

# FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE WINE TOURISM THROUGH COLLABORATION OF GRAPE GROWERS AND WINEMAKERS: CASE OF LJUTOMER-ORMOŽ HILLS

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Sustainable tourism endeavors to harmonize present and future economic, social, and environmental concerns while meeting the diverse needs of visitors, industry stakeholders, the environment, and host communities. This study delves into the pivotal role of collaboration between grape growers and winemakers in advancing sustainable wine tourism within the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region. Emphasizing horizontal integration within the sector, this research probes the perspectives and attitudes of various stakeholders concerning collaboration and their views on wine tourism. The findings underscore stakeholders' recognition of the importance of collaboration, as it holds the potential to drive increased visitor numbers, reduced operational costs, and the creation of innovative tourism offerings. Grape growers and winemakers demonstrate a strong inclination to engage in wine tourism activities, placing significant importance on holistic visitor experiences, which encompass gastronomy, accommodations, and cultural engagement. The study spotlights ongoing endeavors, such as the collective trademark "Jeruzalem Slovenia," while briefly addressing the influence of climate change on wine tourism, underscoring the imperative of adapting to evolving weather patterns and their implications for viticulture. To thrive as a wine tourism destination, the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region should prioritize bolstering collaboration efforts and offering a diverse, locally rooted tourism experience.

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## 1 Introduction

The UNWTO defines sustainable tourism as tourism that fully considers its present and future economic, social, and environmental impacts while simultaneously meeting the needs of visitors, the industry, the environment, and the host communities. Sustainable tourism optimally uses environmental resources, which are a key element in tourism development, preserves essential ecological processes, and contributes to the conservation of natural heritage and biodiversity. Sustainable tourism also respects the socio-cultural authenticity of the host community, preserves cultural heritage and traditional values of the host community, and fosters intercultural understanding. Sustainable tourism ensures successful and long-term economic activities, subsequently providing social and economic benefits. These benefits should be fairly distributed among all stakeholders. Sustainable tourism must maintain a high level of tourist satisfaction and provide a significant experience for tourists, strengthen their awareness of sustainability issues, and promote the practice of sustainable tourism among them (UNWTO, 2005, pp. 11–12).

An essential element in the sustainable development of tourism is integration. Most authors talk about integration between different sectors, but horizontal integration within a specific sector is equally important (Bramwell and Lane, 2000). According to the Tourism Opportunity Bank of Slovenia (2016), the fundamental shortcoming of tourism in Slovenia is the fragmented activity of individual tourism providers and associations and their lack of connection. It is necessary to connect all tourism providers, which reduces costs, increases visits, adds new content to leisure time, creates new jobs, organizes volunteer work, and enables information transfer.

The cooperation and collaboration of grape growers and winemakers are crucial factors for the successful sustainable development of wine tourism. Wine tourism is essentially defined as visiting vineyards, wineries, wine-related events, where wine tasting and/or discovering the characteristics of a particular wine region are the primary motivating factors for visitors (Hall, Mitchell, and Johnson, 2000). For the effective operation of this type of tourism, it is advisable to understand the cooperation of stakeholders and its positive and potential negative effects. The collaboration of grape growers and winemakers can take place in various ways, but the essence is that all stakeholders benefit from this collaboration. Collaboration can occur through promoting other providers, recommending other providers to guests

or customers, exchanging goods, organizing joint events, performing under the same brand, and similar methods. By connecting these providers, the promotion of viticulture and winemaking, as well as the image of the tourist destination in which these stakeholders operate, is built. Successful collaboration among grape growers and winemakers can lead to the development of new tourism products such as wine routes, cycling and hiking paths related to wine, cellar visits, demonstrations of vineyard work, various events, and more. All of this is crucial for the successful operation of a tourist destination.

The problem of the lack of connectivity among providers is also present in the Prlekija region, as highlighted in the Regional Development Program of Prlekija 2014–2020 and the Regional Development Program for the Prlekija Region 2007–2013 (Public Development Agency of the Municipality of Ormož, Prlekija Development Agency, Entrepreneurship Development Agency Gornja Radgona, 2006, 2013). The fragmentation and lack of connection in tourism offerings and tourism actors are also recognized in the Regional Development Program of Pomurje 2014–2020 (Mura Development Agency, 2015). Currently, tourism providers in this area are quite disconnected. It is essential to unify all ideas and demands into a single tourism offer that will represent the story of Prlekija. The lack of connectivity can hinder operations due to higher promotion costs, increased investments, lower visibility, and so on. Additionally, there is no destination management organization or local tourism organization operating in the Ljutomer-Ormož hills area. A Local Tourism Organization Prlekija Ljutomer operated in this area until 2016 but is no longer active.

Centuries of rich history have left their mark on the culture of gastronomy and the renowned wines of Prlekija. Prlekija offers significant gastronomic and wine potential, so efforts should be made to preserve and enhance this direction of tourism.

In the municipality of Ljutomer, there is a place that is one of the most well-known in Slovenia and beyond for its wine - Jeruzalem. Jeruzalem offers tremendous potential and, in our opinion, can become the center of wine tourism for both Prlekija and beyond. The area under consideration certainly has the potential for the development of this type of tourism, and by researching this topic, we can contribute

to the successful sustainable development of wine tourism in the Ljutomer-Ormož hills area.

## **2 Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement in Tourism Destinations**

Collaboration involves stakeholders working together, addressing common issues or solving specific problems. Each stakeholder controls their resources, such as knowledge, skills, supporters, and capital, but as individuals, they may find it challenging to provide all the necessary resources to achieve their goals and plan for the future effectively in the direction of tourism development. Therefore, stakeholders can work collectively under the assumption that their chances of achieving their goals and creating new opportunities to address problems are greater when they collaborate with others than when they act individually (Bramwell and Lane, 2000).

Crotts, Buhalis, and March (2000) state that strategic partnerships and relationships, joint ventures, and similar concepts describe intentional alliances between two companies that have some synergistic and strategic value. Partnerships can take various forms:

- Buyer-seller relationship, as in the case of collaboration between event planners and conference hotels, restaurants, and suppliers.
- Supplier-distributor relationship, as in the case of airlines and travel agencies.
- Alliance among two or more providers.
- Joint ventures formed by two or more previously separate companies.

Atallah (2002) suggests that authors generally cite three types of collaboration based on direction, which are:

- Horizontal collaboration – the collaboration of companies in the same activity within the same sector, e.g., grape growers and winemakers involved in wine tourism.

- Vertical collaboration – the collaboration of companies from different activities within the same sector or a related sector, e.g., a company collaborating with suppliers or customers.
- Diagonal collaboration – the collaboration of companies from different activities or sectors.

Some authors (Brigham and Houston, 2016, p. 721; Gryszel, 2010) mention concentric and conglomerate collaboration in addition to horizontal and vertical collaboration. Essentially, strategic collaboration can be understood as two companies sharing their technological or market resources for joint product development and marketing efforts. It is a reciprocal relationship in which each partner brings certain advantages. In strategic collaboration, resources, investments, and risks are combined for mutual benefit (Okumus, Altinay, and Chatho, 2010, p. 130). Regarding this, Crotts and others (2000) suggest that there are significant growth and success opportunities in companies that form strong synergistic partnerships. However, when collaboration fails, there is a significant risk of losing both a competitive position and a considerable amount of money.

Strategic collaboration can enable the exchange of tangible assets or intangible capabilities of companies, such as knowledge, skills, financial capital, technological capabilities, leadership abilities, and other intangible assets, such as a company's reputation (Okumus, Altinay, and Chatho, 2010, p. 130). The first step in choosing a partner is for the company to identify areas where a potential partner can positively impact its business. When assessing a potential partner's ability to reduce business risk, factors such as consistent high quality, reliable operation, and trust in the other company must be considered (Crotts et al., 2000). Organizations with fewer resources can learn new technical and managerial skills, while organizations with more resources seek to gain market knowledge and build relationships to ensure access to various markets. Knowledge exchange among partners is the most common reason for collaboration today, as knowledge represents a leading force for development. Product and service differentiation and the pooling of resources to gain a competitive advantage are the main motives for collaboration in the tourism industry (Okumus, Altinay, and Chatho, 2010, p. 130). In the future, collaborations and strategic partnerships will continue to exist in the travel and tourism industry, but companies must develop programs that facilitate cultural and business changes necessary to build successful and enduring partnerships (Crotts et al., 2000).

Crotts et al. (2000) mention five key questions that need to be addressed before successful collaboration is established:

- Do we want to collaborate?
- Are we capable of collaborating?
- With whom would we collaborate?
- How would we collaborate?
- How would we sustain and maintain long-term collaboration?

Answering the first question requires evaluating the extent to which collaboration can play a role in gaining a strategic advantage in the market. A strategic advantage results from collaboration where companies can jointly achieve something that the customer values, with reduced risk for all participating companies. Many tourism providers choose to collaborate due to technological innovations, increased market coverage, expanded service offerings, and cost savings (Crotts et al., 2000).

For successful collaboration, a company must be prepared to collaborate. Being a good partner often requires changes in the organization and its people. The question of the capability to collaborate necessitates that the company conduct an internal audit of its own capability to collaborate successfully. Reputation, operational capability, a "win-win" orientation, and the ability to build and maintain trust are key elements in attracting good partners. Companies that collaborate poorly within their own operations often find it challenging to identify partners for collaboration. Individuals within companies must understand why external relationships are important and how to support them (Crotts et al., 2000). Selin (1999) believes that collaboration can take various forms. Ironically, in a time of increasing competition, tourism stakeholders support joint decision-making and resource sharing. Partnerships in tourism are still poorly developed due to numerous geographic, organizational, and political constraints. He believes that coordinated efforts from different sectors are needed to ensure the contribution of current and future partnerships to the sustainable development of tourism.

### **3 Research on the Connection of Grape Growers and Winemakers in the Case of the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills**

Mutual connection and collaboration among grape growers and winemakers are one of the key factors for the successful sustainable development of wine tourism. In the empirical part of this study, we examined the attitudes of grape growers and winemakers in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region regarding collaboration and cooperation, as well as their perspectives on wine tourism. According to Radovan (2001), most psychological definitions describe attitudes as something we either favor or disfavor. Maio and Haddock (2014, p. 2) argue that defining attitudes is a decision regarding whether we like or dislike a particular matter, object, or person. Attitudes summarize various types of information about an issue, object, or individual. This means that all thoughts, emotions, and past experiences are combined into a unified evaluative summary and serve as an important source of information for forming attitudes.

The first research question that we will answer through the analysis of the research results is:

**What are the attitudes of grape growers and winemakers towards horizontal collaboration and cooperation in the areas of knowledge, promotion, and events in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region?**

In the context of this research question, we were interested in whether grape growers and winemakers would be willing to:

- Collaborate with other grape growers/wineries under the same brand.
- Allocate resources for joint promotion with other grape growers/wineries.
- Advertise the products of other grape growers/wineries if they advertised theirs.
- Recommend visits to other grape growers/wineries if they did the same.
- Exchange opinions and experiences with other grape growers/wineries.
- Participate in joint projects with other grape growers/wineries.
- Collaborate in organizing events with other grape growers/wineries.

We also asked grape growers and winemakers how important they consider the following activities in establishing successful collaboration among grape growers and winemakers:

- Grape growers/wineries collaborating under a common name.
- Joint promotion.
- Advertising other grape growers/wineries.
- Exchanging opinions and experiences with other grape growers/wineries.
- Grape growers/wineries participating in joint projects.
- Jointly organizing events with other grape growers/wineries.

We also asked them to what extent they believe that connecting grape growers and winemakers can influence:

- Increasing the effectiveness of promotion.
- Reducing the share of promotion costs.
- Exchanging and gaining professional experience.
- Complementing and shaping their own offerings.
- Exploring common interests among grape growers and winemakers.
- Creating and actively participating in regional events.

The second research question, which we will answer through the analysis of research results, is:

**What are the attitudes of grape growers and winemakers in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region towards wine tourism?**

In the context of this research question, we were interested in whether grape growers and winemakers are:

- Willing to host tourists in their wine cellars, vineyards, and homesteads.
- Willing to invest more time in managing their wine cellars for the purpose of wine tourism.



- Willing to allocate more resources to manage their wine cellars for wine tourism.

We also asked them to what extent they believe that engaging in wine tourism can impact:

- The exposure of their products and the opportunity for consumers to taste their products (wine).
- Strengthening awareness and loyalty to their own brand.
- Expanding awareness and understanding of wine and the wine industry.
- A significant increase in sales.

In the context of this research question, we also asked grape growers and winemakers how important they believe the following advantages of wine tourism are for grape growers and winemakers:

- Immediate and valuable feedback from consumers regarding existing products and the ability to promptly update the product range.
- Adding visitors to an email list that can function as a customer database for targeted marketing and consumer information.
- Higher margins through direct sales to consumers.
- An additional sales point for their products, as grape growers/wineries can sell them on-site.

Finally, at the end of the questionnaire, we offered the respondents the opportunity to provide their opinions, perspectives, and insights on the topic of collaboration among grape growers and winemakers and on the topic of wine tourism.

### **3.1 Research Methods**

We obtained primary data through a survey conducted with grape growers and winemakers in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region. The survey was conducted in the form of questionnaires. The respondents in the study were grape growers and winemakers from the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region. There are 60-70 grape growers or wineries operating in the area under consideration. The survey was conducted as

an online survey from June 14, 2017, to July 9, 2017. Email invitations to complete the survey were sent to grape growers and winemakers. The invitations were sent to everyone whose email addresses could be found online. Questionnaires were emailed to 84 addresses, but we do not have insights into how many people were informed about the survey through other channels. The first invitation was sent to grape growers and winemakers on June 14, 2017, with a deadline for completing the survey by June 22, 2017. Due to the low response rate, a reminder was sent on June 20, 2017, urging them to complete the survey. Because we still believed the responses were insufficient after the deadline, a follow-up invitation with a deadline of June 29, 2017, was sent on June 26, 2017. The final reminder was sent to grape growers and winemakers on July 5, 2017, by the President of the Ljutomer Winegrowers and Wine Friends Society. The final deadline for completing the survey was July 9, 2017. We processed the collected data statistically, analyzed it, and provided conclusions with our own opinions. We used nominal measurement with a simple scale and the Likert scale to gather data on attitudes in the survey. With nominal measurement using a simple scale, we used questions with two exclusive answers (yes, no). We assessed attitudes towards the topics using the Likert scale by presenting respondents with a set of statements and asking them to express the degree of importance and influence. Numeric values were assigned to these responses, and we compared the calculated average values of all respondents.

### **3.2 Research Results**

In the scope of researching the attitudes of grape growers and winemakers regarding horizontal collaboration and cooperation in the areas of knowledge, promotion, and events in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region and inquiring about the attitudes of grape growers and winemakers towards wine tourism, we examined 30 completed questionnaires. The questionnaire was completed by 24 male and 6 female respondents. The average age of the respondents is 45.23 years. Out of the respondents, 13 have completed high school, vocational-technical education, technical school, or other professional education. Seven respondents have completed higher professional education, nine have completed a university or higher professional program, and one respondent holds a master's degree.

Data on the number of grapevines were provided by 29 grape growers or winemakers. The average number of vines among these 29 respondents is 18,634, with a median of 12,000 vines. Three grape growers or winemakers do not sell wine or only produce it for personal use. Excluding these three respondents, the average quantity of wine sold is 23,529.63 liters, with a median of 13,500 liters. This calculation considered the middle value of the range of stated liters sold by the three respondents.

We found that the majority of respondents would allocate funds for joint promotion, advertise the products of other grape growers/wineries, exchange opinions and experiences with other grape growers/wineries, and participate in joint projects and events with other grape growers/wineries. Slightly fewer respondents would collaborate under the same brand with other grape growers/wineries.

In the survey, respondents rated joint promotion, exchanging opinions and experiences, collaborating on joint projects, and jointly organizing events as important or very important for establishing successful collaboration. They considered collaborating under a shared brand and advertising products of other grape growers/wineries somewhat less important than the activities mentioned above.

The overall average ratings indicate that, according to respondents, collaboration and cooperation affect increasing the effectiveness of promotion, reducing the share of promotion costs, exchanging and gaining experience, complementing and shaping their own offerings, seeking common interests, and actively participating in regional events. There are no significant differences in the assessment of the impact among these activities.

Respondents highlighted that in 2017, collaboration among grape growers and winemakers in the region was poor. According to one respondent, this problem was partly due to administrative boundaries set by the state. The Ljutomer-Ormož wine subregion is divided because Ormož is under the jurisdiction of the Ptuj Agricultural Institute, while Ljutomer falls under Murska Sobota. Establishing local collaboration among grape growers with a common wine store in major tourist centers within the region is crucial. Respondents emphasized that, despite the efforts of some

individuals, winemakers are not collaborating enough and are not actively participating in wine events organized in their local area.

Grape growers and winemakers mentioned the lack of professional guidance on how to collaborate, apply for various grants, and other aspects of the wine tourism industry. They noted a need for a person or organization responsible for this role. Respondents also highlighted the lack of professional knowledge and experience that young grape growers should gain, even through international experiences.

Among other things, grape growers and winemakers indicated the difficulty of connecting winemakers with tourism entities that offer accommodations because these entities prefer to keep guests on their own premises. They see untapped potential in linking local winemakers with producers of other products (such as fruit, meat products, cheese) and service providers (accommodations, spas) to create a comprehensive offering that would be widely available to guests. This approach could yield more than just collaboration among grape growers/wineries.

The research found that the majority of respondents are willing to host tourists in their wine cellars, vineyards, and homesteads. They are willing to invest more time in managing wine cellars for wine tourism and allocate more resources for this purpose. Results indicate that, according to respondents in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region, engaging in wine tourism affects exposure, strengthens brand awareness and loyalty, spreads knowledge about wine and the wine industry, and significantly increases sales.

The arithmetic means of the importance ratings of the discussed advantages of wine tourism are all around 4.00, indicating that respondents consider these advantages important. These advantages of engaging in wine tourism include immediate and valuable feedback from consumers regarding existing products and the ability to update the product range, higher margins through direct sales to consumers, an additional sales outlet for their products, and adding visitors to an email list that can be used for targeted marketing and informing customers. An additional sales outlet for their products was slightly more important than the others.

Regarding wine tourism, respondents emphasized that the offerings should include not only wine but also gastronomy, accommodation, relaxation, active experiences, history, and more. This involves connecting grape growers and winemakers with local food producers, craftspeople, and accommodation providers. The offerings need to be comprehensive and adaptable to the needs of wine tourists, who are often wealthier individual travelers rather than large bus tour groups. One respondent suggested that all these activities and offerings should be carried out at the Styria Slovenia region level, rather than at the subregion level, which is considered too small and has too few relevant actors.

Respondents also saw a problem with wine of lower quality from certain producers. In their view, the value of the region is significantly reduced when guests pay for a tasting of poor-quality wine. This negative information can quickly spread and impact the entire area's tourism.

Respondents identified an opportunity in simplifying bureaucratic procedures for operating in wine tourism, as seen in neighboring Austria. It is necessary to activate local entities and tourism development services, primarily tourist associations and the tourist board, which is no longer active in Ljutomer. Respondents believed that municipalities should play a more supportive role, which is often lacking. They also felt that young people should be educated about the future potential of wine tourism in the region.

### **3.3 Research Findings**

Grape growers and winemakers emphasize the lack of professional expertise to advise them on successful collaboration, applying for various grants, and related matters. They are aware of the importance and impacts of collaboration and cooperation in the areas of knowledge, promotion, and events. However, they miss an individual or organization capable of coordinating all the elements into a cohesive whole. As an example of good practice, the Steirisches Vulkanland destination is highlighted. Their work program includes numerous courses available exclusively to members of the association of grape growers and winemakers. These training programs cover various aspects, such as wine production (new technologies, trends, and development), sustainable viticulture concerning land management and sustainable use of all available resources. They also explore new marketing

approaches, taking into account market trends and wine business. Howie (2003) believes that destination management plays a crucial role in addressing many contemporary and sometimes contentious issues in modern tourism. Destinations pose complex challenges to management as it must meet the needs of tourists and tourism businesses, as well as local communities, local companies, and industries. Therefore, for the Prlekija or Ljutomer-Ormož Hills destination, it is recommended to consider establishing an organization for destination management.

Despite grape growers and winemakers being aware of the importance and impacts of collaboration and cooperation, they have pointed out that the current collaboration among grape growers and winemakers in the area is weak. They believe that it is necessary and important to establish local collaboration among grape growers. Respondents express that, despite the efforts of certain individuals, winemakers are not collaborating enough and are not actively participating in wine events organized in their local environment. Grape growers and winemakers also highlighted the difficulty of connecting winemakers with tourism entities that provide accommodation in addition to wine since the latter aims to retain guests on their premises. They see untapped potential in connecting local winemakers with producers of other products (fruit, meat, cheese) and service providers (accommodations, spas) in a comprehensive chain/arrangement, offered widely to guests. It is found that the majority of respondents would allocate funds for joint promotion, advertise the products of other grape growers/wineries, exchange opinions and experiences with other grape growers/winemakers, and participate in joint projects and events with other grape growers/winemakers. Slightly fewer respondents would collaborate under the same brand with other grape growers/wineries.

Based on the results obtained, it is recommended that collaboration is established in the Prlekija or Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region. This should encompass the involvement of stakeholders, who would mutually work towards addressing general issues or solving specific problems. Each stakeholder would still control their resources, such as knowledge, skills, a circle of supporters, and capital. A formally registered network or partnership would provide the necessary resources for achieving the destination's goals and effectively planning the future in terms of tourism development (Bramwell and Lane, 2000).

Rusjan and colleagues (2012) suggest that Slovenian grape growers and winemakers need to organize themselves economically in an organizational sense. A significant challenge in this regard lies in closer collaboration and integration with tourism, as part of comprehensive tourism offerings. It is found that grape growers and winemakers in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region are willing to host tourists in their wine cellars, vineyards, homesteads, and the like. They are ready to invest more time in managing wine cellars for wine tourism and allocate more resources for this purpose. Hall and colleagues (2009) summarized certain advantages and disadvantages of wine tourism for grape growers and winemakers, which were included in the questionnaire. Grape growers and winemakers in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region believe that engagement in wine tourism affects all the factors outlined, and they consider all the discussed advantages important for the development of wine tourism.

Respondents emphasized that the offerings of wine tourism should include not only wine but also gastronomy, accommodations, relaxation, active experiences, history, and similar aspects. Various authors affirm that wine tourism encompasses both enological aspects dealing with vineyards, wine, and tastings, as well as tourism features. To successfully implement wine tourism, tourist infrastructure (accommodation, restaurants, accessibility), specific activities of this form of tourism, and the requirements of tourists interested in this activity are necessary. Besides tourism, wine tourism must also include wine-related activities that can take place in vineyards, wine cellars, etc. (Mănilă, 2012). It is believed that with the implementation of certain measures, Prlekija could become a successful wine tourism destination, but this will require significant effort, time, and resources.

### **3.4 Development of area after the research**

Since 2018, the collective trademark Jeruzalem Slovenia has been linking the offerings of the three municipalities in the Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia, namely Ormož, Sveti Tomaž, and Središče ob Dravi. Part of Ljutomer-Ormož Hills is included in this area. The trademark signifies a comprehensive offering with local added value from Prlekija, which defines the wine sub-region Ljutomer - Ormož in the eastern Slovenian hills (one of the six wine sub-regions in the Štajerska Slovenia region in the wine region of Podravje). The first evaluation of products and food products, artisan products, and culinary events for the collective trademark

Jeruzalem Slovenia took place in November 2018. Already on the first call, farms and artisans showed great interest in participation, and thus, after training and counseling, 270 products (67 artisan and 142 products and food products) received a quality certificate. Three gastronomic events were also assessed, namely St. Martin's Day in Ormož, St. Anton's Day in Kog - Čurkarijada, and the Pumpkin Festival in Središče (Lešnik Štuhec, 2021). The vision for Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia by 2025 is to create a fully integrated boutique wine destination in the rural area between the Drava and Mura rivers. It will attract visitors with its peaceful landscapes, local traditions, excellent wines, and opportunities for outdoor activities. The destination will focus on preserving local customs and the Prlekija dialect, offering a genuine and immersive experience. Visitors can engage in artisanal activities, relax in spas, and enjoy treatments for their well-being, emphasizing the unique and unhurried pace of life in the region (Občina Ormož, Občina Središče ob Dravi in Občina Sveti Tomaž, 2019a). The strategic document "Development Plan for the Economy and Quality of Life Improvement in the Area of the Local Action Group (LAS) UE Ormož for the Period 2019-2025," commissioned by the municipalities of Ormož, Središče ob Dravi, and Sveti Tomaž, comprises seven chapters. The first chapter serves as an introduction, providing a brief overview of the LAS UE Ormož area, the methodology for project implementation and document formulation, the development and marketing of tourism in the regions of Slovenia, Podravje, and Pomurje. The second chapter presents the basis for developing tourism and improving the quality of life in the LAS UE Ormož area. The third chapter provides a detailed overview of the tourism development strategy in the Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia for the period 2019-2025. The fourth chapter introduces the Model for Organizing Tourism Development and Marketing in Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia for the period 2019-2025, which is based on partnership for joint planning, co-organization, co-management, co-guidance, co-administration, monitoring, and evaluation of the Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia offer for the period 2019-2025. Also defined are the recruitment for the efficient operation of DMO Jeruzalem Slovenia, funding sources for implementing the tourism development strategy in Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia, and the model for realizing the vision - measures for tourism development and marketing in the period 2019-2025 in Destination Jeruzalem Slovenia (Občina Ormož, Občina Središče ob Dravi in Občina Sveti Tomaž, 2019b). We can see that in recent years, providers in the area have been collaborating, which was also highlighted as desirable in the research.



Furthermore, the development strategy predicts sustainable tourism development in the future.

#### **4 Wine tourism and climate change**

Wine tourism emerges as a prime prospect for rural development, yet its susceptibility to climatic conditions classifies it as a climate-vulnerable facet of the tourism industry (Sottini et al., 2021). On one hand, the shifting weather patterns, including increased temperatures and changing rainfall patterns, may disrupt traditional grape growing practices. On the other hand, it may open up new opportunities for wine growing in regions previously unsuitable for vine cultivation (Outreville, 2019). Climate change has begun to exert profound effects on wine growing and wine tourism. Rising temperatures, altered precipitation patterns, and increased instances of extreme weather events are shifting traditional winegrowing regions, impacting grape ripening, and challenging the suitability of grape varieties. As a result, wine producers are modifying viticultural practices, exploring new regions, and adjusting their grape varieties to adapt to the changing climate (Jones et al., 2005; Hannah et al., 2013).

#### **5 Conclusion**

In conclusion, sustainable tourism, as defined by the UNWTO, encompasses an approach that is vital for the responsible development of tourism in any region. This approach requires a delicate balance between economic, social, and environmental considerations while respecting the local culture and heritage. The case of the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region in Slovenia, with its rich wine tradition and untapped wine tourism potential, highlights the need for increased collaboration and cooperation among grape growers, winemakers, and other stakeholders in the tourism industry.

The research findings indicate that stakeholders in this region recognize the importance of collaboration but also acknowledge its current weaknesses. They are eager to allocate resources, engage in joint promotion, and actively participate in events, all of which are essential for establishing successful collaboration. It is evident that the potential for growth in wine tourism is significant, provided that the various actors within the region can work together effectively.

The collective trademark "Jeruzalem Slovenia" demonstrates a step in the right direction by linking offerings across municipalities and promoting local products. This integrated approach contributes to the sustainable development of wine tourism. The area's development strategy outlines a vision for creating a fully integrated boutique wine destination that focuses on preserving local customs and traditions.

However, the region also faces and also will face challenges due to climate change in the future, which will impact wine growing and wine tourism. The industry must adapt to shifting weather patterns and extreme events, which may necessitate changes in viticultural practices and grape varieties.

In summary, the success of wine tourism in the Ljutomer-Ormož Hills region hinges on effective collaboration, sustainability, adaptation to climate change, and a shared vision for the future. With the right strategies in place, this area has the potential to become a thriving and sustainable wine tourism destination.

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