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DEVELOPMENT AND PROMOTION OF A WINE TOURISM PRODUCT IN THE UKRAINIAN BLACK SEA REGION FOR THE EU MARKET

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This paper examines the development of a wine tourism product in Ukraine's Black Sea region targeting the EU market. It provides an overview of the region's winemaking heritage and identity, its current tourism infrastructure and wine production profile. We propose objectives and scope for the product, and analyze marketing strategies suitable for EU promotion. Challenges such as security and brand awareness are discussed alongside opportunities from EU integration

and global wine-tourism trends. Finally, recommendations for implementation and sustainability are given, including route development, community involvement, and alignment with EU standards.

У статті проаналізовано розвиток і просування продукту винного туризму у Причорноморському регіоні України для ринку ЄС. Наведено огляд історії виноробства регіону та його традицій, описано наявну туристичну інфраструктуру. Розглянуто можливі маркетингові стратегії, виклики і можливості виходу на ринок ЄС. Запропоновано рекомендації щодо просування і сталого розвитку продукту, включаючи розробку маршрутів винного туризму та використання підтримки європейських програм.

Actuality of the article. In the context of Ukraine's EU integration and post-conflict recovery, developing a distinctive wine tourism product in the Black Sea region is highly relevant. Ukraine's southern viticultural areas (notably Odesa and surrounding Black Sea areas) account for a majority of the country's wine production [9], and recent legislation has aligned Ukraine's wine sector with EU norms to facilitate export growth [10]. At the same time, global tourism trends show a rising demand for authentic, culturally rich wine experiences: industry forecasts predict the global wine tourism market will more than triple by 2035 [11]. Europe alone already accounts for over half of global wine tourism revenue [12], reflecting its deep wine culture and the popularity of vineyard tours. Thus, a well-designed wine tourism product could meet strong demand from EU travelers seeking immersive rural and gastronomic experiences.

Wine tourism is also a proven catalyst for rural revitalization: EU-funded studies find that developing wine routes can provide «a significant boost to local communities» during the recovery period [13]. In Ukraine, even amid conflict, wine tourism stakeholders remain optimistic, with most anticipating industry growth and a draw of foreign visitors-particularly from neighboring Poland and Moldova [14]. To harness this potential, initiatives are linking Ukraine's wine routes with those of adjacent countries. For example, the EU-backed SeaOfWine project aims to consolidate country-level routes into a single Black Sea Wine Route, creating an integrated cross-border wine tourism product. Together, these factors underscore the timeliness of crafting and promoting a Black Sea wine tourism offering for the EU market.

Purpose of the paper. The purpose of the paper is to propose the design and promotion strategy of a wine tourism product in Ukraine's Black Sea region targeted at the EU market. To achieve this, the article will analyze the region's viticultural and tourism assets, identify appropriate marketing and distribution channels, and formulate practical recommendations for implementing a competitive wine tourism offering.

Introduction. The Ukrainian Black Sea coastal region (encompassing Odesa, Mykolaiv and Kherson oblasts) is the heartland of the country's viticulture [1]. This area enjoys a warm continental–maritime climate and fertile chernozemic soils, yielding robust red and sparkling wines [1]. Its winemaking tradition is ancient – vines were cultivated by Greek colonists over 2,500 years ago [1] – giving the region a deep enological heritage that is now a core part of local identity [2]. In the modern era, producers in this region combine traditional varieties (e.g. Telti-Kuruk, Odesa Black) with international grapes, underlining both continuity and innovation in winemaking [2].

The Shabo Wine Culture Center (Odesa) exemplifies the region's commitment to its wine heritage. Founded in 2009 as Ukraine's first wine museum, it promotes a "culture of noble drinks" at one of Europe's oldest vineyards [4]. This center literally sits on an ancient winemaking site, tying the Black Sea coast's 2,500-year legacy to modern oenotourism [2]. Such institutions – along with local wine festivals and museums – strengthen the regional identity around wine, making it an attractive element in tourism.

The importance of wine tourism as a rural economic driver has been widely noted. Global authorities stress that developing wine routes and destinations generates jobs, preserves traditions and adds value to local products [7]. In Ukraine's context of EU integration, promoting wine tourism is especially relevant: a recent study concludes that such strategies "will help…develop wine tourism and establish Ukraine as a promising wine region" [5, p.118-119]. Thus, the Ukrainian

Black Sea region's blend of heritage, culture and natural beauty makes it a compelling candidate for a specialized wine tourism product aimed at European visitors.

Relevance. Wine tourism has grown into a high-potential niche worldwide. The UN World Tourism Organization emphasizes that digitalization, storytelling, and inclusion are crucial for competitive wine destinations [7]. In Europe, tourists increasingly seek authentic cultural experiences tied to gastronomy and local heritage. Ukraine's Black Sea region offers this combination: travelers can explore ancient vineyards, taste unique wines by the coast, and enjoy Black Sea cuisine and landscapes. Leveraging this theme could revitalize rural areas and tap into EU demand for new wine experiences [5, p. 118–119] [7].

Current trends also favor such development. EU-funded projects (e.g. the ENI/Black Sea Sea-of-Wine initiative) are already integrating the Black Sea countries' wine routes and marketing [6]. These efforts highlight growing EU support for regional wine tourism as a vehicle for cross-border cooperation. In sum, creating a Black Sea wine tourism product is timely and aligned with broader goals of sustainable regional development and international tourism diversity.

Objectives and Scope. The proposed wine tourism product aims to create a coherent Black Sea Wine Route and brand that highlight the region's wineries, viticultural landscape, and cultural attractions. Objectives include: (1) linking key wineries and points of interest into itineraries (e.g. vineyard tours, tastings, historical sites, and natural scenery); (2) positioning the product for EU tourists via targeted promotion; and (3) fostering sustainability and local benefits. The scope covers the coastal oblasts of Odesa, Mykolaiv, and Kherson, leveraging their combined assets – for example, coastal resorts (which have existing accommodation infrastructure) and unique cultural sites – to support wine tourism. This approach echoes the Sea-of-Wine project's goal of integrating country-level routes into a single Black Sea Wine Route with a common label [6].

Methodology. This study synthesizes data from literature, industry reports and EU project outputs. Key sources included academic analysis of Ukraine's wine sector [5], official tourism statistics, and reports from regional development initiatives (such as the Sea-of-Wine CBC program [6]). We conducted a comparative analysis of the region's wine tourism readiness and performed a SWOT analysis of the product's potential. Stakeholder consultations (e.g. with local winemakers and tourism officials) would normally complement this research; here we infer insights from project documents and case studies. This methodological framework ensures that the proposal is grounded in documented trends and best practices.

Results. Current Infrastructure and Wine Production. The Black Sea coast already has a foundation of wine tourism infrastructure. Numerous wineries operate tasting rooms, visitor facilities and even hotel or restaurant services on site. For example, large producers like **Shabo** (Odesa) and **Kolonist** have modern cellars and event spaces, while boutique estates (e.g. Beykush in Mykolaiv, Frumushika-Nova in Odesa) also host tours [6]. In 2019 small winemakers from all three oblasts formed the **Black Sea Craft Winemakers' Association**, signaling organized cooperation (festivals, branding) among over a dozen member [6].

In these wineries – as shown by Shabo's barrel room pictured above – substantial investments have been made in production facilities and tourism amenities.

Quantitatively, the Odesa region is dominant: it accounts for **over 60 % of Ukraine's wine output** [5, p. 118–119]. This indicates a high concentration of vineyards and wineries in the Black Sea area. The region's wine grape area and production are by far the largest nationally (Mykolaiv and Kherson contribute much of the rest). Local varieties (e.g. white **Sukholymansky** and red **Odesa Black/Alibernet**) thrive here thanks to the warm summers and limestone soils [2]. Many producers export or aim to export, and some (like Kolonist's French Boulevard or the Frankovskyi Domain winery) have experience with wine tourism.

On the tourism side, the Black Sea coast historically was a major holiday destination with ample accommodation and transport networks. However, recent conflicts have **severely disrupted this**. For instance, Odesa oblast lost much of its usual summer tourism after missile strikes damaged city infrastructure and power supplies [8]. Tourist flows have plummeted in Mykolaiv and Kherson due to front-line hostilities. Thus, while pre-war facilities (roads, hotels, ports) existed to support

wine routes, they are currently under strain or unavailable. Rebuilding these links is a prerequisite for the wine-tourism product's success.

SWOT Analysis (summary)

● **Strengths:** Ancient winemaking heritage; favorable climate and soils; existing cultural infrastructure (e.g. Shabo Center); EU interest in developing rural tourism.

● **Weaknesses:** Security/safety concerns due to war; low international brand awareness; pre-existing infrastructure gaps (signage, hospitality); limited previous experience in tourism marketing.

● **Opportunities:** Novelty for EU tourists seeking new destinations; EU and international development funding (CBC, GIZ, Erasmus etc.); unique local varieties (appealing to oenophiles); diaspora and cultural ties to Europe; global trend toward experiential travel and gastronomy [7].

● **Threats:** Ongoing conflict and instability; competition from well-known wine regions (France, Italy, Spain); regulatory and logistical barriers; economic constraints (currency, investment deficits).

Discussion. Marketing Strategies for the EU Market. A multi-pronged marketing approach is recommended. **Digital marketing** is essential – a professional multilingual website and social media campaigns (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube) can raise awareness among EU audiences. Rich content (video tours, storytelling about Greek-era vineyards, profiles of winemakers) will attract interest. UNWTO experts stress that wine tourism strategies should «embrace digital transformation» and leverage storytelling and branding [7]. Therefore, the product should feature high-quality visuals and narratives (e.g. the theme «Wine on the Black Sea»), emphasizing authenticity and heritage.

Participation in tourism fairs and wine expos will raise the profile of the region. Presence at European events (e.g. ITB Berlin, World Travel Market London) and wine fairs (ProWein Düsseldorf, London Wine Fair) with dedicated stands can directly reach EU tour operators and media. Joint presentations (perhaps under the «Black Sea Wine Route» label) could highlight the cooperative brand developed in the Sea-of-Wine project [6]. Partnerships with specialized tour operators are also vital: collaborations with companies running Mediterranean wine tours can incorporate a new Black Sea segment.

Brand identity and storytelling: A strong, unified brand should be created. For example, adopting the common label «Black Sea Wine Glass Member» (as envisaged by the Sea-of-Wine initiative) would unify all partner wineries [6]. Marketing narratives should blend the region's history (ancient Greek colonies, castle views) and natural allure (sea vistas, sun-drenched vineyards). Tourism operators can use these stories to craft packages («From the Ancient Greeks to Modern Cellars»). Wine and food pairings (e.g. local fish dishes with regional wines) should be promoted to enhance cultural appeal.

Challenges and Opportunities. The **primary challenge** is security: until conflict conditions improve, potential EU visitors will be wary. Perceptions of risk must be managed through transparent safety information and phased reopening (e.g. focusing first on safer areas or virtual experiences). Secondly, **infrastructure deficits** (damaged roads, power, hospitality) limit capacity. Investment (possibly co-financed by EU grants or public–private partnerships) is needed to restore and upgrade hotels, transport links and tourism services. Third, the product must overcome low awareness: Ukraine's wines are not well known in Europe, so emphasis on quality and distinctiveness is crucial. Regulatory issues (e.g. aligning tour quality standards with EU norms) must be addressed.

Conversely, there are notable **opportunities**. EU integration brings development funds (e.g. ENI Cross-Border Cooperation, Erasmus+ tourism grants) which can finance route signage, joint marketing platforms, and training. European travelers have growing appetite for offbeat wine destinations and «solidarity tourism» – visiting Ukraine can be seen as supporting recovery. The region's unique grape varieties and the narrative of «wine as resilience» (many winemakers continued through war [6]) provide an emotional story that resonates. Proximity to Romania and Bulgaria (EU countries) also allows combined itineraries (e.g. a «Black Sea Wine Journey»

spanning multiple countries). Finally, trends toward **sustainable and rural tourism** favor the product: by emphasizing organic vineyards and community-led experiences, the project aligns with UN Sustainable Development Goals and can qualify for green tourism certifications [7].

Recommendations for Implementation and Sustainability. Phased implementation: Begin with a pilot wine route linking 4–5 anchor wineries (e.g. Shabo, Kolonist, Beykush) near Odesa city, which has intact airport and amenities. Develop self-drive or guided tour packages covering vineyards, seaside hotels and local attractions. Deploy a digital platform (website and app) in multiple EU languages with booking capabilities. Simultaneously, participate in key EU events to announce the new route and attract partners. In parallel, upgrade necessary infrastructure: install bilingual signage, train guides in wine interpretation, and ensure basic services (cell reception, road signs) are in place.

Sustainable practices: All partners should adopt environmentally sound practices – e.g. organic viticulture, water conservation, and use of renewable energy – which can be highlighted in marketing as a "green wine tourism" feature. Community engagement is essential: involve local food producers (cheese, fish farms), artisans and cultural sites to diversify offerings (wine & dine, wine & hike, wine & spa). Encourage off-season events (harvest festivals in autumn, winter wine markets) to extend tourism beyond summer.

Collaboration and continuity: Establish a Black Sea Wine Tourism consortium (public and private stakeholders) to coordinate efforts long-term. Leverage the existing Sea-of-Wine ICT platform and Black Sea Wine Glass brand [6] as foundations. Measure success through clear KPIs (visitor numbers, occupancy rates, revenue). Seek continuous feedback from European partners to adapt marketing. Finally, maintain alignment with EU tourism strategies – e.g. by joining European wine route networks – to ensure the product remains visible and competitive.

Summary: The Ukrainian Black Sea region's unique blend of ancient winemaking heritage and coastal appeal offers a strong foundation for a wine tourism product. By developing integrated routes, employing targeted EU marketing (digital storytelling, exhibitions, alliances) and addressing challenges of safety and infrastructure, the region can attract new visitors. Emphasizing sustainability and local culture will ensure the project's resilience and authenticity. The proposed strategy aligns with EU and UN recommendations for rural tourism development [7] and, if implemented, could help establish the Black Sea coast as a distinctive wine tourism destination for European markets.

Conclusions. This study outlines a comprehensive plan to develop a wine tourism product in Ukraine's Black Sea region for the EU market. The region's deep winemaking traditions and favorable terroir make it inherently attractive, but realization requires careful design and promotion. Key conclusions are: (1) A unified route and brand (building on the EU-funded Sea-of-Wine model) can integrate regional assets effectively [6]. (2) Digital marketing and participation in European fairs are essential to raise awareness and attract EU tourists [7]. (3) War and underdeveloped infrastructure are major hurdles, but EU support and innovative storytelling present countervailing opportunities. (4) A focus on sustainability and community benefits will enhance competitiveness and ensure long-term viability. We recommend immediate steps to pilot the wine route, secure funding for infrastructure, and formalize partnerships with European tourism stakeholders. By leveraging its unique identity and fulfilling international tourism standards, the Black Sea region can emerge as an appealing new wine tourism destination for European travelers.

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CUSTOMIZATION OF THE TOURISM PRODUCT IN THE MICE TOURISM MARKET

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This article proposes and validates a customized hybrid event model in the MICE sector, developed for the Ukrainian city of Slavutych as a pilot destination. The research demonstrates how behavioral personalization, adaptive service design, and immersive technologies can be integrated into event architecture to meet the demands of international business tourism. The methodology is grounded in strategic marketing and includes PESTEL and SWOT analysis, STP segmentation, benchmarking, participant journey mapping, and scenario-based modeling. The proposed model enables data-driven personalization, dynamic spatial experience, and long-term emotional