

Article

Wine Hotels—Intangible Heritage, Storytelling and Co-Creation in Specific Tourism Offer

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Abstract: This paper researches aspects of affirmation of intangible heritage and the valorisation of viniculture through themed wine hotels that offer integral wine experiences as well as satisfy tourists’ needs for individualism. This paper aims to explore the intangible cultural heritage through thematic wine hotels and identify special tourism products and experiences created via storytelling and co-creation that impact its competitiveness. The research design includes the selection process of wine hotels in the international context, a comparative analysis of themed hotel offers online promotions, and original research of themed offers. Data is analysed using qualitative and quantitative methodology, including statistical processing. Developed under the concept of wine tourism, themed accommodation facilities—wine hotels—are the core value in the creation of an integral wine experience. However, the research results indicate that international wine hotels do not affirm all the potential and possibilities of creating specific products and do not realise their full competitiveness. The results form a platform for the proposal of a competitiveness model, which synergically affirms hotel core competencies, expressed through tangible and intangible features, sustainability, experiences, co-creation, special advantages and marketing mix elements. Recommendations for wine hotels’ new competitiveness represent an additional contribution of the paper and point to new considerations directed towards innovations, creativity and affirmation of intangible heritage.

Keywords: intangible heritage; social sustainability; wine hotels; co-creation; competitiveness; innovation; services; storytelling; unique experiences



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1. Introduction

The adaptation of hospitality is generated by the changes in tourist demand and the emergence of new trends and innovations. By differentiating and opting for certain market segments, hotels realise competitive advantages in relation to traditional, generic hotel products. Hotel offer specialisation and thematisation enable the fulfilment of the wishes and needs of target market segments, as well as the provision of unique and authentic experiences. The centre of the research is specialised themed hotels. i.e., wine hotels and the impact of thematisation on competitiveness. Thematised hotels develop specific products which, in order to be further developed and innovated in a quality way, need to be classified and diversified. The data obtained by the original desktop research was processed using qualitative and quantitative scientific methodology and statistical processing, which contributed to the understanding of the problem area of thematised hotel competitiveness and efficient promotion.

This paper aims to research the intangible cultural heritage aspects that form non-material values of hotel offers and the possibilities of their implementation. The subject of the research is thematic wine accommodation facilities that were created as a result of targeting specific consumer groups with the valorisation of the core authentic resources

and values. As a result, themed wine hotels have positive impacts in several aspects. Apart from affecting the hotel competitiveness and diversification, they also promote destinations that strive to be affirmed through wine tourism; they promote cultural heritage and wine tradition and help reduce seasonality, as wine hotels have a year-round business character.

Further to the stated key terms of thematisation, specific products and competitiveness, the paper problem questions are set:

Q1: Is the shift in themed hotel design creativity recognised as a competitiveness factor?

Q2: What specific wine tourism products affect the development of wine hotel competitiveness?

Q3: What is the potential of implementation of various specific hotel services identified for the valorisation of intangible heritage in hotel offers?

New insights into the understanding of the topic and the definition of specific related products and experiences that affirm the intangible heritage aspect of wine tourism imply the contribution of the work that fulfils the research gap. In further elaboration and continuing to problem questions, the frequency in forming the offer of individual experiences that affirm intangible cultural heritage will be investigated. Themed hotel rooms, co-creation and guided storytelling tours stand out among these. The results will present the level of implementation and indicate conclusions as a platform for developing scientific knowledge that bridges theory and practice, and future research.

2. Literature Review—Linkage of Intangible Heritage with Tourism Attractiveness of Themed Wine Hotels

International legislation related to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage has defined intangible heritage as a non-material cultural resource that can be identified in various forms of personal, spiritual, and non-material creation that can be communicated and carried forward by word of mouth and other different means. It includes

- language, dialects, speeches and toponymy, as well as oral literature of all kinds,
- folklore creativity in the field of music, dance, traditions, games, rituals, customs, as well as other traditional folk values,
- traditional arts and crafts [1].

According to the UNESCO Convention for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage, intangible heritage is defined as and includes “expressions, skills, knowledge, representations—as well as instruments, objects and cultural spaces—which societies, groups, and sometimes individuals, recognise as part of their own cultural heritage. It represents skills, customs, dance, rituals, music, knowledge, crafts” [2]. According to [3] “intangible heritage, by its definition, includes customs, beliefs, knowledge, skills and phenomena of spiritual and cultural creativity which are passed down through tradition, and societies, groups or individuals recognise them as their heritage”. Furthermore, [4] consider local gastronomy, including oenology, in the context of intangible heritage and point out that the same, although included in the UNESCO list, has not been valorised or sufficiently explored in the scientific literature. On the other hand, Ref. [5] consider the agricultural environment and vineyards as a material aspect of intangible heritage that affirms the territorial identity of the destination and locality.

In light of the aforesaid, Ref. [6] presents the ‘soft power’ concept and explores its relationship with the concept of intangible cultural heritage. Numerous authors consider cultural aspects of the affirmation of various selective types of tourism, including wine tourism, through valorising tangible and intangible characteristics. The latter often remains neglected compared to the material features of the resources, as [7] pointed out. Considering the heritage of viticulture and oenology, separated from the agronomic context, the emphasis is on valorising the authentic culture, traditional way of life, and work while nurturing traditional agricultural production, preserving authentic stories, recipes, and ways of storing final products. In recent paper [8] explore wine as a tourist resource and implicate new manifestations and consequences of a quality product from the perspective

of sustainability. Valuation of oenology and wine tourism promotes sustainable growth and development, both in the ecological and sociocultural contexts. Authors [9,10] consider viticulture and winemaking a national heritage and highlight the evaluation through cultural institutions and national cultural and tourism development policy. The valuation of intangible heritage in tangible cultural institutions and commercial buildings presents a platform for the development and valorisation of wine hotels as a stakeholder of culturally sustainable tourism.

Furthermore, Ref. [11] investigate consumer motivation for wine tourism from an anthropological aspect and emphasise the perception of mysticism and peculiarities in the experience of terror products that valorise tangible and intangible values. In continuance [12] point out that wine tourists desire quality culinary offerings; attractions, including cultural, recreational, and retail choices; human interactions; and a wine region landscape to enjoy. Finally, Ref. [13] highlight that innovation and technology exploitation have become not only a way to differentiate but also a survival necessity for wine tourism operators and wine destinations alike.

However, in the experience economy melting pot, where experience is characterised by accelerated transience, the importance of affirmation of the local, unique and authentic experience within intangible cultural heritage is stressed.

Numerous authors deal with the topic of special experience in tourism. Authors [14–17] study the experience economy and present it as a factor of recognisability in the achievement of competitiveness in tourism, as do [18,19], who adds that emotions and special ambience affect the formation of unforgettable memories and experiences. In ref. [20] identifies different types of tourists and consumers of tourist products developed within the context of the experience economy, while [21] evaluates the power of animation and proposes differentiated animation programmes in tourism and hospitality aimed at education, entertainment and activity, as well as the complete guest experience and satisfaction. Tourist experience can be considered as everything that tourists will forever keep in their memory, and this can be realised through a story, which is imbued by a large number of historical facts, secrets, outcomes and legends. In some situations, “a large quantity of visual information, sounds, colours, data, tastes and smells, can cause saturation in tourists, but a well-conceived story, which contains all important information, will be much more easily remembered” analysed by [22,23].

In continuance, Refs. [24,25] emphasise the importance of storytelling and present the potential for implementing and forming various tourism products and storytelling for different markets and age segments. When exploring wine tourism, Ref. [26] emphasise its influence on competitive advantages in wine tourism. The same is reflected in the competitiveness of wine hotels and the influence of authentic stories on the integral experience of wine tourism. Storytelling affirms the environment, events and life circumstances and arouses emotions, empathy and understanding through which unforgettable special experiences are evoked. Furthermore, the affirmation of intangible cultural heritage through storytelling targets cultural sustainability and influences rural regeneration [2].

2.1. New Tendencies and Innovations in Modern Hospitality—Specialisation and Thematisation

Modern development trends and changes in tourist demand affect the adaptation of hospitality. Primary offers in hotel facilities are no longer sufficient to satisfy the tourist demand. Instead, personalised and differentiated services are becoming the primary motive for travel as a consequence of the changes in the way tourists spend their free time while travelling. Namely, modern tourists actively involve themselves in tourism activities as opposed to one-time passive observation [27]. Furthermore, the same authors consider tourist motivation and how modern tourists spend their holidays and highlight the importance of diversification of special interests, which affect the development of specialised hospitality. As a consequence of specialisation, the concept of themed hotels is presented [27–29], where particular attention is paid to wine hotels regarding the resource base and authentic products with the surroundings.

Thematised hospitality emerged as a result of offer specialisation by which attempts are made to satisfy the needs and to provide unique experiences for a market niche [30]. Fostering innovative practices is important for the hospitality sector, as a competitive advantage is achieved by differentiation, i.e., specialisation and application of modern technological solutions, stress [31]. In ref. [32] analyses modern hospitality trends and defines the importance of ensuring safety and hygiene (especially important due to the COVID-19 pandemic as a threat), contactless technologies, multicultural employment, development of sustainable and smart hotels with technology development. Furthermore, the importance of virtual and augmented reality, robot staff in the hotel product architecture and design, and affirmation of a new concept of luxury based on well-being, the aesthetic of the hotel product material elements, and intangible values are highlighted [29].

Tourism niches represent market segments oriented toward specific tourism consumer groups [33]. Tourism niches are characterised by the intention to achieve informality, sustainable development and environmental preservation. It is precisely by tourism niches that hotels realise competitive advantages the moment when they first opt for tourism niches [34]. With this, they intensify the niche market and create critical mass, selective tourism forms and specialised hotels. As opposed to the features of typical holiday tourism, niche tourism represents an active, i.e., inclusive form of tourism with a tendency towards new experiences.

With hotel offer specialisation, hoteliers target a specific market niche which is looking for new experiences. Apart from the fact that a destination attracts guests through natural and social attractions, specialised, i.e., themed hotels in the role of resources can be defined by a tourist attraction in the sense of developed tourism superstructures [27]. By specialising hospitality and thematising accommodation facilities (hotels, campsites and resorts), new competitiveness is achieved, market niches are affirmed, business methods are reshaped, and the problem of seasonality and the degree of capacity occupancy is levelled [32].

The hotel management's mission is to organise such a hotel that will ensure competitiveness and innovativeness, and one of how to achieve this is hotel transformation into a tourist attraction based on the valorisation of comparative advantages and authentic products. Rural regeneration is being achieved; Ref. [8] explore and elaborate on this topic re in the example of Malaga, a Mediterranean wine region. On the other hand, a more recent study of themed tourism and rural regeneration through tourism contents and accommodation examines api-tourism as a specific valorisation subsegment [30]. It is important that the hotel theme is in the spirit of the destination in which it is located and that, through its specific offers and thematisation, it affirms the autochthonous culture and intangible values of the surrounding areas [27]. In recent paper [35] analyzed wine destination management and marketing issues from the perspectives of the various stakeholders of wine destinations, namely tourists, cellar doors, wine tourism firms, destination managers, wine associations and networks. Accommodation providers should be considered fundamental stakeholders of the tourism system.

2.2. Thematised Hotels as a Tourist Attraction—Wine Hotels

With their specialised offers, hoteliers strive to satisfy wishes and offer unique experiences to specific consumer groups, which they combine according to their mentalities and wishes. The market potential of hoteliers and destinations, as well as fulfilment of the expected satisfaction, are conditioned by the hotel staff's potential to provide unique choices to each guest. In order to improve the process of service provision in hospitality, it is important to, for example, recognise the advantages and disadvantages of own business operations, facilitate an individual approach to guests, simplify services, and use technologies for more efficient work.

A recent paper of [36] explore how the heritage aspects of traditional winemaking can transform into a successful innovative business model (BMI). They are studying the role of values in the strategic trajectories of winemakers and exploring a true portfolio of connected business models where wine tourism is based on a local ecosystem delivering the firm's

historical, cultural, social and economic values. Valorization of intangible heritage through the competitiveness of wine hotels results from the affirmation of innovative business models.

In modern business conditions, hoteliers have developed specialised offers of different themes such as health, gastronomy, oenology, recreation, etc., enabling the development of specialised and themed hotels. In continuance, Ref. [37] elaborate on the synergy of business potentials of co-branding, namely how luxury vinous-concept hotels meets premium wine brands and what are the benefits of joined competitiveness. The themed hotel concept is directed toward creating unique themed experiences with the assistance of themed products, services and designs [19]. The themed hotel attractiveness lies in the affirmation of authenticity of the surroundings and the resource base, as well as in the fact that, as uniquely designed, they appear in the market as an alternative to generic, unified hotels and are offered to guests who do not wish to distance themselves from standardised hotel products [28,38]. The special experience affirmation through the experience economy points to new values, which find their starting point also in both the co-creation and personal participation in the creation of experience.

There is no unique definition of a themed hotel, as it concerns a wide concept; however, Prinz [28] defines a themed hotel as any other accommodation facility which provides its guests with the creation of special experiences and feelings. More precisely, the whole concept of the hotel is focused on a single specific theme and, with the optimal combination of themed services, design, and offer; it contributes to fulfilling guests' needs for new experiences [28]. According to [29], themed hotels are characterised by a new business concept. Namely, themed hotels are becoming a tourist attraction, including storytelling in the entire business model and design; they develop a feeling of hospitality and welcome through an emotional relationship with guests, where guests are not merely passive observers but get actively included in the hotel story by co-creation [32]. The same author proceeds with how positive impacts of the development of thematised accommodation facilities relate to an increase in the number of overnights in the pre- and post-seasons, urban and rural regeneration and improvement of the entire quality of the tourism destination.

Wine hotels are detached from standard, uniform, mass hotel complexes developed from the specific wine tourism niche. Wine tourism includes tourist travel which includes visits to vineyards, wine cellars, wine festivals and wine exhibitions, where wine tasting and/or the experience of attractions of the wine-growing regions represent the primary motivation for travel [39]. They also define the wine tourism product typology, where they highlight: wine routes, vineyard hiking, organised tours and stays in vineyards, oenology studying, visits to wine cellars, wine museums, wine celebrations and festivals and professional presentations and sales fairs. Considering the aforementioned, organised wine hotels have a special place; they enhance the destination's attractiveness, competitiveness and diversification; they contribute to the innovativeness and refreshment of a tourist offer [31]. Cable Wine System [40] and Garibaldi [41] present the wine hotels' concepts and fundamental features.

The concept of "vinotel" and "wine hotel" denotes wine hotels, i.e., accommodation facilities with the theme of wine, which base their offer of products and services on the presentation of the local wine culture such as wine tasting, different wine-based treatments, and others. They are characterised by offering high-quality experiences, multisensory experiences [42] and decoration resembling wine heritage [41].

Wine hotels can be situated in restored rural buildings formerly used for other purposes, and natural materials such as stone and wood are used in restoration to create a powerful bond to the territory. On the other hand, wine hotels can be of a modern, minimalist design, often in combination with high-tech solutions. In addition, there are also unusual wine hotels, such as wine barrels and luxury tents situated in vineyards [41–44]. Furthermore, numerous hotels are located in the close vicinity of wine regions, given that wine tourists take part in wine tours and visit wine cellars [40].

Wine hotels are frequently independent boutique, heritage or lifestyle hotels that operate independently or under the umbrella of a consortia brand. At the international level, wine hotels are affiliated with themed associations through which they affirm strategic marketing. For example, the Wine Hotels Collection is a distinguished marketing association that gathers 68 pronouncedly thematised/trendsetter “wine” hotels throughout the world (Argentina, Portugal, Spain, France, Chile, Italy, South Africa, Croatia, Uruguay and Hungary). This association was primarily created to satisfy an increasingly globally growing demand for gastronomic and oenological tourism. In that sense, the association members consist of the best wine hotels, hotels in areas surrounded by vineyards, and hotels in wine regions [45]

The offer in wine hotels does not only refer to wine tasting but also to a wide range of products and services. It can include only overnights or wine-themed offers, such as wine tasting in vineyards or wine cellars, cycling and hiking tours, horse riding, trekking, yoga, dinners in vineyards, wine-based wellness treatments, various cultural activities which combine art and music with taste, and other [41]. In addition, the offer may include different courses, access to wine collections, spas, nearby local wineries, themed rooms, modern art galleries, and other content providing luxurious experiences [40].

Wine hotels offer their wine cellars and collections created by the world’s best sommeliers and famous chefs who prepare luxury dishes pairing the best with the right choice of wine. When hotels are not situated close to wineries, wine-related events are usually organised at the hotel itself [40].

3. Materials and Methods

The research encompasses an analysis of wine hotels, i.e., the offer of their contents and services in the international environment. It aims to determine the models of wine offer presentation in wine hotels, where the problem questions are set that all the facilities being promoted as wine hotels have the stated contents in their offer.

The research includes qualitative and quantitative methodology, divided into three parts. The first part consists of the desktop research of specific hotel offers. The research results are presented in the table and coded with 0 and 1, which enabled statistical analysis of the sample. The percentages, AVR, STDEV and VAR, were calculated to determine the frequencies and importance of researched variables. The second part of the research explores probabilities and expected values of the services related to the intangible heritage of wine tourism. It uses statistical methodology of the chi-square test. The third part of the research explores the existing literature—a theory related to wine hotels and organised wine hotels. It presents the organised services, facilities and other offers grouped into six categories of the proposed model.

For the research needs, twenty themed wine hotels were selected, of which, three are in Croatia and Spain, six in Portugal, two in France, four in Italy, and one in Poland and New Zealand. Given that, in Croatia, thematised hospitality is still in its early days, international examples enable the detection of the potential for development.

The choice of hotels was based on a search by keywords “*the best wine hotels*” in the Google search engine. This facilitated access to specialised portals on which lists are separated and whose search engine was also examined according to the keywords “*the best wine hotels*”. The wine hotels in Croatia were selected by a keyword search in the Google search engine. For the selection of international hotels, lists from the tourist agency *Food’n Road* [46] (<https://foodandroad.com>) (accessed on 9 December 2022) were used, which contains lists of the best wine hotels by destination (Spain, Portugal, Italy and France). The remaining hotels were selected from the lists of specialised portals *Travel & Leisure* [47] (<https://www.travelandleisure.com/>) (accessed on 18 December 2022) and *Club Oenologique* [48] (<https://cluboenologique.com/>) (accessed on 12 December 2022). Using such a methodological approach, the online promotion of wine hotels was also simultaneously researched, as well as optimising the most frequent web search engine.

When choosing hotels, in order to retain objectivity, hotels were not grouped according to general characteristics but according to the order of appearance, i.e., optimisation. The presented hotels have different types and interior designs (traditional, modern, etc.). Thus, on the one hand, it shows the possibility of setting up wine hotels in different structures, and on the other hand, how hotels meet the different requirements of tourist demand. Objectivity enabled the neutrality of the final list since it is not about already formed, potentially favoured lists but about a generic order of appearance. In this way, the reliability and validity of the sample are achieved.

Qualitative and scientific methodology was used in the research, including the analysis, synthesis, deduction, generalisation, description, classification, comparative method, case study method and statistical methodology. Professional and scientific literature were used as sources in the preparation of the paper, as well as network sources.

4. Results

To provide a comprehensive insight into hotel offers, each hotel's websites were analysed to detect the wine-related contents and services which form part of the hotel offer. Regarding the uniqueness of the research, a modified scale was formed to evaluate the quality elements, according to [49]. The research results are presented below.

In Table 1, answers are coordinated in that number 1 represents the answer "yes", and number 0 the answer "no". According to the conducted research on the sample of twenty wine hotels, the following statistical data is obtained, presented through the rank of the most frequently designed and applied services. Table 2 presents the ranking and the specific services that impact the formation of experiences based on intangible heritage and culture.

Table 1. Analysis of hotel offer with the accent on oenology.

HOTEL	Themed Rooms	Wine Tasting	Guided Story-telling Tours	Wine Spa Treatments	Guest-Experience Co-Creator	Package Arrangement	No. of Specific Products
Vinotel Gospoja—CRO ¹	1	0	0	1	0	0	2
Meneghetti Wine Hotel—CRO ²	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
Cattunar Wine Residence—CRO ³	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Pachecha The Wine House Hotel—PT ⁴	1	1	1	1	1	1	6
Monverde Wine Experience Hotel—PT ⁵	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Hotel Marques de Riscal—SP ⁶	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
Torre de Palma Wine Hotel—PT ⁷	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Palás Cerequio—Barolo Cru Resort—IT ⁸	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Herdade de Malhadinha Nova—PT ⁹	0	1	1	1	1	1	5

Table 1. Cont.

HOTEL	Themed Rooms	Wine Tasting	Guided Storytelling Tours	Wine Spa Treatments	Guest-Experience Co-Creator	Package Arrangement	No. of Specific Products
Château Franc Mayne—FR ¹⁰	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Château Lafaurie-Peyrague—FR ¹¹	0	1	1	0	0	1	3
Pałac Mierzęcin Wellness & Wine Resort—PL ¹²	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
Rosewood Castiglion del Bosco—IT ¹³	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
L'AND Vineyards—PT ¹⁴	0	1	1	1	1	0	4
The Marlborough—NZ ¹⁵	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Abadía Retuerta—SP ¹⁶	0	1	1	1	1	1	5
Monaci delle Terre Nere—IT ¹⁷	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Schloss Plars—IT ¹⁸	0	1	1	0	1	0	3
Cava & Hotel Mastinell—SP ¹⁹	0	1	1	1	0	1	4
The Yeatman Hotel—PT ²⁰	1	1	1	1	0	1	5
Total	3	18	19	12	9	11	
%	15	90	95	60	45	55	
STDEV	0.3746	0.2294	0.2236	0.4956	0.5130	0.5073	
VAR	0.1330	0.0499	0.0475	0.2327	0.2493	0.2438	

Source: Authors' research.

Table 2. Ranking of the organisation and application of specific services in wine hotels.

Rank	N	%	Specific Services in Wine Hotels
1	19	95	Guided storytelling tours
2	18	90	Wine tasting
3	12	65	Wine spa treatments
4	11	55	Package arrangements (wine tasting, lectures, gifts (i.e., books), exhibitions)
5	9	45	Guest—experience co-creator
6	3	15	Themed rooms

Source: Authors' research.

The most frequent services with a wine theme are wine tasting and tours. Namely, 19 hotels have these services in their offer, i.e., 95% of them. The next most frequent service is wine/grape-based spa treatments, i.e., vinotherapy in 65% of the hotels. Package arrangements are conceived and created by 60% of the hotels. In 45% of the hotels, guests can take an active part in creating a wine experience. The least represented way of presentation of the wine offer is themed rooms, in only 15% of the hotels. This is a surprising result given the positioning strategy as wine hotels and considering the potential market com-

petitiveness of thematisation and specialisation. Equally, with regard to the valorisation of the co-creation as a related global SDG goal of sustainable development and inclusion in authentic values, the low indicator of special programme designs, where guests are co-creators of the experience, is the subject of additional consideration. Given the predicted value of 50%, the two parameters were tested using the chi-square test to detect probability and reliability. The results are presented in Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3. Intensity of the implementation of themed rooms in themed wine hotels.

	Evaluate Presence—%	Evaluate Non-Presence—%	Marginal Row Totals
Obtained frequency	15.00	85.00	100
Expected frequency	50.00	50.00	100
Marginal Column Totals	65.00	135.00	200 (Grand Total)
Chi-square test: 49	Degrees of Freedom: 1		p-value: 0

Source: Authors' research.

Table 4. Intensity of the implementation of co-creation in themed wine hotels.

	Evaluate Presence—%	Evaluate Non-Presence—%	Marginal Row Totals
Obtained frequency	45.00	55.00	100
Expected frequency	50.00	50.00	100
Marginal Column Totals	95.00	105.00	200 (Grand Total)
Chi-square test: 1	Degrees of Freedom: 1		p-value: 0.31731051

Source: Authors' research.

Should we look at the level of significance in the research question: Frequency and intensity of the implementation of themed content in hotel rooms of themed hotels, we can note that the chi-square test value indicates a statistically significant difference in relation to the expected value. The second evaluation of frequency and intensity of co-creation in themed wine hotels does not present a weaker statistically significant difference.

5. Discussion

In consideration of the problem question Q1: "Is the shift in themed hotel design creativity recognised as a competitiveness factor?" a negative answer is presented when it comes to the affirmation of creativity in hotel room design and implemented co-creation experiences. This also indicates that there is room for further study, valorisation and education.

Furthermore, based on a comparative analysis of selected hotels' hotel offers, it can be concluded that, according to the set criteria, the hotels *Pachecha The Wine House Hotel*, *Monverde Wine Experience Hotel*, *Torre de Palma Wine Hotel*, *Herdade de Malhadinha*, *Rosewood Castiglioni del Bosco* and *Abadía Retuerta* lead, among others. Namely, in the research relating to hotel offers with an accent on oenology, they are the only hotels offering a rich and versatile range of experiences which includes creative tourism and guests' active participation in experience provision. Among the observed hotels, *Pachecha The Wine House Hotel* distinguishes itself by accommodation units in the shape of wine barrels, providing a special stay experience. Apart from the mentioned hotel, only *Vinotel Gospoja* and *The Yeatman Hotel* offer themed rooms, while other hotels' rooms are characterised by top and sophisticated design which respects and nurtures wine tradition and typical elements

through the choice of colours and finishing and furnishing materials. Within their offer, all the hotels have a wine tasting and guided tour; this data was not found on the official website, only for *Vinotel Gospoja*. As it, however, concerns a wine hotel, we can presume that wine tasting and tours are an integral part of the stay at the hotel. More than half of the hotels have grape and wine-based treatments in their offer, which points to the possibility of linking the wellness segment and wine. Package arrangements are used to attract a desired segment through an optimal combination of services and experiences.

From those above, we can distinguish the answer to the problem question Q2: “What specific wine tourism products affect the development of wine hotel competitiveness?”

The research identifies specific products that are integral to wine hotels’ hotel offers and differ in relation to offers in traditional, standardised hotels. Products that are divided into categories for diversification can be observed in Figure 1. The products are intercorrelated and are affirmed as the key offer in wine hotels, which facilitates the creation of the experience mosaic. In relation to the identified criteria, they are differentiated into six fundamental categories, illustrated in the model of competitiveness below.

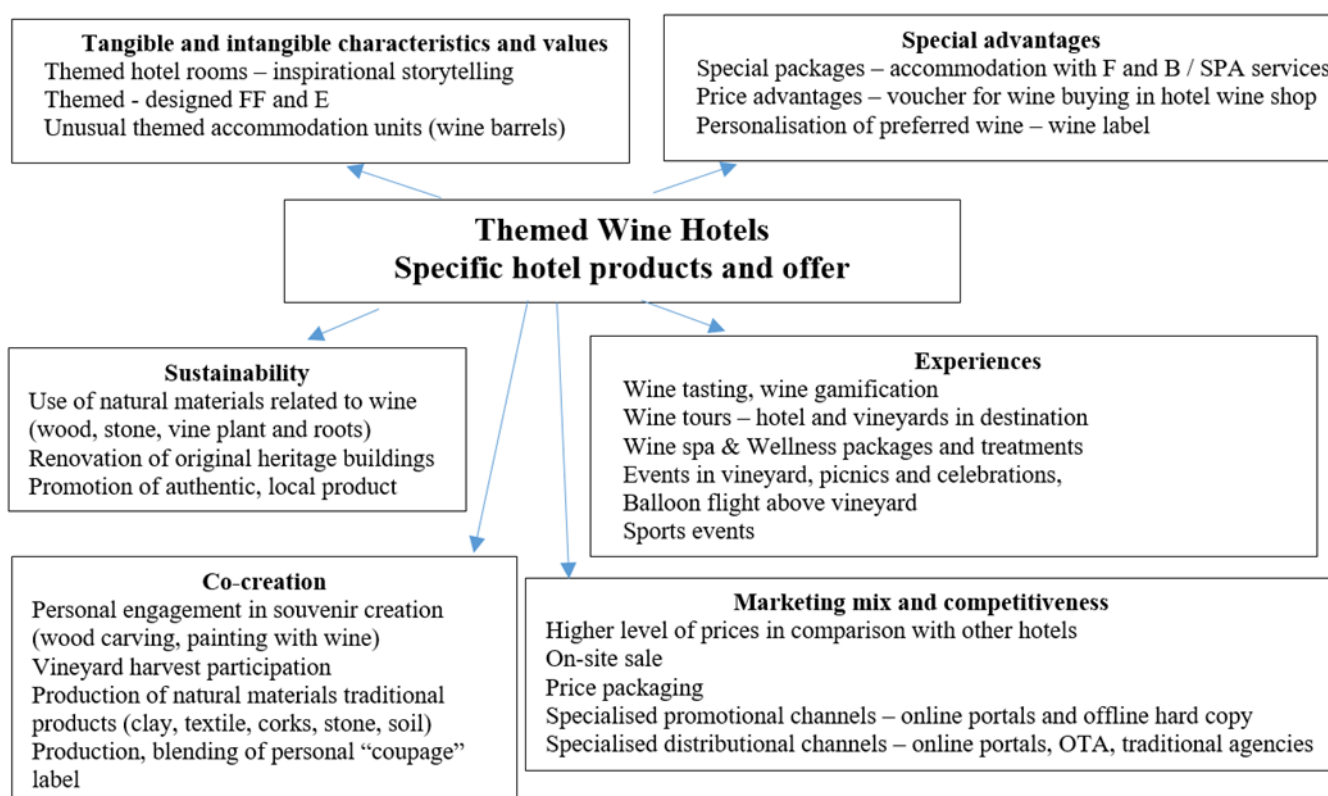


Figure 1. Model of competitiveness—Specific products as part of hotel offers in wine hotels. Source: Authors’ research.

The contribution of the research is reflected in the detection of possible failure and the development potential of the offer of wine hotels, which can be applied in their themed offer. The research points to the possibility of innovatively presenting integral thematic wine content by enriching the hotel’s offer. Through comparative analysis, specific products and services that could be designed for distinction in the market with an emphasis on oenology were determined.

The presented categories represent a proposal for a new classification of competitive advantage elements of wine hotels:

1. Tangible and intangible characteristics and values
2. Sustainability

3. Co-creation
4. Experiences
5. Special advantages
6. Marketing mix and positioning

The third problem question is related to the frequency of implementation and exploration of use potentials. Q3: What is the potential of implementation of various specific hotel services identified for the valorization of intangible heritage in hotel offers? Furthermore, can specific hotel services influence the affirmation of intangible cultural heritage? Considering the data in Tables 1 and 2 and taking into account services and experiences that directly impact intangible heritage, a paradox in the implementation in practice is evident. Namely, traditional guided storytelling tours are offered by 95% of the surveyed hotels, while significantly fewer hotels offer innovative programs that affirm intangible heritage aspects through experience economy. For example, only 15% of hotels organize themed interior design, and 45% create an oenology cultural experience system. Slightly more, 55% of hotels form integral packages of thematic services oriented to wine tourism, which include lectures, exhibitions, artistic expression, creation of olfactory experience, and similar. The findings indicate the new questions related to the research on the influence of intangible cultural heritage on hotel attractiveness and competitiveness. The topic should be elaborated on in future research.

Through the three problem questions, the paper explores the topics of competitiveness of wine hotels based on the valorization of intangible cultural heritage. Firstly, the positions of the extent to which wine hotels implement creativity and design in the formation of thematic hotel offers are explored. Numerous authors [19,22,28,37] point out that the influence of the design on the tourism experience is significant. From themed wine routes to themed accommodation facilities, the design affects the sensory experience [50,51], especially if they are immersed in an authentic landscape. The second problem question was focused on analyzing the diversity of specific products and services of wine hotels through various aspects researched by [38,43,52]. Their identification and grouping according to different criteria is a roadmap to achieve full affirmation, attractiveness and competitiveness. Finally, specific aspects of intangible cultural heritage in the context of organized hotel offer valorization are explored. When analyzing the theory where [6,7,9,15] elaborate on various aspects, including storytelling, co-creation and personal participation, and the results indicate the implementation gap.

6. Conclusions

The specialisation of hospitality in the market contrasts with standardised and uniform hotel products by focusing on market segments. Thematised hotels are a tourist attraction due to their specially designed interior or exterior or due to facility conversion. The important precondition of thematised hotels is that the theme is in synergy with the destination and provides themed experiences through themed products, design and content. An example of themed hotels is wine hotels. They base their offer on the presentation of the wine culture, wine tasting, guided tours and walks through nearby vineyards, by which they link the hotel offer, affirming it through the prism of authenticity. Numerous creative programmes and initiatives are, however, still at their conceptual and developmental beginning. Certain hotels develop creative content with an accent on oenology, for example, through holistic spa wine treatments and packages of different products and services; they, however, still do not realise their full potential of implementation and competitiveness. Creativity, as the characteristic of anthropogenic creation from an individualised, personalised sphere, transcends into the domain of commercialisation, but with respect to the concept of sustainability and social responsibility.

Wine hotels could affirm both the intangible and tangible heritage via the sustainable, innovative and smart organisation of offers. They can be valorised in authentic but restored buildings; typical wine elements can be used to arrange common spaces, such as restaurants,

spas and meeting rooms as well as hotel rooms. On the other hand, they can be a modern design with high-tech solutions but still promote intangible heritage values.

From the case study, wine offers were encompassed in selected wine hotels. Wine hotel offers are affirmed through themed rooms, wine tasting, tours, wine spa treatments and innovative experience palettes. The following conclusions and recommendations are distinguished:

- affirmation of social, intangible values, local tradition and authenticity contribute to socially responsible business activity and profiles the hotel as a company that operates on the principles and values of socio-cultural sustainability;
- themed hotel promotion should be affirmed through both specialised portals, consortia, and associations and SEM and SEO tools for online promotion of certain hotels;
- hotel companies can achieve competitive advantage by the organisation of specific hotel offers (tourism animation, co-creation, storytelling, gamification) themed on wine tourism in the oenology culture authenticity regions;
- hotel design arrangement, specific products and co-creation affect the perception of new experiences, which, in the system of economy of experience, represents added value to tourist stays.

In conclusion, specialised hotels build on specialised offers that are intended for a special market segment. Only a personalised, innovative offer brimming with experiences will enable competitiveness in the increasingly dynamic market. Oenology has a rich range of possibilities to create and enrich the destination tourist offer. As opposed to exclusively bathing tourism in the Mediterranean basin countries (primarily in Croatia), oenology can be a basis for developing tourism to reduce seasonality, as it does not depend on the sun and the sea. Thematised accommodation facilities added value in creating a wine experience, and, moreover, the identified aspects, which represent an additional contribution to this paper, simultaneously represent a platform for future research. In addition, the importance of online hotel promotion is recognised on a fragmented individual basis, where optimisation and presence in searches by keywords is an important factor. In this research, one of the main limitations was also found. Hotels' websites are the key communication interfaces for realising the most favourable conversions; therefore, the recommendation is recognised for future research and implementation of improvements and innovations.

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Notes

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