

# WINE CYCLING TOURISM – THE EXTRAORDINARY CYCLISTS

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## **Background and research motivation**

Just like cycling experiences a new hype around the globe, could wine cycling tourism establish as a new and sustainable type of experience and culinary tourism? There is an increasing demand for linking complementary tourism offers (Hall et al., 2000; Hall & Macionis, 1998; Lamont 2014 and 2009; Ramshaw & Bottelberghe, 2014). As real-life examples show, there are regional tourism associations offering cycling tours in combination with wine tastings at vineyards (Morpeth, 2000). This combination of indulgence, active recreation and nature is a result of an increasing demand for adventure and events of the emerging experience society (Ritchie et al., 2010). However, as research tends to focus on dedicated sport cyclists, there is a need to focus more on prevalent “casual recreationalist cyclist” (Downward & Lumsdon, 2001; Weed et al., 2014). Our research project addresses this issue by analysing how wine and cycling tourism can be bundled effectively in order to create greater benefit.

## **Literature review**

Wine tourism and bicycle tourism are both subgroups of tourism with either wine or biking as their main purpose (Dreyer, 2012; Dreyer, Rainer & Ernst, 2012; Lamont, 2014). Depending on the infrastructure and the size of vineyards and trails in different regions and countries, their requirements and actions are different. Therefore, cooperation with local partners can be advantageous. This is supported by a recent study by Scherhag and Binnering (2017) which shows that a destination card can foster tourism activities in wine regions.

In a meta-analysis, Weed and colleagues prove evidence of the positive economic impact of cycling tourism on the development of places. They show that casual recreationalist cyclist are interested in shorter trips with more stops to refresh and socialize (Weed et al., 2014). In their study investigating the Tour of Flanders in Belgium Ramshaw and Bottelberghe (2014) argue that there is significant potential to leverage tourism benefits by linking cycling tourism with other regional offerings such as food. Analysing the South Australian Cycle Tourism Strategy Lamont (2009) figures that niche tourism like wine tourism could be bundled with cycling to create value-added products.

The latest analysis of bicycle tourism in Germany published by the German National Cyclists' Association (ADFC) shows that 49% want to combine bicycle tours with culinary experiences. According to the ADFC, the lack of public transport to and from bike trails and especially the inability to meet the bike tourists' gastronomic needs is a weakness that needs further analysis (Bangel, 2017). In part, this study wants to meet this issue with respect to the wine industry. One reason could be that the combination of wine and cycling is challenging from the legal perspective, although most (European) countries allow a certain percentage of alcohol on a bicycle. In Germany the alcohol-level amounts to 1.6.

## **Main problem(s) to be investigated**

Wine cycling tourism can be another way to increase direct sales of vineyards and tourist service organizations. However, knowledge about these potential customers is rare. Therefore, our study wants to shed light on this group. The objective of this study is to study attitudes and

behaviour of wine cycling tourists in comparison to 'regular' cycling tourists. So far, wine tourism research is predominantly done in the US and Canada, Australia and New Zealand (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). However, the infrastructure and the size of vineyards vary significantly among different regions and countries. Especially in Germany, vineyards tend to be smaller than e.g. in Australia, hence the requirements and actions for these smaller vineyards are different. Therefore, it is necessary to gain more insights in the specification of wine tourism and the importance in Germany.

### **Research method**

In order to analyse the associated behaviour, the attitudes and the differences of wine cycling and cycling tourists, an empirical study has been conducted. The study was carried out through an online survey. The survey link was distributed through the newsletter of the German Cycling Association and posted in respective social media channels addressing cycling and wine tourists.

### **Preliminary findings**

The sample consists of 395 participants. Preliminary results indicate that the profile of a typical cycling tourist differs from a wine cycling tourists. The latter tend to be older, travel at different times of the year (mainly during the harvest), visit vineyards (more) spontaneously and spend more money on food on their tours. Although only a third of the study participants have done wine cycling tourism so far, most of the remaining participants would like to try it. The majority pays little/no attention to the amount of alcohol consumed when riding a bicycle.

### **Conclusions and managerial implications**

Therefore, wine cycling tourists represent a potential target group for communities, tourism associations as well as vineyards in order to benefit from direct and cross-selling effects. The fact to spend much more, provides greater economic impact and thus potential on local areas. Study results can be used to effectively promote not only vineyards but also culinary highlights as well as hospitality management of a region.

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