

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WINE, HERITAGE AND TOURISM: AN EXPLORATORY FARM STUDY

Francesco Saverio Nesci¹, Donatella Privitera²

Abstract. Agriculture has taken on a multifunctional role and link with tourism is required to protect and exploit its “historical” resources (heritage) as a tool of interconnection between local products, countryside, traditions, cultural values but also to place emphasis of the territory and communicate it. The aim of paper is the role assumed today by firms in particular those that support rural tourism. The objective is to assess the relationship between the company image, the entrepreneurial behavior built according to values, “typical” signs, historical resources of the rural world and the spin-offs on the territory. The paper shows the utility for rural tourism development: the heritage, which is often well preserved in rural areas is a valuable resource to integrate with management providing useful help as a vehicle for economic benefits also for agricultural regional development.

Keywords: heritage marketing, multifunctional agriculture, firm identity.

1. Introduction

In recent times, the search for a new relationship with nature, of quality and safety of foodstuffs and in particular the need for “identity”, of characterizing places as bearers of values and traditions have led an increasing number of people to see rural areas as places of values, resources, culture and products to discover and enjoy. Therefore, the rural territory presents itself as a field in which to experiment sustainable forms of development and where agriculture has taken on a multifunctional role (OECD 2001). Agriculture and Tourism is required to protect and exploit its “historical” resources (heritage) as a tool of interconnection between

¹ Francesco Saverio Nesci, University “Mediterranea” of Reggio Calabria, Department of Agroforestry and Environmental Sciences and Technologies– Reggio Calabria, e-mail: francesco.nesci@unirc.it

² Donatella Privitera, University of Catania, Department Processi Formativi, Catania, Italy, e-mail: donatella.privitera@unict.it

local products, countryside, traditions, cultural values but also to place emphasis of the territory and communicate it (Sharpley, 2002).

The aim of this work is the role assumed today by firms regarding the importance acquired by the integration of tourism and agriculture, for which the communication and promotional activities become qualifying points of company philosophy. The objective is to assess the relationship between the company image, the entrepreneurial behavior built according to values, “typical” signs, historical resources of the rural world and the spin-offs on the territory.

The research will be carried out by making specific reference to Calabria, a representative region of the Mediterranean area, with specific reference to vineyards and wine-making firms. Therefore, we intend to highlight the important role of heritage and heritage marketing in order to privilege the heritage and the competitive advantage that it can have for the company. The subject is linked to the most general strategies of territorial marketing, and attention is focused on reflections at a company level of welcoming visitors but also the way in which the presence of visitors is encouraged and managed. The study of entrepreneurial behavior allows us to highlight the critical factors, providing useful information for the decisional processes and the regional programming.

2. The re-appraisal of heritage in the vision of heritage marketing

Besides creating economic resources, firms are centers of organization and aggregation, and factors of social and cultural change. The firms presuppose the existence of a “family”, a managerial group, human resources that often have their own history and are amalgamated and rooted in an environment, assuming an integrated identity between a certain community and its relational space, or rather, the identity of the territorial resource. The firm may also have the physical or cultural characteristics of a certain place, arousing interest and curiosity in a target group and therefore assuming the identity of the tourist resource. Identity is a topic that involves different regions and disciplines; it may be understood, for example, as a genetic heritage, belonging to a community, strengthening its dimension or a return to the places of origin (Paasi, 2003). Heritage comprises identity and must be seen as a resource, an object, a symbolic representation, a sign of a fixed territorial area or subject. It is the union between the past and present, a collection of meanings, traditions, behaviors and attitudes necessary to understand the present, or rather to ensure continuity between the past and present (Bessiere, 1998). In other words, heritage consists of carrying out, adapting, and re-interpreting elements of the past of a social group (its knowledge, skills and values), but by combining conservation and innovation, stability and dynamism, memories and creation, a new social significance that generates identity is created.

The firm is the heir of a heritage of products, history, contents, buildings and experiences that contribute to defining the firm's identity, together with the identity of the territory, population and social groups (Marano, Pavoni, 2006). However, for the firm, the reconstruction of knowledge and values of the past can only be done by starting with present knowledge and values (Amari, 2001). Therefore, the firm takes on a function that is innovative and conservative at the same time.

Kotler (1993) states that "marketing is based on the idea that each individual has a set of needs and desires to be satisfied and that these are satisfied by a variety of products and services". Making reference to the strategic approach of the firm in all its functions may provide an important contribution also for the development and growth of the local economy. A strategy for the transformation, development and promotion of the territory, the environment with which the company has contact with and where it is situated as a *de*. In particular, it is possible for a company to adopt a heritage strategy in communicating with clients, which is to refer to historical roots that place the company image as part of the culture, of a history that is not only individual but also collective. The heritage of the company – formed of material and immaterial elements and comprising photos, old tools, particular events, historical things, documents of the time or simply witnesses and artisan abilities linked to the production process – is then used strategically, emphasizing the aspects of current events and interest for the "consumer-visitor".

The simple production of goods and services is not enough: it is the "experiences" offered to the client that forms the foundation of the creation of value. In any event, an experience is memorable that involves the consumer on a personal level in the very act of consuming; they are experiences that create the personalization of the product and therefore increase its desirability (Pine, Gilmore, 2000).

From the mid-980s, the application of heritage marketing by many firms has led to the creation of actual collections of objects, materials relating to the historical heritage (but not necessarily) of the firm, that is museums open to visitors (Montemaggi, Severino 2007). The traditional architecture, the organization of the agrarian and forestry environment, the charcoal-burner and snow-sweeper, the objects of rural civilization, the holy art, beliefs, legends and local literature; these are all elements that increase knowledge of places and the history of a community and contribute to qualifying the rural tourist offer of a region (Heath, 2009).

3. The relationship between wine, heritage and tourism

The tourism sector has undergone radical transformations that have influenced also the tastes and choices of the demand. Today, this appears

increasingly oriented and characterized by a return to nature, the search for choices that are eco-friendly, traditions and spirituality, by the de-standardization of consumer models towards matrices that are more sober and “experiential” holidays with a more active participation of tourists, both from a physical and intellectual viewpoint. Parallel to these tendencies, from the point of view of the supply, the following aspects have become important: protection and valorization of the distinctive and authentic traits of culture, of local society and the territory in which it is situated, their diverse expressions (environment, rural architecture, artisans, uses, cuisine etc). This is because in a territory these resources are unique, which represents a source of competitive advantage and important elements of differentiation. So, the development of forms of tourism that exploit the cultural and natural heritage of areas that were not visited by many people until now – villages, inland areas, agricultural spaces etc. – has led to a new conception of the hospitality industry, more widespread and balanced, more rooted in local realities and distributed also in the rural space. In this environment, rural tourism, in its various forms today comprises a significant exchange of values and experiences between consumers and agricultural entrepreneurs in which very diverse elements come into play, such as educational tours, food events, agricultural museums, traditional food festivals, local networks among companies, and work opportunities (Ventura, Milone, 2000).

However, rural tourism is an activity that is closely linked to agriculture, and the tourist-consumer in some way sees it as a holiday in nature. In the literature on the subject there is a wide variety of definitions with different meanings attributed in the international area (Grefe, 1992; Lane, 1994; Bramwell 1994; Gannon, 1994).

Recently, many researches document the development of wine tourism different from rural tourism: “...a form of consumer behaviour, a strategy by which destinations develop and market-wine-related attractions and imagery, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to educate and to sell their products, directly to consumers” (Getz et al., 1999), fuelled also by the rise of associate movements, proposals of tourist experiences have been developed, also concerning other agrarian productions (Wolf, 2002). Wine tourism is a form of special-interest tourism and an example can be seen by the success of initiatives and networks like the “wine routes” and/or “olive oil routes”, “open cellars” and “cities of wine” accompanied by the development of themed associations (Hall et al., 2000), itineraries and various initiatives for a form of tourism that is not finalized only at the sale of products but an expression of diverse modalities of use, supported by the availability, often offered by networks of companies, of the necessary infrastructures and hospitality services connected.

Wine tourism, defined in different ways but all comprising a visit to the firm, the desire to know the productive process, traditions, history and culture of the wine but also of the territory, the region through images, economic, social and aesthetic values, cultural and natural elements, historical signs rather than consumerism (Getz et al.; Charters, Ali-Knigh 2002; Croce, Perri, 2008). Wine is also a part of the heritage of a place. It is especially closer to it when it is identified by quality labels and brands that protect its identity and depend on the territory in which is produced (Asero, Patti 2009).

4. Material and Methods

The tools that contribute to defining a kind of emotional and visual experience of the product or the firm that later can be confirmed or proved to be untrue by the experience *in loco* and by direct and more in-depth knowledge that these instruments provide. This assumes greater relevance for those producing firms that combine the primary activity with other tourist services (catering, hospitality etc.) since today choice on the part of the user is determined more and more often by the Internet, due to the wealth of information regarding offers on websites and the quality of the 'virtual visit'. Considering this, we have carried out an applicative analysis concerning a significant sample³ of Calabrese vineyards, with high quality production and with their own sites on the web.

The survey was developed in three phases of which the first concerned the analysis of the territory, mainly cognitive, regarding the productive wine structure of Calabria in the Italian context, which was useful to focalize on some aspects of the sector in the area of study.⁴

The second phase was developed on the company websites through a check list of important aspects along with direct observations (5 leader wineries) made in the target places, on the basis of diverse elements such as territory investigation, the presence in the areas of the region with most tourists and the production of

³ Through a research engine using some key words we found a group of company sites to analyze. The survey is limited to the present sites in the first five pages of results produced by Google. Subsequently, after verifying the existence of the site and the characteristics of the company (the analysis was limited to companies that make finished products), each URL contributed to the formation of a database. Altogether 75 companies were examined, 13 were excluded because the site was not available or presented characteristics that did not fit with the aims of the study. 62 valid cases were collected in the period from January-March 2010.

⁴ The work referred to an precise collection of data and information at institutions and authorities, the obtaining of studies and research already carried out and specific controls aimed at integrating and rectifying the data of the sources on existing information. In some cases, the collection of data from different sources, often contrasting, led to inaccuracies.

quality. The use of cases study, data, interviews permit that the theories are more clear and depth (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The information gathered on the check-list was divided into three categories:

- of a technological nature (referring to the main elements necessary for presence on the net, like contact information and emails but also interactive contents and multimedia support);
- of a commercial character (number of hectares, bottles produced, information of the offer of the product such as functional aspects, certification of the product, on-line sales, traceability, complaints, online forms etc.);
- services offered and heritage aspects linked to the company and the product that are important for visitors (references to building and historical heritage, information about the documented production through historical-scientific and educational notions, information concerning the product and links with the territory and environmental and cultural resources, history of the company, support service for hospitality, tourism etc.).

Subsequently, the data was re-grouped once more and highlighted on figures that summarizes the behaviors of the entrepreneurs regarding the key issues.

5. The productive wine-producing structure in Calabria in the Italian context

The Italian wine scenario has undergone profound changes over the last twenty years since the methanol scandal, which caused victims and permanent damage to people and marked a clear line in the way of making wine, with “quality” as a constant reference point. In the decade 1982/1991 Italy produced an average of 6,800,000 millions liters a year, while in the 1992/2001 decade the average quantity had decreased to 57,800,000; in the last decade, there has been a further reduction by 3 millions to 54,400,000 liters a year.

There is a surface area of about 675,579 hectares for the production of wine grapes of which: 233,522 hectares are classified as DOC wine and 442,057 are designated for table wine. The average surface area of firms is equal to 2.15 hectares for AOC (Appellation of origin controlled) and AOCG (Appellation of origin controlled and guaranteed) wines and 0.69 for ordinary wines. In the last decade, Italian wine production has been characterized by an increase in quality.

Calabria is the region in which the wine growing sector has the least impact on the regional agricultural economy – less than 2%. If we add to this that the incidence of AOC- AOCG wine on the total regional wine production does not

reach 12% (ISMEA sources, 2009), it is clear that it has a very small place on the Italian map of wine producers.

Table 1 State of the surface area of vines and production in Calabria

Year	Surface area (hectares)	Production (hl)	yield
2000	12.597	612.535	78
2001	12.559	883.921	107
2002	12.407	530.727	74
2003	12.565	475.545	62
2004	12.331	484.790	68
2005	12.340	538.953	70
2006	12.262	483.790	67
2007	12.413	406.107	57
2008	14.701	444.696	50

Source: our elaboration of ISTAT data, Annuals of agriculture.

The structural data of wine producers in Calabria shows how the number of vineyards has recorded a decrease of 37.6% while the surface area of vines has decreased to 41.2%. The companies producing AOC wines have grown in numerical terms by 29.8%, faced with an increase in surface area equal to just 2.5% so they are equal to 7.5% of the total and the surface area is 20% (table 1). Calabria represents less than 2% of the winemaking area in Italy.

6. Results of the survey and discussion

By summarising the data obtained from the analysis of the 62 web sites found through search engines and by applying the frequency analysis of several classification criteria, some conclusions have been drawn.

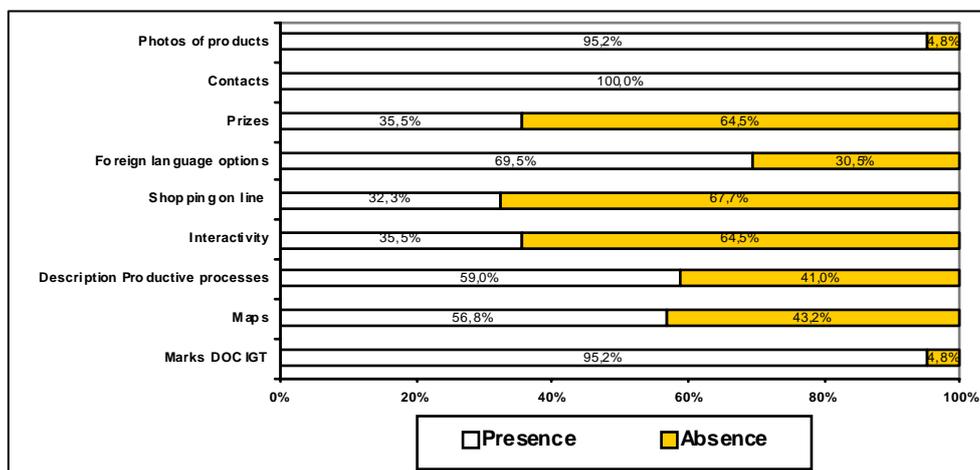
The survey allowed us to define the main aspects of the way in which the operators present their products and services virtually, the opening to visitors and the image in reference to their cultural and historical identity and the local territory.

From a technical point of view we should observe that in general the virtual presence of operators seems qualified. Almost all the URLs correspond to the name of the firm and the necessary information of the contact is present (Fig. 1).

More than half of the firms' sites in the sample we analyzed offer a linguistic option for consultation (69,5%), mainly between Italian and English, and maps identifying places of production, hospitality services, itineraries of access from the main infrastructural network (56,8%).

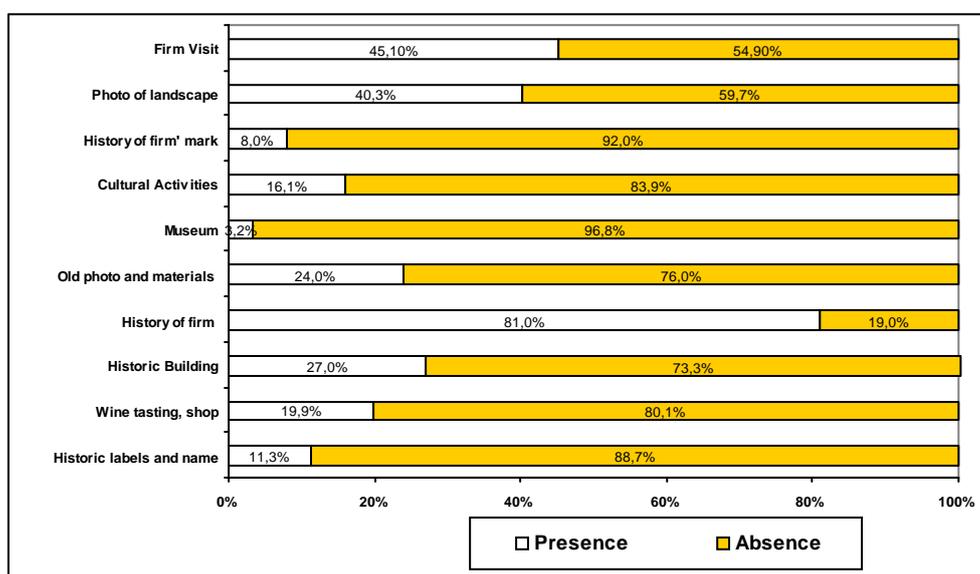
From a commercial point of view, the firms are keen to point out the indications of the denominations of protected origin (95,2%). We came across a lot of information on the traceability (type of vine, area of production etc.), together with a detailed product description, while 35,5% make reference to prizes and awards they have won. The need to illustrate to the customer the place and modality with which the production is carried out, often implies the description, also through images (photographs, short films) of characteristic aspects of the agricultural terrain or a brief description of the production process. Besides, this information draws on the relationship that they intend to build with the user who surfs in the site and who could be interested in buying the product. In this sense, the producer tries to correct the informative asymmetry that naturally occurs when the production can only be assessed virtually. In this group of variables, the image of agricultural land and vineyards prevails (73%), the description of the productive process (59%), the geographical description of the area (57%) and finally, photos of the regional countryside in general, not necessarily agricultural (40,3%). The activity of e-commerce is present only cases; therefore, many of the sites have a mere 'show-case' function.

Figure 1 Principal technical and commercial characteristics of the web sites studied



As for the aspects that are connected to the application of the concept of heritage and the level of opening of the firm to visitors, whether they are real or virtual, and the relative offer of services, first of all, reference has been made to information of a historical nature concerning the producer's need to inform clients of the past, often illustrious, of the firm, and also of the rooting of the firm in a productive area and in a techno-cultural tradition from which certain qualities of the product and certain values of reference of the firm descend (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 Principal heritage and "tourism" characteristics of the web sites studied



The most relevant elements traced during the analysis are, in order, those concerning the history of the firm (present in 81% of cases examined), those linked to the history of the territory (40,3%), the presence of old buildings (27%) or tools and machinery (24%), from the display of historical photos (24%).

An on-the-spot investigation at a leading firm in the area of Cirò, representative of quality wines AOC "Cirò", Melissa and the TGI "Val di Neto", corresponds to these results although it does not boast a particular historical epoch and opening to visitors, considered a point of strength for success in the market, the presence of a cultural centre, which forms part of the out-buildings of the firm, used for events such as wine-tasting courses, cultural evenings, conferences etc. boosts its image considerably.

Services and cultural-educational facilities mainly concern the possibility to take guided tours (14%) preferably booked beforehand; there is a limited number of real educational farms with specific itineraries and learning experiences (8%), and company museums and collections of cultural interest (3,2%). In this sense, an interesting example has arisen in the AOC area of Lamezia, where a producing firm has restructured the productive buildings in a way that is well-designed and function. The company image appears built on modern elements with some recall to the history of the area rather than to the origins of the family and the company brand. The conservation of past testimonies are relatively present but there appears to be more the desire to give value to technological progress which places itself in a view of a wider tourism path through belonging to tourism associations.

7. Conclusions

The data collected have shown how the firms are interested in a wider circuit of tourism more through commercial results than aspects that can be identified with the strengthening of popularity, image and trustworthiness rather than “genuine” values of a historical, cultural and artistic nature linked to the territory. The attention to factors of quality of products and services is still sometimes insufficient, especially with reference to those that represent the specific needs of the tourists, that is reception in the context of use of services/products. Besides, the offer of hospitality does not seem very present (accommodation facilities, tourist information on wine, areas in which accommodation and wine are combined) in some places of wine production and relative integrated promotion with other forms of tourism (in particular that linked to culture, well-being and quality of environment).

The close integration between product and area of production, with all its specificities should be a guarantee of quality of reception and of the territorial context but all this appears scarcely present and can be perfected through greater professional attitude of the operators of wine and food tourism, that often involves operators who must still acquire the adequate competences.

The associations of wine tourism seem to be dynamic and a source of wealth integrated with the activities of the firm but it is likely that the *forma mentis* of the entrepreneur needs to be changed in order to accommodate the figure of the guest and client at the same time.

The territory is seen as a source of competitive advantages but the network of local systems and relationships that are developed in it should be increased. However, the wealth of integration cannot express all its potential if there is a lack of adequate social connecting resources on which the widening of the sector to the global and immaterial depends.

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