



Paris, 24 of September 2020

RECREATING BONDS IS ESSENTIAL FOR INNOVATION IN WINE TOURISM

ON TUESDAY 22 SEPTEMBER, THE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION OF VINE AND WINE (OIV), PAU ROCA, AND THE SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE WORLD TOURISM ORGANISATION (UNWTO), ZURAB POLOLIKASHVILI, WELCOMED SPEAKERS FROM THE WINE TOURISM SECTOR AND PARTICIPANTS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD FOR A WEBINAR JOINTLY ORGANISED BY THE TWO ORGANISATIONS.

Held in cooperation with the International Wine Tourism Think Tank and moderated by Mariëtte du Toit-Helmbold, based in Cape Town, the focus of the webinar was put on “**Innovating in wine tourism in the context of COVID-19**”.

Speakers from Argentina, Chile, France and Spain shared their recent experience on how they have dealt with the impact of COVID 19 on their wine tourism activity. Some common trends have emerged in how to innovate in order to rethink and recreate wine tourism in the current context. The importance of local markets, new partnerships, open air experiences and digital transformation were highlighted.



The importance of sharing best practices

As **Pau Roca** stated, the creation of the OIV in 1924 was a response to a crisis. Today, we are facing a "different crisis in which the OIV is in a central position to respond and provide solutions, to develop the economy of vineyards and farmers as well as promoting the wine trade". For him, the attractiveness of wine tourism is based on three key points: diversity, rural areas, and very strong cultural links.

For **Zurab Pololikashvili**, gastronomy and wine tourism are essential pillars of tourism development in rural areas. He stressed how fundamental it is for all [UNWTO](#) member countries to support rural tourism, where wine plays a very important role : "coordination is one of the most important aspects of our lives over the past few months" and it is by sharing best practices that we will succeed in overcoming and reactivating tourism. The partnership between the OIV and the UNWTO is particularly important and "rowing in the same direction is what the tourism economy expects that we do" said the OIV DG

“Technology is an enabler that needs a human story”

The moderator, **Mariëtte du Toit-Helmbold**, pointed out that "tourism has always been resilient and the industry is working hard to rebuild stronger and more sustainably than before. [The] industry has been brought to its knees by a tough lockdown and two complete bans on the sale of wine in South Africa. It is imperative that we restart tourism in a responsive manner and build with a focus on local and sustainable travel". The priority must be health and safety to reassure people, then collaboration between sectors and regions with a focus on the local market and local people, who are the greatest assets for wine tourism, and finally a creative approach with digital solutions keeping in mind that technology is an enabler that needs a human story to have a real impact.

Roberta Garibaldi, from Associazione Italiana Turismo Enogastronomico, presented an overview of the crisis, its consequences and adaptations based on the self-assessment of enterprises answering a questionnaire. She provided a detailed overview of the situation in Italy and Spain as well as information on France, Portugal, Mexico, Chile, Brazil, Argentina and South Africa. The results show a major change in the activities proposed by companies, new marketing strategies and financial consequences. Roberta put the stress on diversifying the experiences with a bigger focus on local culture which are two very encouraging tools to rebuild the wine tourism industry in a more sustainable and inclusive manner.



Strengthen local bonds

The insight from Argentina was given by **Lorena Cepparo**, representing Chandon. She talked about the reinvention of Oeno-Gastronomy in Wineries during and post COVID-19. Creativity and solidarity had to be shown, amidst new protocols and restrictions. Faced with social and labour problems, the winery set up online events (with physical experiences) and a take-away catering service promoting an oeno-gastronomic concept, which enabled it to keep in touch with its customers: "we see this as an opportunity, in the midst of this situation, to recreate bonds ". With the gradual reopening, as well as adaptation to health restrictions and measures, an investment in local communication through social media has been made. Her conclusion words were those of belief: wine tourism is fundamentally an "area of human enjoyment, people will want to travel so we have to be ready!"

Speaking on behalf of [Great Wine Capitals Global Network](#), **Catherine Leparmentier Dayot** reflected on wine tourism from a French perspective and showed how its strength relied on organising and managing outdoor experiences. Summer season 2020 in France has seen a radical change in the origin of tourists who were mostly nationals (94% of French travellers stayed in France). She highlighted facts such as the preference for small local activities rather than large infrastructures, rural rather than urban, outdoor rather than indoor. Positive facts in the case of wine tourism because it can provide tourists with all the requirements that the sanitary crises impose. "The trend that has occurred this year has greatly benefited wine tourism," Catherine sums up, "to the point that today wine tourism can be considered an art of living". However, major difficulties remain, such as the drop in visitor numbers, especially when summer is over and national tourists are back to their daily lives. As a solution, winegrowers must keep in mind that innovation is not just a survival mechanism and they need to integrate it into their future plans, concluded the French speaker.

An opportunity for wine tourism?

Irene Gimeno, from Enoturismo Chile, talked about the New Strategies of Wine Tourism Destination. Created in 2016, Enoturismo Chile is a national programme that aims to strengthen wine tourism supporting wineries and communities within the industry's value chain and considering wine and tourism as an issue of economic and social development for rural communities. The Chilean wine tourism sector has suffered a double strike over the last year with civil protest on October 2019 and then COVID-19. The case of Chile shows how relevant it is to work together, as a sector, with the government and this cooperation between the private and public sectors. Together they led to a common strategy structured in 3 stages: from containment, to adaptation, then reactivation.



During the first phase, the focus was on health care and safety. Then came the adaptation phase during which companies prepared and selected new tools (webinars, digitalisation, knowledge transfer) to achieve reactivation, where communication and marketing had a key role to play. Irene explained that "they have had to change the way they approach the public, moving from wine tourism to prioritising health and safety". To conclude on a positive note, she said that "this situation helped Enoturismo Chile to know better the sector. We want to see it as an opportunity for wine tourism".

The Spanish perspective was presented by **Zaida Semprun**, from the World Shopping Tourism Network, and **Beatriz Vergara** from Gonzalez Byass, on the subject of "New Reality, New Wine Tourism". Zaida defined the framework of the impact that tourism, and wine tourism in particular, had in the Spanish economy before COVID-19 in relation to the "New Reality". She explained how the sector is adapting through safety protocols and labels such as "Safe Travel" stamps and analysed the opportunities (restricted circle, local target) and challenges (health measures, withdrawal of people from their restricted circle) that the crisis implies, ending with a list of new measures that a winery has to face (restriction of the number of people, delay between visits). Beatriz then presented the specificity of wine tourism, which allows for more personalised experiences and can be a complementary offer on the chosen travel destinations. It is an asset in the pandemic crisis and in the current context, digitalisation is essential to materialise the experiences that can be proposed.

Digitalisation is here to stay

Get to know the customers to offer a personalised experience, finding the right balance between technology and human contact are fundamental for the panellists, as digital modifications are here to stay. Along with these changes, improving local tourism turned to be the key for recovery, having sustainability as a pillar.

In that sense, Roberta Garibaldi stressed the importance of data collection from effective visitors and potential ones, including not only the traditional costumers, as those online (website, social media...). "Being able to track these users is very important to plan creative and efficient services with specific offers to each target, providing a personalised offer", referred.

But with the increase of digital activities there's a "need of adapted professional equipment", reminded Roberta, enlightening that "these tools are an excellent help to keep the interaction with visitors. Not forgetting to give a human touch to technology, with a good storytelling", though.

The new virtual way of communicating brought up with the crisis, for Irene Gimeno, "turned out to be really effective". For her, the events such as webinars, allowed the increase in the number participants, from different regions.



“I think this has come to stay and it is going to be a complementary tool to live presences”, considered.

The webinar moderator pointed the fact that domestic tourism is leading the recovery, asking Catherine Leparmentier Dayot “how can we make the category of wine more desirable for the local market”. The French panellist answered that was “actually the main challenge. In Bordeaux most of the visitors are foreigners. Wineries started to wonder who was coming to visit”, explained. A situation aggravated by the fact that the wineries “didn’t have any ready tools to reach the domestic tourists”. While hoping that international traveling restarts soon, Catherine is sure that “we must engage these new customers in a longer term, and here is where marketing, storytelling and all the tools that we have been creating have to remain and to develop”.

“Tourism, a Tool for Rural Development”

Sandra Carvao, Chief Tourism Market Intelligence and Competitiveness at the UNWTO, closed the webinar reminding that next World Tourism Day’s topic, September 27th , is “Tourism and Rural Development”. To wrap up, Sandra outlined the importance of knowing the customers, especially now that local tourism is so important, to build solid partnership and strong governance models where public and private sector cooperate in tourism development with local communities. She pointed out the importance to enhancing destination management, to engage visitors with the “new reality” and relying on digitalisation on all the steps of this process. In her intervention, Sandra stressed the importance of sustainability, reminding, as an example, the increase of disposable materials used currently due to sanitary protocols, and the need to think how to minimise the environmental impacts of these measures.

- All presentations can be consulted very shortly [here](#)
- Click [here](#) to watch the webinar
- UNWTO Gastronomy and Wine Tourism Programme [here](#)

Contact

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