



GASTRONOMY AND WINE TOURISM AS A VARIETY OF SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM: THRACIAN VINEYARD ROUTE*

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ABSTRACT

Having an increasing tendency towards a combined consuming habits, modern humans tend towards different types of special interest tourism in order to increase their life standards, to add “surplus value” to their lives and to have different experiences. Gastronomy and wine tourism, within this context, have an increasing attractiveness. This study is carried out to identify the enterprises taking part in Thracian Vineyard Route (TVR) project, to reveal how TVR entrepreneurs and proprietors perceive Thracian vineyard route as a tourism product, to find out their ideas on future and to propound some offers on existing TVR project. In this study, total of nine people, who were either owner or the managers of eight out of all 12 TVR enterprises, have been interviewed in detail by using a qualitative analysis method and the data obtained have been evaluated by descriptive analysis method. Written documents regarding the study has also been examined. In consideration of the data obtained in this study, it has been revealed that unpopular destinations within the scope of tourism could be revived by theming if sufficient infrastructure and superstructure, and human resources are provided. Especially the latest legislative regulations has urged TVR enterprises to develop alternative sales strategies for entering into market and delivering their products to end users. TVR enterprises have proven that they have the potential to become a role model for various projects planned to be realized in the future apart from being a profit for the region they are located.

STRUCTURED ABSTRACT

Special interest tourists tend to actively seek for connections in cultural and physical environment. Pursuit of innovation and change, continuous learning and self-realization are some of the most significant motivations of special interest tourists (Hanrich 2008). Since they give value and experience to the tourists, gastronomy and wine tourism are among the increasingly-popularizing types of special interest tourism. Within this context, wine tourism has been discussed on the basis of

* Bu makale Crosscheck sistemi tarafından taranmış ve bu sistem sonuçlarına göre orijinal bir makale olduğu tespit edilmiştir.

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countries from Germany (Scheffel 1993) to South Africa (Bruwer 2003), and several studies (2004) underlined the importance of wine tourism on a global scale. While Faßler (2008) discussed the relation and interaction between wine production and tourism within the context of regional development, Doren Kagelmann and Orsolini (2011) studied wine marketing and culture tourism, and Marenó Melgarejo (2012) researched Spanish wine routes. In the studies conducted on gastronomy tourism in Turkey, sustainability was also emphasized in addition to cultural aspects (Kesici 2012) of gastronomy tourism. When it comes to Thrace, it is observed that along with Kiracı and Özdemir (2006) and Kiper and Korkut (2011), there are several scholars, who also discussed agritourism, rural tourism and alternative tourism types in Thrace besides sea-sand-sun tourism as in Şarköy example of Küçükaltan and Ultanır (2012). Unlike aforementioned studies, this study focuses on Thrace Vineyard Route (TVR), which was carried out in 2013 with participation of 12 vineyard facilities and supported by Thracian Development Agency (TRAKYAKA) as the first gastronomy and wine tourism route in Turkey. 12 TVR enterprises were selected as references of this study. The interviews were conducted with nine people, who were either the owner or the manager of the eight enterprises. It is observed that the participants travel frequently and had overseas experience, and that they were knowledgeable and experienced in gastronomy and wine cultures, and prefer to run boutique facilities. These people are aware of the fact that viniculture is a difficult process, and they are consciously involved in this business. These interviews provided information to the author regarding pleasure, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, demand group, wellness, etc., along with the chance to get closely acquainted with TVR enterprises and wine tourism, and lent assistance regarding the potential, problems and solution suggestions on gastronomy tourism in general, and on wine tourism in particular. Many difficulties were faced while manifesting the research questions. While normally the preparation of research questions and literature reviews are two simultaneous and interactive processes in many studies, the research questions in this study could only be shaped after completing a certain part of data collection process (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2013). Within this context, since there were not any available academic studies regarding TVR, instead of a semi-structured questionnaire form, which would form a basis for a qualitative research that would act as a starting point for future quantitative studies, in-depth interviewing method was preferred to research and propound the development process of TVR enterprises and to collect data. In this context, descriptive analysis was applied in this study by using deduction method. The existence of TVR facilities strengthened the image of Thrace as a tourism destination. Within this context, TVR is considered as a successful project. Since gastronomy and wine tourism are attractive tourism products, TVR also finds wide press coverage in visual and printed media. TVR enterprises faced with rapidly-growing demands of visitors and tourists and particularly caught off guard due to inadequate accommodation facilities. This also comes up in the process of welcoming and entertaining the guests. Immediate solutions for these problems should also be created in order to increase sustainability of the project. It is observed both in literature reviews and in the process of interviews that

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TVR process is on its onset. The interviews revealed that the Thrace region may set an example for entrepreneurs in Aegean region and Cappadocia, where it is more suitable to establish a vineyard route in Turkey, and this type of projects may be carried into effect by receiving support. TVR enterprises, which are newly-established and small-scaled enterprises in terms of their structural features, consider TVR as a tourism-themed route. It is observed that direct sales have increased with the visits on the route. Although it has some drawbacks, the tourism destinations in surrounding areas have become more attractive with the increasing numbers of short vacations. Thus, it would not be wrong to say that the TVR enterprises have successfully added “surplus value”, along with offering a new experience to the visiting tourists. It is also predicted that TVR enterprises will also attract more tourists by continuing to focus on tourism. However, although TVR enterprises rank among national and international brands in wine production, they cannot get the attention they deserve due to insufficient accommodation and human resources in terms of becoming gastronomy or wine tourism routes. It is observed in the data obtained from the interviews that there were major drawbacks especially in presentation, tasting, consultancy, sales and accommodation in enterprises. Within this context, it is observed that despite of its drawbacks, TVR project, which is a clustering project, was partially successful due to the increasing numbers of tourists and day trippers. Although it is a route, if TVR is desired to be located in Thrace as a sustainable regional development factor in the future, other gastronomic values of the region, especially cheese, meat, olive oil, marmalade, etc., should also be as high-quality as wine produced in the region. TVR, which is at the outset of thematization within this context, may be a sustainable regional factor with both a vertical and a horizontal clustering model, as well as a national and international achievement model.

Key Words: Special interest tourism, Gastronomy tourism, Wine tourism, Vineyard Route, Thrace.

BİR ÖZEL İLĞİ TURİZM ÇEŞİDİ OLARAK GASTRONOMİ VE ŞARAP TURİZMİ: TRAKYA BAĞ ROTASI

ÖZET

Giderek karma bir tüketim alışkanlığına sahip olan günümüz insanı, yaşam kalitesini arttırmak, deneyim yaşamak ve yaşamına “artı değer” katmak için özel ilgi turizm çeşitlerine yönelmektedir. Gastronomi ve şarap turizmi, bu bağlamda artan bir çekiciliğe sahiptir. Bu çalışma, Trakya Kalkınma Ajansı'nın (TKA) destekleriyle 2013 yılında hayata geçirilen Trakya Bağ Rotası (TBR) Projesi'nde yer alan işletmeleri tanımlamak, TBR işletme sahipleri ve işletmecilerinin TBR'yi bir turizm ürünü olarak nasıl algılandıklarını ortaya çıkarmak, bu kişilerin geleceğe yönelik düşüncelerini öğrenmek ve mevcut TBR projesini geliştirmeye yönelik öneriler ortaya koymak amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu çalışmada nitel bir araştırma yönteminden yararlanılarak toplamda 12 TBR işletmesinden sekizinin sahibi ya da işletmecisi olan toplam dokuz kişi ile derinlemesine görüşmeler

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Volume 10/10 Summer 2015*



geçekleştirilmiş ve elde edilen veriler betimsel analiz tekniğiyle değerlendirilmiştir. Ayrıca çalışma ile ilgili yazılı dokümanlar incelenmiştir. Elde edilen bilgiler ışığında, turizm bağlamında sönük olan destinasyonların TBR'de olduğu gibi yeterli alt- ve üstyapı ve insan kaynaklarının sağlanması durumunda temalaşmaya giderek canlandırılabilceği, bir takım öneriler sunularak ortaya konulmuştur. Özellikle son yasal düzenlemeler yeni kurulan TBR işletmelerini pazara girişlerinde ve ürünlerini nihai tüketiciye ulaştırmaları bağlamında alternatif satış stratejileri geliştirmelerine sevk etmiştir. TBR işletmeleri buldukları coğrafya için birer kazanç olma yanında gelecekte gerçekleştirilmesi düşünülen birçok proje için örnek model oluşturma potansiyeline sahip olma özelliği sergilemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Özel ilgi turizmi, Gastronomi turizmi, Şarap turizmi, Bağ rotası, Trakya

Introduction

Special interest tourism is the fastest-growing type of tourism industry. The participants of special interest tours tend to have a deep tourism knowledge and experience and they are generally in pursuit of new experiences. Within this context, it is necessary to offer new products and services to the market, which will appeal to this target group. Special interest tourism involves a wide range of tourism types. For example, urban, nature, gastronomy, wine, history, culture, education, sex, etc. (Douglas, Douglas and Derett, 2001).

While the number of studies on hospitality facilities and sea-sand-sun tourism in Turkey have been growing apace each year, the number of studies, especially qualitative studies, on touristic routes and special interest tourists are too scarce. The number of studies, which focus on, evaluates and brings suggestions on formation and development phases of tourism routes in Turkey, are not at satisfactory levels as well. When the international themed tourism routes are examined, it can be seen that the studies in Turkey were inspired by these routes. This also applies to TVR. No academic studies have been encountered in Turkey on clustering in gastronomy tourism. Within this context, the information regarding TVR enterprises, which are also referred to as boutique wineries, are limited to the promotional materials prepared within the scope of TVR project (brochures, booklets, CDs, videos, maps, etc.) and newsworthy information that have media coverage. Therefore, this is the first study in this field. In this context, the purposes of this study may be listed as follows: 1) to describe the enterprises that took place in TVR project, which has been carried into effect in 2013 with support of TKA, 2) to reveal how TVR owners and managers perceive TVR as a tourism product, 3) to find out their thoughts about the future, 4) to propound suggestions to develop existing TVR project. It is also aimed to develop hypotheses for creating a starting point for prospective quantitative studies based on the deductions to be obtained through the analysis of the data collected in this qualitative study.

In line with the aforementioned purposes, the answers for the following questions have been sought:

1. What are the structural characteristics of TVR enterprises?
2. In what way have the TVR enterprises been influenced by the TVR project within the context of tourism?
3. Could we consider TVR project as an accomplishment? What were the challenges encountered?

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4. Are TVR enterprises forced to go through a structural change?

5. How these enterprises were affected by the new Law on Alcoholic Beverages and what were their solutions?

While this study seeks for answers for the aforementioned questions, it is also conducted for sustainability of TVR project, which is supported by TKA, and to research and evaluate the potential short, medium and long term contributions of this project to the region. Along with its contribution to the literature, it is also believed that this study may also be considered as a corporate social responsibility behavior, since the organization, where the author works, is located in the Thrace region. In addition, since the region is untouched, and the number of studies on this subject is very limited, this study may also have a preventive effect on potential wrong decisions, apart from providing practical solutions to save time and money on prospective scientific and sectoral initiatives. Another purpose is to plan a research on developmental status of TVR with the studies to be conducted in every five years within the context of creating the first themed gastronomy and wine tourism route in Turkey. According to Doulas, Douglas and Derett (2001), special interest tourism types are influenced by political developments as much as they are influenced by environmental factors. Thus, it is believed that this study will also contribute to the literature, where the business conditions that have changed following the new legislative regulations regarding alcoholic beverages in 2013 and the new developments will be presented.

Literature

Special interest tourists display behaviors that actively search for connections in cultural and physical environment. The pursuit of innovation and change, continuous education and self-realization are among the most significant motivations of special interest tourists (Hanrich 2008: 50). They also want to experience the people, culture and physical environment and to join them. This may sometimes perceived by the local people as a new process, since at some point, the local people become a part of this tourism activity.

Scheffel's (1993) study, where he discussed numerical values in German vineyard route example, is one of the first studies in the field of gastronomy and vine themed routes. Bruwer (2003) discussed South African wine routes, structural extents of wine tourism industry and wine tourism product from a different point of view, and Hall (2004a) revealed the development, management and market of global wine tourism. While in another study that he conducted at the same time period, Hall (2004b) discussed the small businesses, wine and gastronomy tourism in New Zealand in terms of collaboration, clustering and lifestyle, Fäßler (2008) discussed the relationship and interaction between winemaking and tourism within the context of an independent regional development. Doren, Kagelmann and Orsolini (2011) studied wine marketing and culture tourism, and Mareno Melgarejo (2012) researched Spanish wine routes. When these studies are reviewed, it is seen that TVR enterprises are structurally closer to Hall's (2004b) study.

In the studies conducted in Turkey on gastronomy tourism, it is seen that the sustainability of gastronomy tourism (Yüncü 2010; Kodaş and Dikici 2012; Cömert 2014; Kaşlı, Cankül, Koz and Ekici 2015) also pointed out, as well as its cultural aspects (Kesici 2012). On the other hand, Türkben, Gül and Uzar's (2012) study named "Place and Significance of Viniculture in Agrotourism in Turkey", is a study that was conducted on vineyard tourism in Turkey. This study suggests organizing activities that may attract tourists, who visit our country to promote vineyard tourism in Turkey. These activities could involve to organize harvesting and tasting tours for tourists in areas, which are suitable for vineyard tourism, to have them taste the wines produced from the grapes cultivated in that region, to organize trips to wine distilleries, and to provide them the opportunity to make their own wines and to promote the region by organizing vineyard

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festivals. Since vineyard tourism promotes economic development, especially in rural areas, it is very important for our country (Türkben, Gül ve Uzar 2012, 48). Türkben, Gül and Uzar's study emphasizes Şarköy and Mürefte in Tekirdağ example.

It can be stated that some certain destinations have not yet ranked among tourism market, except for Şarköy, which is known by summer house tourism for Thrace and especially for Istanbul. On the other hand, it is seen that sea-sand-sun tourism in Şarköy has also not been discussed academically. Although most studies emphasize "rural" features of Şarköy, there are a considerable amount of studies. Although Kiracı and Özdemir (2006) conducted their study named "Current status of viniculture in Şarköy, Tekirdağ, and determination of organizational opportunities for the solution of the manufacturers' problems" many years ago, realization of TVR as organization and clustering have only been accomplished in 2013. On the other hand, Kiper and Korkut discussed the case of tourism in Şarköy and studied the effect of plant production on rural tourism (Kiper and Korkut, 2011). Again, another study involving Kiper and Korkut (Kiper, Korkut and Yılmaz 2011) named "The effect of natural landscape on the development of rural tourism: the example of Şarköy, Tekirdağ", shows that Şarköy become prominent in Thrace as a research area. In another study, to which Kiper contributed, named "Applicability of Agro-tourism and the role of women. Example of Şarköy-Mürefte", the roles of women in rural tourism, who are one of the economically disadvantaged groups, were researched (Kiper, Özdemir and Başaran 2011). In this context, rural tourism was discussed with respect to sustainability in terms of contribution to local development. In another study named "Determination of trekking routes regarding nature tourism in Şarköy District in Northwest Turkey", Kiper (2011) discussed Şarköy as an active tourism destination. With richness and diversity of natural attractions, Şarköy and its surroundings are attractive destinations for trekking tourism, which is one of the alternative types of tourism. Küçükaltan and Ulutanır (2012) discussed Thrace in their study and selected Şarköy as the field of application. Şarköy example, within the context of applicability of rural tourism in Thrace, may set an example for areas with similar structural characteristics in Thrace. Another study with a similar title was "Evaluation of the potential of rural tourism as a factor for rural development in Şarköy and surroundings" by Çakır and Çakır (2012). As in the previous studies, these researchers also focused on rural tourism.

According to Akgün (2014), wine production, consumption, marketing and promotion in Turkey have been radically affected by the "Regulation Regarding the Amendment of the Regulation Related to the Procedures and Principles Regarding Sales and Presentation of the Tobacco Products and Alcoholic Beverages", which has entered into force after being published on the Official Gazette no: 28769 in September 18, 2013, and which has been regulated by Tobacco and Alcohol Market Regulatory Authority, and by the "Law Regarding Amendment of the Statutory Decree no: 375 by Some Other Laws", which has entered into force on October 2013 (www.resmigazete.gov.tr). Within this context, it can be stated that today, the previous studies and suggestions regarding wine tourism have substantially lost their validities. In this sense, apart from being the first study in many ways due to the following reasons, the following are deduced in consideration of the findings obtained in this study:

1. Wine tourism, which is considered as a special interest tourism, has been radically affected by the aforementioned Law.
2. All TVR enterprises were caught off guard against the prohibition of advertisement of alcoholic beverages in the aforementioned Law. TVR enterprises faced difficulties due to the fact that known promotion, marketing and sales channels became out of the loop and started to search for alternative ways for marketing and to reach the end user.

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3. Due to the aforementioned reasons, the studies conducted in our country before 2013 should now be considered as invalid in terms of their relevance.

4. A great deal of the suggestions brought by the studies conducted until 2013 have fallen behind and lost their validities.

5. Due to the latest developments, the international studies could also be utilized within certain limits.

Method

Many difficulties were faced while presenting the research questions. The fact that there were not any available theoretical frameworks was the main difficulty. While the lack of any theoretical literature made things difficult for the researchers, it could also be stated that it also brought along many surprises. While normally the preparation of research questions and literature reviews are two simultaneous and interactive processes in many studies, the research questions in this study could only be shaped after completing a certain part of data collection process (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2013: 94).

The research area was found readily available within the scope of Thracian Vineyard Route Project. The facts that the research area was dispersed and the enterprises were under the influences of different socio-cultural and socio-economic effects have affected both the course and the results of the study. It was also seen in the preliminary survey stage that the literature was insufficient for this study as well. The promotional materials prepared within the scope of TVR project were reviewed based on the studies that did not go beyond reports or columns in printed media. Within this context, since there were not any available academic studies regarding TVR, instead of a semi-structured questionnaire form, which would form a basis for a qualitative research that would act as a starting point for future quantitative studies, in-depth interviewing method was preferred to research and propound the development process of TVR enterprises and to collect data.

For this purpose, five research trips were organized between June 23 and July 13, 2014 and 12 TVR enterprises were selected as examples. The interviews were conducted with nine people, who were either the owner or the manager of the eight enterprises, and the interviews took seven hours and seven minutes in total. The interviews were put into report form in 85 A4 size pages and each interview took between 45 and 72 minutes. One-to-one interviews conducted with the enterprise managers gave us information different than expected. Thus, this study also contributed to increase reliability of the qualitative data, which were obtained with support of other materials, such as research, observation or archive (Kozak, 2014: 137). In this context, descriptive analysis was performed in this study by using deduction method. In addition, the researchers also participated in national and international fairs, conferences and panel discussions regarding this matter and tried to collect and diversify information and materials.

Since it was the first interview, and it shaped the research to a large extent, the interview with Doğan Dönmez, the owner of VINO Dessera, played a key role for this study. The new questions that arouse during interviews were also added to the previously prepared questions. The questions, which were thought to be outdated, were eliminated and a continuous research process was experienced. This was considered to be a accompany process for the theory, which will be developed through the reference grounded theory. These interviews provided information to the author regarding pleasure, sustainability, corporate social responsibility, demand group, wellness, etc., along with the chance to get closely acquainted with TVR enterprises and wine tourism, and lent assistance regarding the potential, problems and solution suggestions on gastronomy tourism in general, and on wine tourism in particular. Tape recorders were used during interviews and the records were deciphered afterwards. This also contributed to the efficiency of the research.

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Although the participants were easily accessible, it was difficult to make an appointment for the interviews, since many part-time business managers live in Istanbul. The participants had no trust issues against the researcher. The researcher received the permissions of the participants for using tape recorders prior to interviews. In order to perform the interviews in a comfortable environment, the participants were interviewed either in their establishments and/or the place where they live. This is believed to increase the validity of the data obtained. Since this study is the first academic study on TVR, the subject was analyzed under the following titles: the structure of TVR businesses, the opinions of TVR business owners or managers on considering TVR as a tourism product and the challenges faced by TVR.

The researcher has a different role in field in qualitative researches. The researchers play those roles or positions or they are given those roles or positions voluntarily or involuntarily. The information that will be obtained or will not be obtained by the researcher may vary depending upon those roles and positions. According to Flick (2004: 154), the participation or role of the researcher in the field is divided into four groups as the stranger, visitor, initiator and a well-informed person, or the researcher is regarded as the “professional stranger”. According to Spöhring (1995: 148), the researcher and the subjects are normally strangers to each other. Thus, it is necessary to retain the trust and interest of the subject, and also protect the data (Flick et. al. 1995: 155).

Findings

The research was performed with nine people, who were either the owner or the manager of the eight TVR enterprises. The findings will be evaluated under three titles: structure and motives of TVR enterprises, the opinions of TVR business owners or managers on considering TVR as a tourism product and the challenges confronted by TVR.

Structure and Motives of TVR Enterprises

Although size, capacity, spaciousness, number of employees, etc. are not currently determined criteria for boutique enterprises, TVR enterprises describe themselves as “boutique” enterprises. Besides TVR enterprises are authentic, and represent a certain terroir, vineyards and wine distilleries are intertwined in these enterprises. Although he stated that no sharp lines could be drawn for boutique wine making, Fedai Yaldız reflected boutique wine making with the following statements:

“As long as you don’t go over the limits of boutique wine making. You should not exceed maximum 400 - 500 tons, I don’t know, but I think you cannot say you are a boutique wine maker by producing millions of bottles of wine. I don’t know the certain limits. The vineyard and wine grape of the boutique wine maker should be integrated. You should grow your vineyard in accordance with the wine you want to make. If you can personally check each one of your products, if they are not mass produced, that is boutique wine making.”

As it was also stated by Fedai Yaldız, and as it is seen on Table 1, all enterprises visited by the researcher can be considered as “boutique” enterprises. When Table 1 is reviewed, it was seen that all TVR enterprises, except for Melen Vineyards, were established after 1993. Beside the fact that many managers entered into viticulture by quitting their previous jobs or considered viticulture as an extra job or a hobby, suitable legal provisions may also be considered among these reasons.

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Table 1: Thracian Vineyard Route Enterprises

Name of the Enterprise	Location	Year of Establishment	Interviewees	Size	Production/Bottle
Melen Vineyards	Şarköy	1920	Cem Çetintaş	240 decares	500.000
Gülör Vineyards	Şarköy	1993	Fedai Yıldız	150 decares	200.000
Chateau Kalpak Vineyards	Şarköy	1993	Bülent Kalpaklıoğlu	120 decares	50.000
Barel Vineyards	Tekirdağ	1997	Barkın Akın	150 decares	40.000
Arcadia Vineyards	Kırklareli	2000	Zeynep Arca Salliel	200 decares	120.000
Barbare Vineyards	Tekirdağ	2000	Tülin Bozüyük	230 decares	80.000-100.000
Şato Nuzun Vineyards	Tekirdağ	2005	Necdet Uzun	146 decares	33.000-35.000
Vino Dessera Vineyards	Kırklareli	2007	Doğan Dönmez	200 decares	100.000

In the interviews, it was observed that the common characteristics of the participants were that all of them travel frequently and had overseas experience, and that they were knowledgeable and experienced in gastronomy and wine cultures. When talking about her overseas experiences, Zeynep Arca Salliel explained with the following examples that gastronomy tourism develops rural areas:

“We are thinking about world-wide gourmet food made from local products. We are currently making and offering these foods to our same-day visitors. This is a common model in the world. After all, we see that all rural areas of Italy have developed in this way. You also see that all rural areas of South France have also developed in this way. St. Sebastian in Galicia, Spain is also famous for its restaurants in rural areas and there are five restaurants with three Michelin stars in that village. These are extreme examples, but they exist.”

Necdet Uzun talked about his overseas experiences as follows *“I have been to many wineries around the world. Especially to old wineries. [...] Both in Chile, Argentina, USA, Canada in the Americas, and in Spain, Germany, etc. In Europe. I have observed the way they do this job. There are ultramodern wineries.”*

Necdet Uzun summed up why he chose viticulture as business in the early 2000s due to his overseas experiences and the suitable conditions in Turkey, his influences from lifestyles and enterprises in other countries and his initial steps into wine making business, believing that viticulture could also be successfully done in Turkey:

“We bought this land in 2004. We set to work in 2005 by planting the vines. We planted a part of the vines. We produced our first products in 2008 and launched them at the end of 2010. Half of the land is currently empty. 146 decares of land. Now we have vines planted in 70 decares.”

When explaining the initial processes of entering into viticulture business, which is a challenging work, Zeynep Arca Salliel stated that they also considered the suggestions of their foreign visitors:

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“We began by producing wine based on the fact that these lands have the potential for world-wide products, but we could not make quite a name for ourselves, because food & beverage is very important in our tourism sector. In food & beverage, you need to present a good menu that you supply with local products together with a good local wine. This is how it is done in all over the world.”

While overseas experience and examples play a crucial role in the examples of Necdet Uzun and Zeynep Arca Salliel, it is clear with his following statements that his education had a huge influence on Barkın Akın’s interest in winery business:

“I worked in food industry in the past. I studied Business in English. I also studied gastronomy in Yeditepe Üniversitesi. It was the first culinary school in Turkey. I have a food company in Istanbul. I became acquainted with wine in there. Since we grew up in a vineyard, my family and I have always had a passion for wine. We have already been making wine with the grapes of our own vineyards. And after I received education, I said ‘why don’t I become a Professional?’”

Another example of entrepreneurship from the TVR enterprises is observed in Bülent Kalpaklıoğlu, the owner of Chateau Kalpak, and he briefly explains as follows:

“It all started as a hobby, and then things got out of hand.”

As it can be seen from the statements of the interviewees, the facts that the wine makers have overseas experiences and they are well-educated show that they consciously started this job. It was also observed that the viniculture sector, where the TVR enterprises are considered as boutique enterprises and the owners have started this job to make their dreams come true or as a hobby, has developed in time and the enterprises has entered into the process of branding.

The Opinions of TVR Business Owners or Managers on Considering TVR as a Tourism Product

This may seem as a solution for the enterprises, which were up against the wall with the aforementioned legal practices that has entered into force in 2013, the year when TVR project was realized. The effect of this project on development of tourism is also undeniable. Although it is too early to tell, all interviewed TVR managers and owners express positive opinions about the results of the project.

“I think this is a great and a successful project. It gave us, the newly-established companies, an elbow room after the latest prohibition on promotion. We cannot promote our products. We cannot do anything. Everything is prohibited. We have a signboard by the road. We will also remove that. We don’t have a website. We cannot share anything on Facebook or other social media channels. How will people find us? That is impossible. TVR was there right on time. Now we even have weekend tours” (Barkın Akın).

Bülent Kalpaklıoğlu, the manager of Chateau Kalpak, which is one of the enterprises geographically far from Istanbul, shared the similar opinions with Barkın Akın.

“It is quite effective. Very effective. There have been many people, who followed that route. By many, I mean not hundreds of people, but less than 50. We received tens of phone calls, more than 50. They call us. They say, ‘we saw you on vineyard route, and we will be joining in a tour including your place. Can we stop by? That’s how they came.”

TVR project and gastronomy/wine and tourism fact can be seen in detail in Tülin Bozöyük’s statements:

“Of course the demand has increased after TVR. These are two parallel things. We

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have built a hotel in this are both individually and as Barbare. We are promoting our facilities as much as we can, but we eventually get stuck at some point. Now I will give you the simplest example. You are in Istanbul and you will go somewhere at the weekend. You go online and make a quick research about the places to see. You type some keywords in Google. The results will most likely take you either to Şile or Ağva. When you search for a vineyard house in Thrace, you see a question mark.

Tülin Bozöyük also mentioned that an adaptation process is required for the tourist to accept new tourism products and destinations and that the news that have press coverage are very important within this context. Besides, she also pointed out the subliminal importance of the image of destination in decision making stage for the tourists and that TVR project had a positive impact on these efforts:

“TVR was something that supported our individual efforts. While we used to receive one or two phone calls in a week, we began to receive one or two phone calls in one day for the last couple of months. They ask things about accommodation, and they say they want to stop by. They call us, and tell us they want to visit, but they don’t know what to expect. These are goods signs at this point. But if they still say that they don’t know what to expect after two years, that’s not good. Good things happen. For instance, they call us from the Aegean Region and say ‘we planned a trip to vineyards in Thrace for the weekend, and we want to stop by. We heard that you provide accommodation.’ We receive that kind of calls. People come from South to North, to Thrace. Black Sea tours have always been popular. But I have never heard someone say ‘let’s go on a Thrace trip’.”

Within this context, it is observed that TVR’s potential of making Thrace attractive for tours is also noticed and Thrace becomes an alternative for people living in other regions of Turkey, in addition to traditional Black Sea tours.

Challenges Faced by TVR

When the opinions of TVR owners and managers are considered, the challenges may be grouped under two main titles: (1) Marketing of the wines manufactured, (2) Insufficient physical means and human resources to welcome, entertain and accommodate the guests.

It is observed that the TVR enterprises, who were inspired by the overseas practices when establishing a winery, and who started out by considering the marketing and sales of the products through ordinary channels, were faced some challenges because of the amended legislative regulations. Zeynep Arca Salliel stated the current conditions as follows:

„Now we cannot promote our products since we are alcoholic beverage manufacturers. Our products on market are our sole commercial activity. Our current commercial activity unfortunately does not allow for promotion.”

When we look through the perspective of the entrepreneurs, it is necessary that the sector to be invested and the conditions on that country should be stable. The methods applied for boutique wine products, which are considered as luxury products, and especially for wines, which are produced through organic-based production methods, may be fragile and the product may have higher costs. Necdet Uzun, who prefers organic viticulture, summed up the beginning of his journey and the conditions that he encountered as follows.

“When we made this investment, the laws, regulations and the legislations were favorable in our country. For instance, we has the opportunity to sell our products through online channels. We were preparing our website when we hit the marketplace at the end of 2010. This omnibus bill was enacted at the beginning of 2011 and online sales were prohibited.

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We were planning to make half of our sales through the internet. [...] We started off by thinking that we could reach people directly by using these opportunities and our plans got upside down. We suddenly lost the channel that we planned to make half of our sales.”

Necdet Uzun, who set off based on his overseas experience within the context of adapting ever-changing conditions, stated that he started to search for different sales channels, and tried wine clubs, which are common entities in other countries, and summed up the problems that he encountered when marketing his products:

“The wineries in other countries have their own wine clubs. We have created a wine club. Then we were able to send products by cargo to the members of the wine club. [...] And then another law was introduced on June 2013. The law states that you cannot send alcoholic beverages to end users by cargo. And when the law was introduced, 40% of our sales were made through this way. It was around 1200-1300 at that time. We have about 2000 club members and this has the potential to constitute half of our sales but we cannot use this channel. But people can come and purchase our products from here. We cannot bring our products to our customers. Thus, this had a negative effect on our plans. That’s why 40% of our sales are now made from here. The remaining sales are made to restaurants and wine boutiques. We have invoiced sales. And other retail sales with a receipt.

The guests, who visit the vineyards by following TVR or out of curiosity and interest, also demand accommodation services from the aforementioned enterprises to increase their „experience“, apart from wine tasting and vineyard tours. Although TVR was initiated in 2013, it is observed that many enterprises were caught off guard, especially within the context of tourism. For instance, Zeynep Arca Salliel from Arcadia Vineyards stated their accommodation issues as follows:

„We fail to satisfy accommodation needs. We direct our customers to Ezgi Hotel. The guests do not want to stay in an urban hotel. They say they want to stay in the village and experience the village. We cannot provide accommodation in the village, there is no infrastructure.”

Tülin Bozöyük predicts the problems, which may arise in the future due to the increasing demand following the realization of the project, since the accommodation infrastructure is insufficient and since more people are expected to visit after the promotion of TVR and its attraction:

“I believe, our biggest problem here will be this: tourism will have a boom within a couple of years, but there are no facilities here to satisfy the target group that we aim as the founders of these twelve vineyards. Now we have built six rooms in here. 6 rooms mean maximum 12 people. I can host 12 people in a weekend. However, I have a facility (restaurant) here, where I can potentially host 100-120 people. But where will these people stay. That is a problem.”

Müge Akgün’s statements, who discussed gastronomy tourism from another perspective, supports the prediction of Tülin Bozöyük. “[...] I have travelled through the vineyard route in Thrace. Mürefte is falling apart. So is Şarköy. There are no places to stay. [...]” (www.turizm gazetesi.com). It may be considered that Şarköy or Mürefte are secondary house/summer house destinations and the reason for these problems may be that they appeal to low-income demand group.

Fedai Yıldız also mentioned the idea that the visitors will demand accommodation, since the expectations of the visitors will be varied due to the development of TVR and increasing

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number of visitors, and since TVR enterprises will become more attractive due to their locations:

“People will want to spend the night in these places. Maybe small lodges should be built. The guests will want to drink their wines and enjoy this view at night. Tourism will also bring a lot of money. We have a vineyard house over there. It is a private property but we are planning to use it as a boutique hotel. But it is too soon. It is the same for all of us. TVR came out of nowhere. But good things happen.”

Apart from marketing the products and insufficient physical means to meet the accommodation needs of the guests, Zeynep Arca Salliel also expressed another problem. She gives the following statements about the rocky roads of viniculture and wine making, about the fact that an idle land is used, and that 7-8 years of time period is required to get products and this is a difficult process that requires patience:

“[...] When we first purchased this land, there were not even a single weed or a quick grass. We have put all our energy to this land without doing anything else for 5 years in order to regenerate the soil. We have injected bacteria, put green manure, laid compost and fertilizer. We have spread alfalfa seed and other seeds. We have fetched tanks of water from the village and irrigated the soil. It was something crazy. The town’s people see us as mad as a hatter.”

Zeynep Arca Salliel also gives the following statements about the challenges that she experienced when entering into this sector:

“We have had many difficulties for many years. We were always talking about the concept of terroir wine. We have always wanted to produce wine with unindustrialized production techniques that reflect the taste of these lands, and our foreign customers have always criticized us on this matter. Why? You do have the potential, but why don’t you have those products. The wine has been in these lands for thousands of years, why isn’t it available now?”

It was also observed that the opinions of TVR owners and managers on the future are also related to the problems that they look for solutions. It was observed in the interviews that the marketing of the products and insufficient lodging facilities were the leading problems among the most challenging aspects for TVR owners and managers.

Conclusion and Evaluation

It is observed both in literature reviews and in the process of interviews that TVR process is on its onset. The interviews showed that the Thrace region may set an example for entrepreneurs in Aegean region and Cappadocia, where it is more suitable to establish a vineyard route in Turkey, and this type of projects may be realized by receiving support.

TVR enterprises, which are newly-established and small-scaled enterprises in terms of their structural features, consider TVR as a tourism-themed route. Direct sales have increased with the visits on the route. Although it has some drawbacks, it the tourism destinations in surrounding areas have become more attractive with the increase in the number of short vacations. From this point forth, it is avowable to say that the TVR enterprises have successfully added “surplus value”, along with offering a new experience to the visiting tourists. It is also predicted that TVR enterprises will also attract more tourists by continuing to focus on tourism.

Although it is not hard to say that tourism sector utilizes advanced communication technologies and it develops under the influence of these technologies, it is also not hard to predict that the current conditions become uncertain for TVR enterprises due to the work and business

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conditions that have changed by the regulations regarding alcoholic beverages. Comprehending the current situation is very important for sustainability of future plans and strategies to be developed. Although TVR enterprises rank among national and international brands in wine production, they cannot get the attention they deserve due to insufficient accommodation and human resources in terms of becoming gastronomy or wine tourism routes. It is observed in the data obtained from the interviews that there were major drawbacks especially in presentation, tasting, consultancy, sales and accommodation in enterprises. Within this context, it is observed that despite of its drawbacks, TVR project, which is a clustering project, was partially successful due to the increasing numbers of tourists and day trippers.

Although it is a route, if TVR is desired to be located in Thrace as a sustainable regional development actor in the future, other gastronomic values of the region, especially cheese, meat, olive oil, marmalade, etc., should also be as high-quality as wine produced in the region. TVR, which is at the outset of thematization within this context, may be a sustainable regional actor with both a vertical and a horizontal clustering model, as well as a national and international achievement model.

Some hypothesis are propounded below within the context of constituting a starting point for future quantitative studies based on the results of this study:

- There are differences between the perspectives of the business entrepreneurs and expectations of tourists in gastronomy and wine tourism, because if the entrepreneurs switch from wine making to tourism in a short time, they start to notice their drawbacks when the tourists start to show up.
- Part-time operated TVR enterprises will have to decide whether to become full-time operated enterprises, when the visits to TVR enterprises begin to increase.
- Unless TVR enterprises offer accommodation facilities with adequate capacity for overnight guests, TVR will turn into excursion points, rather than tourism routes.
- Within this context, TVR will move away from ensuring projected and expected sustainable regional development.
- Amended legislative regulations crucially affected TVR enterprises and canalized them to alternative sales and marketing methods.

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Citation Information/Kaynakça Bilgisi

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