in marketing and promotion



**Figure 4.1: Venn Diagram highlighting the first overlap between wineries and associated organizations. This is the focus of the following findings.**

### Reasons small-medium scale wineries produce wine

Wineries in Northern Greece all have varying reasons for producing wine. Some estates, like Ktima Gerovassiliou and Dalamaras Estate have been passed down through generations of family, and both have played an instrumental role in the resurgence of traditional grape varieties in the region. Gerovassiliou originally began cultivating the grapes they currently produce in 1981, in efforts to revive the oenological history of the region (Ritchie et al 2015). Today, their efforts in continuing to produce high quality wine lies within this history of cultivation and nationality. As

noted by Thrass, an assistant winemaker at Domaine Gerovassiliou, “The substance of the product which is wine has all these things... has traditions from the past, everything is related... the product exists for four thousand years in Greece” (Ktima Gerovassiliou, Personal Communication, March 22, 2016). The Dalamaras family has been involved in winemaking and distillation since 1840 (Wines, 2016). Kostis Dalamaras is the fifth generation of the family who is dedicated to the winery and making wine. He is knowledgeable about each aspect of the winery and takes on the major responsibilities of the business, including the vine growing and cultivating, facilitating wine tours and visits, and carrying on the story surrounding his well-known family (Dalamaras Estate, Personal Communication, March 29, 2016). The nature of history and family legacy are very important to these wineries, both holding great pride for the work of their forefathers.

While these have a strong family tradition, others have emerged more recently from their personal interest in viticulture, and others in aims of creating their own legacy. Chatzivaritis estate began as a hobby and has evolved into a successful family business. Vangelis Chatzivaritis began making wine for his family and friends as a break from his demanding career as a mechanical engineer (Company, 2016). In 1994 he planted the first 50 acres of vineyard, and today the estate consists of 120 acres of unique Greek grape varieties (Company, 2016). The winery now has a beautiful visiting center and area to taste the wine. Vangelis, and his wife Olga Iakovidou, have a passion and dedication for winemaking and educating the consumer about wine. The Thomaidis Distillery currently specializes in the production of Tsipouro, however they are expanding their business to winemaking in the upcoming years. After returning from school in Barolo, Italy, Savvas Thomaidis saw an opportunity to enter the wine market in Greece. He came back from his studies wanting to implement what he learned about the process of winemaking, as well as the technique of combining history and terroir when marketing the wine, in his own business (Thomaidis, Personal Communication, March 29, 2016). This young entrepreneur, with the help of his brother and parents, is working to establish his business as a contender in this ever-expanding wine market.



**Figure 4.2: A wine tasting being held outside at Chatzivaritis Estate**

**For the winemakers, maintaining the quality of their wines takes precedent over marketing their products**

Many of the wineries in the region are relatively new wineries. Research by Ritchie et al. (2015) shows an increased level of interest in the cultivation of the regional varietals, namely seen through the crusader, Vangelis Gerovassiliou. The adolescence of the region as a wine tourism region is apparent, mostly because up until the 60's, "there were no more than 70 organized wineries

in Greece” (Yiannis Boutaris, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016). This has since grown and there are now nearly 700 wineries in Northern Greece (Yiannis Boutaris, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016). This rapid expansion means that these estates have relatively little business experience. As noted, the winemakers are primarily focused on producing quality wine, as evidenced by another assistant winemaker at Ktima Gerovassiliou, “...we focus more on the quality of the product, that’s the first thing we put out.” (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016). This is an important consideration that needs to be taken into account when analyzing tourism to these estates because these artisanal producers take great pride in the quality of their work. They present little interest in commercializing their brand at the expense of quality. The management aspect of the winery as a business comes secondary, and it is largely for this reason that a coordinated industry of wine tourism in Northern Greece remains relatively small.

In addition, given the small size of the wineries, they lack the manpower to develop the business facet of their winery, despite having desire to expand. The major obstacles faced in promotion of the wineries has been manpower to do so because of the size of the winery, costs, and accessibility. Dalamaras has cited lack of employees as a major inhibitor to taking on additional tourists stating, “It’s hard because the nature of the business is small. I cannot say I will hire somebody just for visits.” (Dalamaras Estate, personal communication, March 29, 2016). This is an important bottleneck because these small scale wineries are not willing to sacrifice the quality of their product. Dalamaras states, “I need to train somebody that can replace me when I want to leave. That is very important... If I resolve this part of the problem, then we can focus on having more and more people come. But first we need to figure out a way to satisfy them all without losing the quality of what we are producing.” (Dalamaras Estate, personal communication, March 29, 2016).



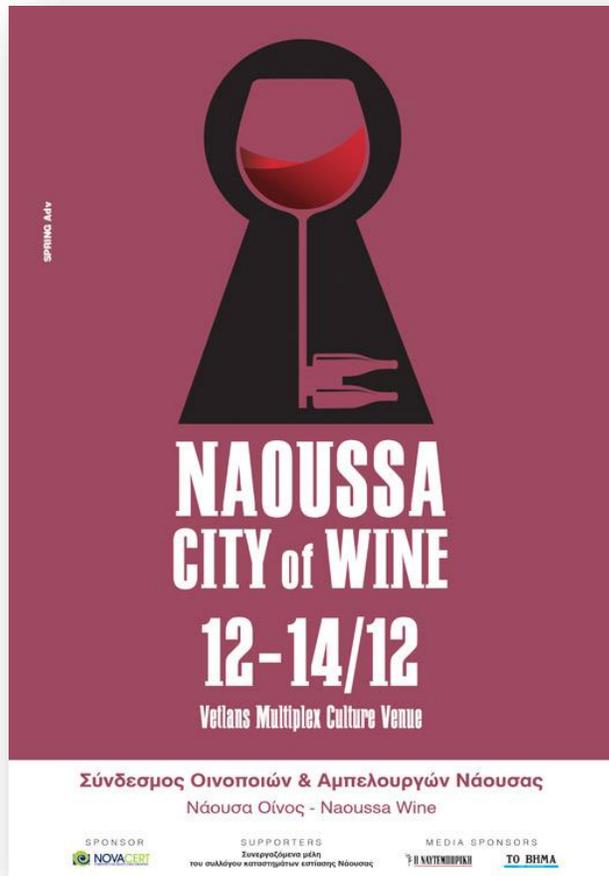
**Figure 4.3: Dalamaras Estate in the region of Naoussa, Greece**

### **Wineries are promoting wine tourism at the regional and local levels**

Many regional and local efforts have been made on the part of the wineries, including collaboration with other local wineries, small artisanal businesses, associations, and local organizations involved in the promotion of wine tourism. The first aspect of this collaborative effort are the partnerships formed between wineries and the small artisanal businesses of the regions. In order to expand tourism to wineries throughout the region, these businesses must work together. Mayor Boutaris clearly articulates this sentiment stating, “The wineries and the local administration, the local area, hotels, restaurants, they must be one big thing. If you go to Naoussa and visit some wineries, then you go and don’t find good food, it doesn’t work.” (Yiannis Boutaris, personal communication, April 11, 2016). This collaboration can help foster the promotion of both local businesses and regional tourism. Examples from South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand further reinforce this idea (Bruwer, 2003; Chaney, 2002; Beverland, 1998). For example, in Australia, due to the rural locations of wine regions, steps were taken to provide lodging and food for visitors to wineries. An established infrastructure proved to be a driving factor in bringing in more tourists and improving the image of the regions, as well as the brand image of the associated wineries (Sparks,

2006). Another aspect of this collaboration is the relationships wineries have with associations involved in the promotion of the region. Gerovassiliou and Chatzivaritis are both members of the Wine Producers Association of Northern Greece, and host an Open Doors weekend funded by the association every year. This event is a successful and well recognized function for the wineries, bringing in consumers of all types. Gerovassiliou states that they “... have 2,000 people in one weekend, 500 almost are children. So adults we have almost 1,500. This weekend is the most famous.” (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016). Chatzivaritis estate also states that it is a major event of their winery involving cuisine from local businesses and traditional music (Chatzivaritis Estate, personal communication, March 31, 2016).

In addition to the regional affiliations such as the Wine Producers Association, there has been an emergence of smaller, local organizations focused specifically on one region. Much like the efforts of the larger organization, these local partnerships focus on the advancement of the local hotels, restaurants and wineries, but just focus on their region. Dalamaras estate reports involvement of the organization of Naoussa, describing the events the organization sets up stating, “We [the organization] organize annual events for wine tasting and that usually lasts three days. There is a wine tasting square and everyone can go and taste wine. We have some parallel events around that and then the third day which is Sunday they can come down to our wineries and visit and taste.” (Dalamaras Estate, personal communication, March 29, 2016). These events are organized per the region and help promote the local cuisine and cultivars specific to Naoussa.



**Figure 4.4: A pamphlet for a wine tasting event organized by the Naoussa region wine association**

### **Wineries promote themselves as a tourist destination**

Wineries have implemented various methods to promote their estates, their wine, and their events. Gerovassiliou sends out newsletters, prints and posters for the nearby village, and organizes wine fairs. Social media is commonly used, including Facebook and Twitter, and winery websites. Olga Iakovidou states “The first thing is the internet, our website, our page on Facebook...we participate in fairs and exhibitions” (Chatzivaritis Estate, personal communication, March 31, 2016). Word of mouth is also considered an important method of advertising by this winery.

## Wineries target specific market segments of consumers

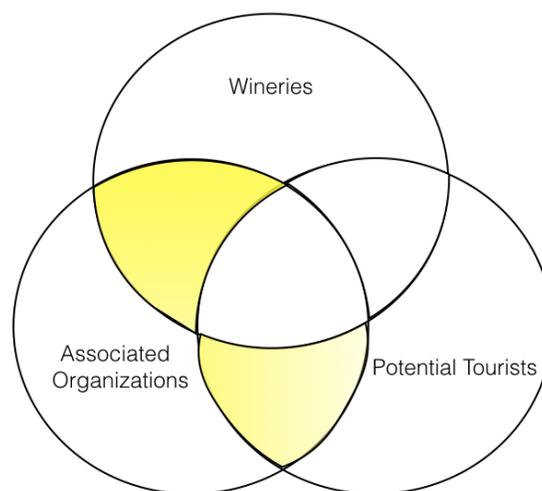
Wineries target specific market segments -- the wine lovers and the neophytes. The wine lovers are the majority of their customers due to their interest and knowledge in wine. These consumers, as seen in the literature from wine regions globally, are an older segmentation with a larger income. The majority of visitors to Dalamaras winery are an older demographic. Dalamaras states, "they are from 55-70 years old and they want to discuss things. And this is usually, I think, most of the tourists are at this age, especially the ones that come from abroad." (Dalamaras Estate, personal communication, March 29, 2016). Gerovassiliou also draws from an older consumer segment noting, "Most of the visitors are aged 40-45" (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016).

While attracting an older, more experienced, and knowledgeable consumer segment, the wineries in this project expressed an interest in engaging with younger, less experienced consumers, as a way to promote their efforts in winemaking to a new generation of consumers. As noted by Magdalene, working in public relations at Ktima Gerovassiliou, "We would like to have younger visitors." (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016). This interest in the younger generation was also noted by Iakovidou who indicated, "That [the university students] was the best audience. The best audience because they were interested in why they were trying. What's the wine, how do they drink it, they wanted to be educated" (Chatzivaritis Estate, personal communication, March 31, 2016). This enthusiasm in the ability to educate the 'millennials' about wine and help them expand their knowledge of wine was also echoed in the interview with Gerovassiliou employees stating, "That's why we do the events and seminars that attract the younger ages" (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016).

The interest in the neophyte sector comes in large part from the educational opportunities that the wineries provide. Gerovassiliou reported that 36% of visits to their estate were school visits, with an educational focus. The estate creates opportunities for all ages explaining one activity they host for the of-age consumer stating, "We make a small game...and we call it krass test. Usually what we do is bring people close to wine and teach them how to taste the wine, teach them how to taste the wine and get them to appreciate the wine. We play with some aromas and try to find what kind of aromas it is, is it the fruit? Is it the flower?" (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016). Chatzivariti has also expressed an interest in these opportunities such as a wine tasting where they explain the characteristics of the wine. Furthermore, they pair the wine with a certain food, and examine the different tastes with each food (Chatzivaritis Estate, personal

communication, March 31, 2016). These educational initiatives have given the wineries a new interest in the type of consumer. While the neophytes do not know much about wine currently, their desire to learn is beneficial to the winery by forming long-term relationships with the neophytes, contributing to the future of wine tourism. Iakovidou further validated this concept by expressing the importance of the younger generation, “Currently the younger generation may not have the income to buy wine, but they will ten years from now” (Chatzivaritis Estate, personal communication, March 31, 2016).

## **Objective 2: Determine the current actions and efforts of organizations who engage and promote wine tourism in Northern Greece**



**Figure 4.5: Venn diagram highlighting the overlaps of both the wineries and the associations, but moving to highlight the overlap between the associated organizations and the potential tourists. The following information focuses on these.**

## **Governmental support could substantially benefit the growing tourism industry in Greece and create stronger connections with the wineries**

Tourism throughout Northern Greece has been seen to be an underdeveloped industry. The mayor of Thessaloniki, Yiannis Boutaris, states, “What happens in North Greece is that tourism is not well developed anyway. You’re trying to develop a niche market, wine tourism, where they don’t actually have tourism. Northern Greece has never been actually a touristic destination. Apart from something like Mount Olympus or Thessaloniki, they didn’t know how to do it anyway so they

cannot understand how they should develop wine tourism” (Boutaris, personal communication, April 11, 2016). This is imperative to understand that wine tourism is a small aspect of the tourism industry in the region and when looking to increase it, the entire sector of tourism must first be advanced. Even though most of the organization of tourism industries happened around the same time (early 1990s), (Charters, 2010, Columbini, 2015), tourism in Italy, France, and Spain have seen significant support from governmental initiatives to promote and develop wine tourism; this is something that appears to be lacking in Northern Greece. The development of wine tourism can greatly benefit when local governmental administration provides funding and also the necessary infrastructure for emerging regions to develop better tourism industries (Charters, 2010). The mayor of Thessaloniki states, “This is the responsibility of the mayor of the area, he is to gather everybody and say, ‘look we have got one point of economic development, wine tourism. How do we do wine tourism?’ He gets a professional who will have a strategic plan, so in the next five years the area will be different” (Office of the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016). While it may not be possible for the government to provide large amounts of financial support, it is important that they understand the benefits of wine tourism to the region.

### **Engagements between wineries and organizations/tourist agencies need time to become established and beneficial to both parties**

Wineries and tourism agencies, organizations and hotels collaborating can benefit the advancement of wine tourism. While it was clear that there was a lack of communication between the groups, successful relationships exist, which can provide a basis from which the construction of this connection can form. Of the wineries interviewed, one reported of a successful relationship with a tourism agency. Dalamaras winery is associated with a travel agency that is contractually obligated to bring 1,500 tourists per annum, or 100 visits with tourist groups of 15 (Dalamaras Estate, Personal Communication, March 29, 2016). When these visitors come to Dalamaras estate, they are predicted to spend a certain amount of time and money not only at the winery, but at other local businesses in the area. Applying Columbini’s work (2015) to Naoussa, tourists are predicted to purchase wine from the cellar door, and with the average price of 15 euros per bottle, they are theorized to spend a total of 90 euros on wine and other products. Multiplied by the ensured 1,500 visitors the tourism agency brings, that results in 135,000 euros of secure income for Naoussa just from the efforts of one winery. Because of this relationship between the winery and the tourist agency, the whole region can benefit. Furthermore, this contract gives the tourism agency the

benefit of knowing that they have a structured trip to go on, and the winery the benefit of knowing that they can definitely expect a certain number of visitors to their winery per year.

While this partnership has been successful, winemakers have shared stories of opposition: the dreaded experience with a tourist agent. One winery expressed a negative experience where the agent did not coordinate the timing correctly, therefore the cuisine prepared was not present, and the relaying of messages to and from the winemaker and the consumers were twisted and not completely true. At Chatzivaritis, Olga Iakovidou also expressed contention with tourism agencies, and her desire to not work with groups such as this. She described a day where a large group of people came to the winery on a tour bus, and the tourists were disrespectful and rowdy. “I have tried to educate them, to serve them and teach them how to drink the wine, or what’s that wine etc. They won’t hear anything” (Chatzivariti, Personal Communication, March 31, 2016). It was a very unpleasant experience for the winery.

Tourism agencies and hotels in Northern Greece have a low level of participation in wine tourism, having little direct connection to wineries and wine associations. Three out of the four wineries interviewed do not have a contract with a tourism agency and are reluctant to do so. Gerovassiliou reported, “The agencies usually try to make up a day program and they try to find things to do for 30 minutes before or after the beach... these large groups... have no real interest in being here” (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016). The tourism agencies are focused on service, meaning that they aim for quantity of visitors over the “quality” or level of interest the tourist has in learning about wine. In contrast, the wineries are interested in the quality of their product and the experience of the visitor. For example, Ktima Gerovassiliou gladly accepts the tourist agency that calls with 20-35 visitors and ample time to spend at the winery. It is when the agencies call with 50 people and only 30 minutes to spend that they say no (Ktima Gerovassiliou, Personal Communication, April 22, 2016). Chatzivariti reported that they no longer accept large groups for the lack of interest in their wine they experienced (Chatzivariti, Personal Communication, March 31, 2016). The reasoning for this rounds back to the primary motivations of the wineries, which is the experience the visitor has and the relationship they have the opportunity to create with each tourist.

As a result of this mismatch, there is a gap in communication between the hotels along the wine routes and the organizations promoting wine tourism. Even the hotels along the established wine routes have a weakened relationship with the associations. The Wine Producers Association reports they previously had contracts with the hotels along the routes, but no longer do. “The

contract was for 3 years. 2007, 2008, and 2009. After this period, there was no contract, there is [currently] no fee for these members. We just have them on our website.” (Giannis Albanis, Personal Communication, April 4, 2016). It is clear that there is no validation as to whether or not the hotels along the route are actively promoting the wineries. The association also explained, “We send them information and we hope they promote in their clients but we are not sure if they do” (Giannis Albanis, Personal Communication, April 4, 2016).

Furthermore, tourism agencies and hotels currently have a low level of collaboration with wineries. Ambotis Air Tours Services and Silver Holidays tourism agencies reported not having any direct contracts with wineries or involvement with the Wine Producers Association (Ambotis Air Tours Services, Personal Communication, April 8, 2016; Stefanos Hajimanoulis, Personal Communication, April 5, 2016). They reported having informal trips to wineries as part of a larger excursion. For example, Ambotis tours stated that they organize tours to wineries as a component of a larger tour to a specific region. When asked about the level of communication and coordination with these wineries, the tourism agent stated that they did not have any formal agreements with the wineries, and that it was structured as a call ahead plan (Ambotis Air Tours Services, Personal Communication, April 8, 2016). Silver holidays stated that their level of involvement in wine tourism was a little higher, yet they too only organize excursions with wineries on a call-ahead basis. They expressed a desire and a vision for communication between tourist agencies and wineries, stating that there needed to be not only education of the other, but a willingness to collaborate on both sides. Furthermore, he stated that the potential for wine tourism exists in Northern Greece, however there needs to be more communication between parties involved (Stefanos Hajimanoulis, Personal Communication April 5, 2016). Current packages of wine tourism include a trip to the winery as part of a larger excursion to a region or historical site (Ambotis Air Tours Services, Personal Communication, April 8, 2016). Finally, the Project Manager of Electra Palace Hotel acknowledged that they had never been approached by a winery or a representative of the Wine Producers Association regarding the promotion of wine tourism (Alexandros Svyriadis, Personal Communication, April 18, 2016). Little effort is being made between these stakeholders in providing packages that promote wine tourism while providing engagement with the rich history and culture of the region (Stefanos Hajimanoulis, Personal Communication April 5, 2016; Ambotis Air Tours Services, Personal Communication, April 8, 2016). Wineries can increase tourism with the cooperation from organizations, associations and administrations in the region. The mayor stated that wineries cannot accomplish wine tourism alone, and it is imperative that they collaborate with

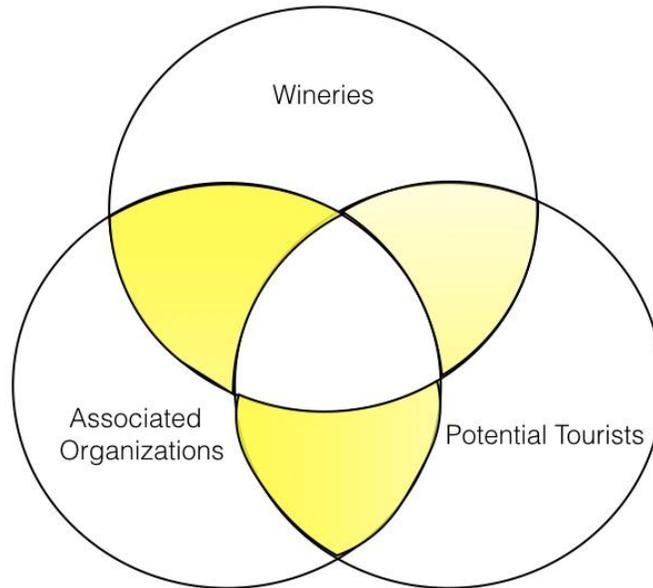
local businesses in order to increase tourism to the region (‘Office of the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016).

### **The Wine Producers Association of Northern Greece focuses on promoting the wines of the region**

The Wine Producers Association of Northern Greece is strictly promotional, and has created a framework of wine routes throughout the region. The participation of wine festivals and fairs hosted by the association has been seen to benefit the wineries involved. Dr. Iakovidou at Chatzivariti estate said, “...It brings people to the region. So, at least some of them will leave something to the cafes of the city, to the hotels to the restaurants. This is economic. It brings life to the village, that’s very important” (Chatzivariti Estate, personal communication, March 31, 2016). Gerovassiliou also reported that because of the events, they “...have a small group of people follow us, whatever we do, they are here, and they come again and again” (Ktima Gerovassiliou, personal communication, March 22, 2016). This economic stimulation and promotion of the local businesses is a crucial component of wine tourism, and is one of the association’s major goals. “The Association’s overall objectives are to search for solutions that are suited to the needs of rural areas, through the participation of local authorities, collective bodies, firms and the local population” (Pitoska, 2008, p10).

The Wine Producers Association has stated that direct communication with the customers has not been an initiative taken by the organization. This is in large part due to constraints the association is under such as manpower and funds, which holds them back from expanding their promotional business to target consumers directly. When asked about the association, students falling under this neophyte cluster reported that they were not aware of the Wine Roads Association or of the goals of the organization.

**Objective 3: Identify what motivates and interests the potential consumer to participate in wine tourism and explore how wineries could better reach them**



**Figure 4.6: Venn diagram highlighting the three overlaps, building upon the last two sections, this now highlights the connections between the consumers and the wineries.**

**Lack of knowledge and opportunity inhibits potential consumers from visiting a winery**

All of the student participants in this study expressed interest in visiting a winery, learning about the winemaking process, varietals between types of wine and the brands they offer, and how to taste the wine. Almost a quarter of the students saw visiting a winery strictly as an educational opportunity such as learning about the process the winemaker goes through to make the wine, and had no interest in tasting the wine. However, half had visited a winery before and out of those students who had visited a winery in the past, most were on school-sanctioned trips, organized because of the student's participation in a particular class. Apart from these school trips, students rarely visited local wineries because they did not have the experience or means to organize a trip in the absence of planned outings to wineries by tourist agencies. Students who have not visited a winery stated that if a tourism agency or another organization were to approach them directly and plan the entire trip for them, they would be more inclined to go.

Furthermore, students want to be educated about wine but most do not have any experience in tasting wines or lack knowledge of the winemaking process and feel that this inadequacy would be on display if they were to visit a winery. The Mayor of Thessaloniki, who previously was a winemaker at a one of Greece's most successful wineries, mentioned that not having as deep of knowledge as a wine critic "is frightening for the consumer. The consumer doesn't know anything about that" and no one should "make anyone who is tasting wine feel inadequate when tasting the wine because he hasn't found the banana aroma that you find" (Office of the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016). The Project Manager at a five-star hotel in Thessaloniki explained that many young men will bring their significant other on a date to the hotel and want to be able to pick a nice wine for dinner but are very shy and embarrassed when doing so. He believes this is due to their lack of knowledge in this particular area and something needs to be done about this. It is important for consumers to be comfortable in their knowledge. He stated that "with regards to wineries, I think you need to communicate it. Write something like 'from wine newbies to wine experts, come and we are going to teach you everything there is about wines'" (Electra Palace, Personal Communication, April 18, 2016).

Additionally, Students also reported a lack of knowledge that the option of going on a wine tour existed for them. They expressed interest in going on a tour but had not previously considered it as a trip they could take. They described it as not having the opportunity, but when asked to clarify, they replied that visiting a winery is not seen as an activity for them to participate in (University Students, Personal Communication, April 12, 2016). Unlike in other countries, such as France, where wine tourism is an extremely well-known activity to partake in, the students interviewed were unaware of the opportunities available for them to visit a winery in Northern Greece.

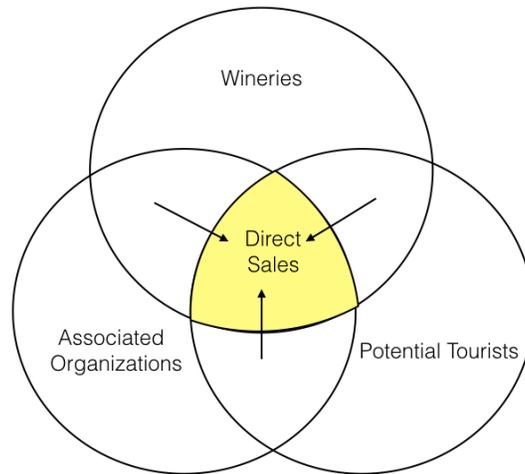


**Figure 4.7: Project team with advisor, sponsor, and owners of Chatzivaritis Estate**

Left to right: Kostas Rotsios, Anushrot Mohanty, Whitney Hazard, Tess Nogueira, Casey Magrath, Nicola Bulled, Victoria Georgouvela, Vangelis Chatzivariti, Robert Hersh, Andrea Hersh, Olga Iakovidou, Christos Kouloudis

### **There are many avenues through which potential consumers could be reached**

The neophyte segment can be reached through many different avenues, such as tourism agencies, hotels, public events, promotion at their school and social media. Officials at the hotel Electra Palace see many visitors falling under the neophyte cluster who have an interest in wine and, for example, order wine at dinner but do not know much about different types of wines. If made aware that it was possible to go on a wine tour and that wine expertise was not expected, these consumers would be interested in such an excursion (Electra Palace, Personal Communication, April 18, 2016). A major avenue to reach the neophyte sector more directly is through social media. In order to reach the neophyte segment, students believe social media is the best outlet to do so, and that wineries need to start to better utilize this (University Students, Personal Communication, April 12, 2016). However, within this project, all four wineries have a very strong social media presence via Facebook and Twitter, and have a grasp on how to promote themselves this way. Even so, these efforts are not reaching the eyes of the students we engaged with for this study.



**Figure 4.8: Venn diagram showing the culmination of the three overlaps, focusing on the interconnection of all three groupings. This is the epicenter of our findings and is the concept of direct sales.**

### **Selling wine directly yields the highest profit margin**

Regional development and promotion is an important consideration because it leads to increased direct sales. The influx of tourists to one region provides opportunities for increased cellar door sales of the wineries in that area. Direct sales present an opportunity for small wineries to maximize their profits. Selling directly eliminates the use of an intermediary to sell the product in local stores or through exports (Viniflor, 2006). This can include sales at the wineries, exhibitions or wine fairs, through the mail or internet and sales through associations of producers (Gurau, 2008). Through this method, wineries can decrease the cost of transportation, as well as the cost of an intermediate, in turn increasing their profit margin (Jenster, 2008). Overall, direct sales can “increase the continuity and the stability of revenue flows and, if properly applied, can even determine a gradual increase in profitability and reputation” (Olsen et al., 2004).

The ultimate goal for direct sales is to create a long term relationship with the consumer through regular and relevant communication. The hope is that they eventually become a repeat buyer or even an advocate for the wine, enhancing word of mouth promotion (Gurau, 2008). Common forms of reaching these buyers is through direct marketing. Examples of this is through mail, telephone, email, and the internet. In order to increase these sales, direct marketing methods can be employed. For example, wineries have mailed out or placed pamphlets in local businesses that contain information about the history of their wine and grape varietal, activities they offer, and

critics reviews of their products (Jenster, 2008). Wineries must keep information about their customers, such as creating a mailing list with their name, contact information, address, and purchase history to allow for effective communication between both parties

Direct sales can be a greatly beneficial opportunity for wineries for many reasons. First, the alternative, increasing exports, was not seen as a main priority for the wineries due to the high transaction costs involved, the competitive market and the lower yields compared to other avenues for sale. With excise tariffs of 23% on exports, Greek wineries prefer to sell wine directly without added costs. This is often done through various avenues of direct marketing. Ktima Gerovassiliou and Chatzivaritis Winery engage in direct sales by allowing consumers to purchase wine from their website, in addition to being able to buy it directly at the cellar door. Direct sales maximize profit and minimize cost, and presents a prosperous business strategy that small- medium scale wineries in Northern Greece could implement (Office of the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016; Gurau, 2008).

The winemakers have reported they have been selling out of yearly product. Dalamaras and Chatzivaritis have reported that they sell out, despite the crisis. In part, this is due to less production than anticipated because of ruined crops, however also indicates that there is a greater demand for the product than is currently being produced. If they are currently selling out of their wine, it means that there is a production ceiling, and the demand is greater than the supply. Without the immediate option to increase supply, it is most advantageous to maximize the profit they get from the supply they have. This can cause a shift in the aim for the desired tourist to the winery, because the tourist who will buy wine directly from the winery can now be viewed as the most crucial visitor. Dalamaras states that he aims “to sell directly from here [the winery] because it is quite profitable.” (Dalamaras, personal communication, March 29, 2016). The question as to whether the wineries will endeavor to increase their production and/or cultivations still remains unknown due to the fact that many factors go into this decision.

The level of collaboration the winemakers have with organizations such as the Wine Producers Association of Northern Greece and local agencies such as the Winemakers and Winegrowers Association of Naoussa, tourism agencies and local as well as regional hotels needs to be developed to increase the number of tourists to the cellar door, and in turn increasing the level of direct sales.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

The Northern Greece region has an abundance of family owned wineries which have great potential for attracting visitors. Our recommendations focus on the need for the stakeholders in the Northern Greece wine sector to increase visitors through promotion, packing the experience of wine tourism, and education.

### Promotion

Employing direct marketing will be beneficial to wineries in order to increase their sales, along with visitors to their estates. The ultimate goal for this strategy is to create opportunities for customers to become regular buyers and eventually loyal advocates for their product. Australian wineries saw less success due to their heavy dependence on cellar-door sales, without effective promotion (Bruwer, 2003). It is essential to use various promotional and marketing approaches to ensure high cellar-door sales. (Vlachvie, 2009a). The following are recommendations that can help facilitate the process of direct marketing for wineries in Northern Greece.

The first step wineries must take toward direct marketing is to develop methods to collect consumer information. This information is collected at the winery and/or all other places where the wine is sold, such as wine fairs or exhibitions. The gathered information includes the customer's name, email and/or mailing address, and purchase history. The purchase history will entail keeping record of if the customer has purchased wine before, and if so, which varietal(s). When compiling this list, there is an option for the consumer to give permission for the winery to contact them or not. Contacting the consumer can be done through mail, telephone, email, and/or the internet. The customers that give permission to be contacted can be added to the winery's mailing list.

When contacting the customer, it is important for the winery to gear the communication toward the consumer they are trying to reach, and to consider what is most beneficial for the customer. For example, if the customer had previously purchased red wine, sending them a newsletter featuring other red wines offered by the winery may prove successful. Other forms of outreach can include providing an offer that is time sensitive, which can lead the customer to take action more quickly.

Our second recommendation is that there be a designated person or company at wine fairs, competitions, and/or exhibitions who will be in charge of promoting wine tourism in Northern Greece in order to improve direct marketing strategies. This designated person/company is separate from the winery where customers can go to organize a wine tour and get more information on the

wine routes of the region. Specifically, there could be detailed maps made by the Wine Producer's Association of Northern Greece for each wine route with the restaurants, hotels, wineries, and other attractions present along the route. Having separate maps for each route will make the route clear and easy to follow, as well as make the main attractions apparent to the tourist. It would be beneficial to have a person present at the table with transportation information as well, such as bus schedules, various tourism agencies who offer packages for specific wine routes, other options for transportation, and how much it would cost. This will allow the wineries to focus on the promotion and sales of their wine at the event, as well as giving them the opportunity to spend time with the potential customers.

### **Packaging the experience of a wine tour**

We recommend that wineries create a package that encompasses the full experience of wine tours, including the services offered at the winery, the cost of the trip, what visitors will do, and how long it will take. Wineries could also collaborate with local shops to include their products in the pamphlet as an option for tourists. Contact information for the winery, along with the hours they are open will be included. This package can take the form of a brochure or pamphlet, and would be distributed to hotels, restaurants, and other local businesses to make available to their clients.

The packages can include historical sites along with already established wineries, hotels, and restaurants. For example, if a winery is located near a major landmark or archaeological site, the package be constructed to incorporate the sight with the wine tour. This would provide the opportunity to connect wine tourism with the history of the region. Since the Wine Producer's Association organizes the wine routes and the attractions along the route, it could provide this information to the wineries to help them make the pamphlets.

### **Education**

Education is a key factor in attracting the neophyte segment, and it is recommended that when advertising the estate and services offered at a winery, specific details be included. For example, describing how customers will get the chance to see the entire process of how the wine is made with different grape varietals, how they will learn to correctly taste the wine, and how to pair the wine with different types of food. We believe it is necessary for wineries to convey that customers do not need any previous knowledge about wine, as long as they are willing to learn and be educated. It needs to be clear that the wineries want this type of consumer, and therefore the

agencies and hotels can accurately promote certain trips to the customer, effectively matching the customer's level interest with that of the winery. We specifically recommend that wineries create a section about education on their websites, in pamphlets and brochures, and through their social media outlets, along with distributing these pamphlets and brochures directly to colleges and universities in the region in order for students to learn more about the educational component and also to open the opportunity for teachers and professors to provide educational opportunities through these wineries.

It is also critical to educate employees of restaurants, hotel managers, and artisanal food producers about the benefits of closer collaboration within the wine sector. The spreading of knowledge about wines and wineries in the region, will promote a more united effort to regionally promote wine tourism. This for example is seen in France, where upon entering the Bordeaux region, the Mayor recalled sitting at a restaurant and having the waiter tell him “You know you are in Bordeaux, you don’t drink any other wine but Bordeaux wine.” (Office of the Mayor of Thessaloniki, Personal Communication, April 11, 2016). The efforts to promote the region's wine through all aspects of the tourist’s experience can help to increase knowledge of the wines of the region and help to increase interest in these wines.



**Figure 5.1: A typical winery tour involves learning about the wine making process.**

### **For Future Exploration**

Further study is needed to examine wine tourism's role in regional development in Northern Greece. Due to time and transportation constraints, we were unable to conduct interviews with more than four wineries. It would have been beneficial to explore how large-scale wineries participate in wine tourism, as a contrast to the smaller wineries we engaged with, as well as expand to more small-scale wineries. In addition, we were only able to conduct an in-depth interview with one hotel manager. We did not have ample time to speak with more hotels to understand why they were or were not involved in wine tourism. Both tourism agencies we spoke with conducted tours to wineries, however there are agencies in the area that do not. Speaking with local businesses about the potential that wine tourism presents to bring visitors to the region would be crucial in a study concerning regional development,

Interviewing wine lovers about their experiences and motivations regarding wine tourism is another route our project could have taken. While we focused on the neophyte cluster, the wine lovers are the main tourists visiting wineries in Northern Greece. Understanding their motivations

and comparing that to the literature to help wineries understand their target market presents a potential project. Finally, the concept of direct marketing to increase direct sales can be expanded. For example, wine clubs are a form of direct marketing used in other countries, and it would be useful to understand if such clubs can be implemented in northern Greece.

Our project is part of an ongoing process to establish Northern Greece as a wine tourist destination. Our research, we hope, can be used by stakeholders in the wine sector in Northern Greece and future project groups from Worcester Polytechnic Institute as a foundation to develop wine tourism in Northern Greece.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Questions for Wineries Regarding Tourism

We are a group of students from Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, USA. We are conducting a study of current and potential interconnections between the efforts of the winemakers, the actions of the marketers and the wants and needs of the potential consumers. We believe this research will ultimately enhance the wineries understanding of their opportunities to increase direct sales through increasing visitors to their winery, specifically the potential wine tourists.

Your participation in this interview is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any time.

This is a collaborative project between Perrotis College and WPI, and your participation is greatly appreciated. If interested, a copy of our results can be provided at the conclusion of the study.

1. What are your goals in wine tourism?
  - a. Do you focus mostly on your winery or collaboration with the region?
  
2. Can you give us an overview of the activities /events you offer?
  - a. What is the typical “wine tour package”?
  
3. Do visitors usually buy wine after a tour, if so how much? Any data on this?
  - a. What programs have been the most successful in attracting tourists?
  - b. What programs do you see as the most important to you?
  - c. What new programs do you want to implement and why?
  
4. Do you employ anyone to handle tourism?
  - a. \*Yes\* What is their role?
  - b. \*No\* why not?
  
5. Could you describe your level of involvement in the wine routes association?
  - a. Do you think this has been a key success factor in increasing tourism?

- i. What effectively promotes your winery?
  - ii. What could they be doing to better promote your winery?
6. Have you partnered with other associations or organizations (tourism agencies, etc.) to promote tourism?
  - a. What have they done to be effective?
7. What other platforms do you use to promote your winery?
  - a. ie. newspaper ads, social media, tripadvisor, www, etc
8. Do you face any clear obstacles that are causing a problem in terms of tourism? (hopefully this question will be answered with previous questions and probes)
  - a. What have you done to overcome them?
9. We have found from our research that a major push factor in getting customers to visit the winery is meeting the winemaker. If we are able to speak with the winemaker we will want to ask the following questions after given a brief overview of what he does.
  - a. How involved are you in tourism activities at the winery?
    - i. Do you meet and talk with tourists on wine tours?
    - ii. Are you involved with the educational programs at the winery?

## Appendix B: Interview Questions for Director of Wine Producer's Association of Northern Greece

1. We have noticed that hotels have promoted visitation to the wineries both on their website and in their lobby. What is the connection between the tourist agencies/ hotels and the wineries?
2. We have seen wineries join smaller, local associations. Could you explain the association's connections with the smaller co-operations?
  - a. Do you see these organizations as beneficial or have they become a challenge to the efforts of the wine roads association in promoting the entire region?
3. What has been your level of involvement with the Greek ministry of tourism in developing wine tourism?
  - a. How has the government provided support for your programs? What challenges have you faced?
  - b. In light of the crisis, how has your organization's relationship with the government changed? How has the level of support from the government changed?
4. We have heard of the large events you orchestrate, such as the open doors weekend. Could you expand more from the association's perspective the role it plays in this?
  - a. Could you tell us more about the other actions you take to assist the wineries?

## Appendix C: Interview Questions for Tourist Agencies

1. How do you communicate with wineries if at all? How do you plan a visit to their estate?
2. How do tourists set up tours with you?
3. What is the average size of a tour that you facilitate? Who would you say is the typical tourist that wants to visit a winery?
  - a. Do you see a potential for students to learn more about going to wineries? Do you see a lot of students interested in learning about wine?
4. Do you combine visits to wineries with other activities?
5. Do you find that the tourists you bring on wine tours are interested in learning about the wine or is it just another part of the tour for them?
6. Have you ever been turned away from a winery?
7. Do you see the potential in growing wine tourism in the region? How do you see tourism agencies playing a part in this growth?
8. How effective do you believe the Wine Producer's Association has been in promoting wine tourism?

## Appendix D: Interview Questions for Hotels in Thessaloniki

1. What is your involvement with wine tourism?
2. Are you interested in getting started with or increasing your presence with wine tourism?
3. Do you see the wine tourism industry in Northern Greece expanding? Why or why not?
4. What is your level of knowledge about the Wine Producer's Association of Northern Greece?
5. What type of market segment do you see being interested in wine tourism?
  - a. Do you see the potential for students, or the neophyte cluster, to become more interested or involved?

## Appendix E: Interview Questions for Mayor Boutaris and Eleni Sotiriou

1. We understand you have worked with Mr. Boutaris in his winery before your current position. What has your experience been with wine tourism and wine tourists while you worked at the winery?
2. We know the mayor has spent a lot of time and effort to increase tourism in the region. From working in his office, how do you view the wine tourism industry now?
  - a. How has your view changed from when you worked in a winery?
3. From our interviews we have found the wine roads association of northern Greece focusses mostly on promotion. The association provides a framework for the roads yet there are no physical tours the association provides. We are curious to hear from your view, how the association could grow to provide more physical tours?
4. Why do you think they have no relationships with tourism agencies? How do you think a working relationship with agencies could help grow tourism?
5. We have found in our research that there is a perception that the wineries have a weak relationship with hotels in the area. For example, the hotels give their customers information for wine tours to nearby wineries, yet the wineries have no working relationship with these hotels. Have you seen this as well?
  - a. How have you seen the wineries reach out to customers?
  - b. Have you seen this lack of communication between businesses inhibit wine tourism?
  - c. What do you think the wineries and hotels could do to work better together?
6. We have seen that there is a varying opinion between wineries and tourist agencies. For example, the wineries have pride and honor in their work and are reluctant to work with tourism agencies to “commercialize” their business in order to increase tourism. On the other hand tourism agencies believe the wineries need to broaden their thinking and become more willing to work with agencies. What are your thoughts on this relationship?

7. We have seen an emergence of smaller, local organizations (for ex. Naoussa and Drama) as opposed to the larger regional associations. How do you see this affecting wine tourism in the industry? Do you see it as a good or bad thing and why?

## Appendix F: Interview Questions for Students at Perrotis College and Aristotle University

1. What do you usually do if you want to go on an excursion? (how do you plan it)
  - a. I.e. Drive there, use a tourism agency, just don't go
  
2. Have you ever been on a wine tour?
  - a. Yes, what was your experience?
    - i. Regardless of good or bad experience, are you interested in going again?
  - b. No, what has stopped you?
  
3. What would you hope to get out of a wine tour?
  
4. Have you thought about using a tourism agent/ agency for going on a wine tour in the region?
  
5. How could tourism agencies interest you in doing a wine tour with them?