


DOI: [10.22616/REEP.2023.16.004](https://doi.org/10.22616/REEP.2023.16.004)

The Role and Importance of Viticulture-winemaking in Agritourism Activity (On the Example of Guria Region)

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Abstract: The article presents the history, existing condition and development trends of viticulture-winemaking in the Guria region. Winemaking is one of the directions of agritourism, which includes the following services: accommodating and feeding visitors in farmer's house, working in the vineyard, learning winemaking technology and participation in it, wine tasting. The diversity of the tour depends on the enthusiasm and capabilities of the farmer. Presented materials are based on the results of our research conducted in 2021. During the research, 12 winegrowers and one potter were identified in all three municipalities of Guria, who are engaged not only in wine production and pitcher making, but in agritourism activities as well. The aim of the research was to get to know the activities of local farmers, to identify problems and to determine the ways of their regulation. Relevant recommendations have been elaborated, which serve the development of the field, the growth of the farm's expansion possibilities, the creation of new tourist routes and refinement and perfection of the service quality. As a result of all this, the level of migration will decrease, the local population will be employed, and their social and economic situation will be improved. In the end, all these benefits will have a positive effect on the economic development of the region.

Keywords: agritourism, viticulture, winemaking, wine road, history of Chkhaveri

Introduction

In Georgia, over time, viticulture was developed, new varieties have appeared, and different winemaking methods were created. Over the centuries, the winemaking styles of Kakheti, Kartli, Imereti and other regions of Georgia were formed. In this respect, among the regions of Georgia, we should highlight Guria, located in western Georgia, on the Black Sea shore, where diverse types of farming, including viticulture, are spread. The technology of viticulture and winemaking itself, here were formed over centuries; nowadays, it is the regional originality and distinctiveness that has become the main feature that visitors are interested in.

Important works dedicated to agritourism are written by foreign scientists: S. Blanco, B. Bosk, A. Brochado, J. Karlsen, S. Filopoulos, J. Fountain, S. Charter, O. Guzel, A. Mathieson, F. Potevin, V. Santos, D. Senese, M. Tafel, and by others. Among the Georgian authors, the works of E. Kharashvili, M. Metreveli, L. Qorghanashvili, I. Shalamberidze, G. Shanidze, L. Khartishvili, Ts. Tsetskhladze, N. Khakhubia, G. Sekhniashvili, M. Diasamidze, A. Devadze, Z. Mikashavidze, P. Chaganava, M. Gogelia and others should be noted.

However, the potential of tourism at the level of regions, especially in the direction of agritourism, is still less examined. The development of "wine tours" is especially promising for Georgia and exactly this reality has determined the goal of the paper to reveal the potential of wine tourism and the prospects of its development in Georgia, namely, in one of its regions - Guria, taking into account the experience of advanced touristic countries of the world.

Methodology

In the paper, based on the conceptual analysis of foreign and Georgian literature, we used the qualitative research method - documentary analysis. We carried out a synthetic analysis of the results obtained. We also used systematic approaches and comparative analysis. To obtain data, we conducted a survey. We have chosen this method of survey because there are no statistical data on tourism and agritourism in the Guria region.

Local farmers and winemakers participated in the survey, and it was revealed that most of them are involved in agritourism activities as well. A total of 12 wine-producing entrepreneur-farmers were identified. Of these, 7 in Ozurgeti municipality, 4 in Chokhatauri, 1 in Lanchkhuti. In the research process, scientific works of Georgian and foreign researcher-scientists, proceedings of scientific-practical conferences, data of the National Statistics Office of Georgia and the Georgian National Tourism Administration were used. Also, the data of the tourism administrations of Ozurgeti, Chokhatauri and Lanchkhuti municipalities of the Guria region were collected and analysed.

Results and Discussion

1. History of winemaking in Georgia

In Georgia, there has been a continuous tradition of viticulture and winemaking for millennia. It is the oldest wine center in the world. Georgia was also called the country of 8,000 vintages, because the oldest traces of cultivated vines in the world have been found here. Several decades ago, in Kvemo Kartli, to the south of Tbilisi, in the Marneuli valley, in the ruined house of the Dangreuli Gora, archaeologists found several grape-stones of the 6th-millennium (B.C.) vine and based on morphological and ampelographic features, they were attributed to the cultivated species of the vine, *Vitis Vinifera Sativa*.

Today, more than 530 varieties are known in Georgia. About 440 varieties among them, have survived to this day, gathered in collection plots, the rest are in the process of seeking out. Kakheti region is the most distinguished by the diversity of varieties, with 80 varieties confirmed. 75 varieties have been confirmed in Imereti, 72 in Kartli, 60 in Samegrelo, 58 in Abkhazia, 53 in Guria, 52 in Adjara, 50 in Racha-Lechkhumi (Kharbedia, 2017).

Besides, from ancient times, in Georgia, the attention was paid to the making of wine vessels as well. The prototype vessel of the pitcher was created as early as the Neolithic Age. On the ancient clayware, which was found on the territory of Georgia - on the Great Hill of Khrami and belongs to the VI-V millennia, bunches of grapes are depicted. A number of early Bronze and middle Bronze Age pitchers have been found on the territory of our country.

Pitcher wine may be considered as the phenomenon of Georgian and world wine culture, which is the most archaic and rooted in the depths of centuries. Traditional Georgian pitcher wine technology has no analogues in the world today. The main advantage of the pitcher is that the wine storage temperature in the pitcher buried into the ground is almost unchanged throughout winter and summer. It is an excellent vessel for storing a wine, besides, it also participates in the technological process of wine. The fact that the wine during the storage period, before the first extraction, does not suffer from the negative influence of grape-stones, main stalk of bunch of grapes and *chacha* (*here: grape residue left after making wine*), and on the contrary, all of the three has a very positive effect, is conditioned by the conical shape of the pitcher. Grape-stones, main stalk of bunch of grapes and *chacha* are sunk, covered by sediment and wine and remain so for months, resulting in a wine rich in tannins, with a high shelf life.

Nowadays, pitchers are made in only a few villages of Georgia. In Kakheti, the village Vardisubani is famous to produce pitchers. In Zemo Imereti these are the villages of Kharagauli district - Makatubani and Shrosha, as well as Tqemlovana village of Chiaturi district, Atsana village in Guria. Over the centuries, pitchers from Racha-Lechkhumi, Kartli, Samegrelo, Samtskhe-Javakheti and other areas were also famous (Kharbedia, 2017).

All this was facilitated by the rich traditions of winemaking and the diversity of local grape varieties. In this regard, Guria is a very interesting region, because 58 local varieties of vines are spread here, among which, one variety - *Kordzala* is recognized as common variety of Guria and Adjara. Twenty among the listed varieties (*Atinauri, Chachietis Tetra, Chkhinkilouri, Dondgho, Kaknatela, Kakutura, Kamuri Tetri, Kapistoni Tsitsiliani, Katuri, Keshelavas Tetri, Khushia Tetri, Maisa, Mauri Tetri, Sakmiela, Saknatura, Samarkhi, Tetri Qurdzeni, Tkvlapa, Vatsitsvera, and Zenaturi*) are white grape varieties; 34 varieties (*Akido, Aladsturi, Bakhvis Qurdzeni, Berdzula, Chepeshi, Chkhaveri, Chumuta, Jani, Jani Nakashidzis, Jani Tsikhuri, Kamuri Shavi, Khemkhu, Khushia Shavi, Kikacha Shavi, Kordzala, Kotskhana, Kumusha, Maganakuri, Makhaturi, Mandikouri, Mtevandidi, Mtredispekha, Mtsvivani Guruli, Nasheneba, Ojaleshi Guriis, Opoura, Rtskhili, Samchkhavera, Saperavi Guriis, Shavchkhavera,*

Skhilatubani, Tsanapita, Tsivchkhavera, and Vorona) are red grape varieties; 3 (*Badagi, Tsitlani, and Tsivchkhavera Vardisperi*) are pink and 1 - *Tsisperula* is of gray colouring (Barisashvili, 2016).

Such a diversity of grape varieties indicates that in the recent past, viticulture and winemaking were strongly rooted in Guria (Barisashvili, 2016). Climatic and natural conditions also contribute to the development of viticulture. Guria is open from the side of the Black Sea and the Rion lowland and is influenced by the Black Sea, which is why the climate is favourable for the development of grape culture. Due to favourable natural conditions, viticulture is well developed in Chokhatauri district, the area of vineyards in other districts - Ozurgeti and Lanchkhuti is relatively small.

Chokhatauri municipality's vineyards are in the valleys of rivers - Supsa, Gubazouli and Khevistsqali. In the villages located on the right side of the Supsa river, there is *the viticulture zone of Dabaltsikhe village*, where favourable natural conditions make possible to produce high-quality table wines. In the same valley *the viticulture zone of Yanoul-Berezhouli* is important as well. Quality products can be produced in the villages located on both sides of Gubazouli river, up to the village of Kheva, above which the spread of vineyards is limited, because the grapes do not have enough time for ripening due to the lack of the sum of active temperatures.

Through the Guria-Imereti border passes the Khevistsqali river, which enters the Chokhatauri district. On the left side of this river, *the Kokhmar-Sachamiaseri zone* is important in terms of winemaking. The possibility of obtaining high-quality products in this zone is conditioned by the existence of humus-carbonate soils developed on marls (*an unconsolidated sedimentary rock or soil consisting of clay and lime, formerly used as fertilizer*), relatively less humidity due to the distance from the sea, and favourable conditions for the sum of active temperatures. In this district, Imeretian grape variety – *Tsolikouri* is the leading one, which has earned the fair sympathy of the population due to a number of positive qualities. From the Imeretian varieties, *Tsitska, Dzvelshavi* and *Mgaloblishvili* are also spread here on a small scale. In the district, local vine varieties are represented with one or two rootstocks. We think that it is an urgent task to study them and identify the best ones, which will expand the resources of quality wine production.

Ozurgeti municipality has mainly three zones in terms of viticulture-winemaking: *lowland, which is surrounded by low valleys of rivers and the Black Sea coastline; mountainside zone, which is mainly located on the slopes of valleys, and high mountain zone, which is adjoined to the Guria-Adjara Mountain range.*

In terms of winemaking, here, the mountainside zone of the valleys of the district is noteworthy. In this regard, *the valleys of Supsa, Bakhvistsqali and Natanebi* are important.

On the left side of the Supsa river valley, vineyards are planted in the form of low-trained vine, in the villages of Nagomari-Shroma zone: *Nagomari, Akhalsopeli, Baileti, Gurianta, Meria, Kakhuri, Konchkati, Zedobani, Shroma, Vake, Tkhinvali, Khrialeti, and Ompareti*. On the right side of the valley, the micro-districts of *Dzimiti, Silauri and Jumati* are noteworthy.

The valley of river Bakhvistsqali in Ozurgeti municipality is the most quality zone in terms of winemaking, the Askana-Bakhvi zone with villages: *Askana, Vaniskedi, Mtispiri, Zemo Bakhvi, Kvemo Bakhvi, Pampaleti and Nasakirali* is important here. The micro-districts of *Askana, Bakhvi and Nasakirali* are particularly distinguished by their high quality of wine. The high quality of wine in this area is conditioned by the sufficient amount of carbonates contained in the soil, the slope of the vineyards towards the south, the favourability of the sum of active temperatures. Precipitation is excessive, but as long as the vineyards are planted on the slope, it does not have an adverse effect on the production.

In the valleys of the Natanebi and Bzhuzhistsqali rivers, vineyards can be found in the following villages: *Vakijvari, Bagdadi, Tskhemliskhidi, Uchkhubi, Dvabzu, Natanebi, Gomi, Shemokmedi, Makvaneti, Likhauri, Chanieti* and others. Here stands out the viticulture zone of Baghdadi, where sufficiently high-quality wine is made from *Tsolikouri*.



Figure 1. Georgia, Guria region (Guria, 2023)

It should be noted that varieties of the local vine spread in the region are less examined, if we do not consider the fact that in the village of Bakhvi, 14 hectares of Chkhaveri plantations are cultivated, from which they make original, semi-sweet wine *Georgian Wine Chkhaveri*, which has obtained sufficiently high sympathy by consumers due to its originality.

Lanchkhuti municipality has vineyards, which are mainly spread on the northern and southern slopes of the Guria's mountain range, in the mountainside lane. Here, the vineyards located on the southern slopes are located on the right side of the Supsa river and follow the mountainside zone, where vineyards are found in the villages: *Chanchati, Kvemo Aketi and Zemo Aketi, Atsana, Mamati and Gaguri*.

In the northern part of the mountain range, in Lanchkhuti, there are massifs of vineyards above the railway track in the following villages of the Nigoiti-Shukhuti and Chibati-Chochkhati zones: *Kviani, Chqonagora, Cholobargi, Nigoiti, Shukhuti, Lashisghele, Lanchkhuti, Machkhvareti, Gvimbauri, Zemo Chibati and Kvemo Chibati, Lesa, Ninoshvili, Nigvziani, Tabanati, Khoreti, Tsiteliubani, Guliani* and others.

The Black Sea has a great influence on this zone, atmospheric precipitation is large; Due to favourable natural conditions, table wines for mass consumption are made. But there are some villages where quite high-quality wines are produced. Such villages are: *Chqonagora, Cholobargi, Nigoiti, Zemo Shukhuti, Shromis Ubani, Moedani, Khoreti, Tsiteliubani* and *Guliani*.

In general, Gurians divide the vineyard and grape varieties into three categories:

1. *Chkhaveri* grape vineyard, the harvest of which is usually quickly sold or reserved for the family and used for making wine in small quantities for religious holidays.
2. *Adesa*, which is used for daily consumption. As a rule, the wine made from Adesa is drunk by family members or relatives. The history of Adesa's spreading begins in the second half of the 19th century, when, in Guria, many varieties of grapes died out due to disease. Then, new grape variety was introduced through the city of Odessa. The vine was named "Adesa". It is well spread in this region.
3. *Tsolikouri* and *Alaska*, the total number of which is certainly small; farmers who make wine from this variety of grapes usually host guests with this wine (Sepiskveradze, 2011).

2. Wine production and Wine Tourism in Georgia

The area of vineyards in Georgia is about 45 thousand hectares, which is much less than 30 years ago (almost 120 thousand ha) and is approximately equal to the index of the 30s of the XX century. Grapes are mainly used for wine production in Georgia. About 150-200 thousand tons of grapes are produced

in Georgia. From this, about 30-40 thousand tons are processed in wine companies, 15 thousand tons is consumed as table grapes, and the rest, more than 100 thousand tons are processed by unregistered private individuals to make "family wines".

The winemaking sector in Georgia is gradually developing and growing both in the local and foreign markets. In recent years, sales of bottled wine within the country have been increasing, on the international market new countries have appeared, where there are good opportunities for export growth (Lazariashvili et al., 2017). The export of Georgian wine is increasing, the positive dynamics is maintained in strategic markets as well, according to the data of the 6 months of 2021 (Figure 2).

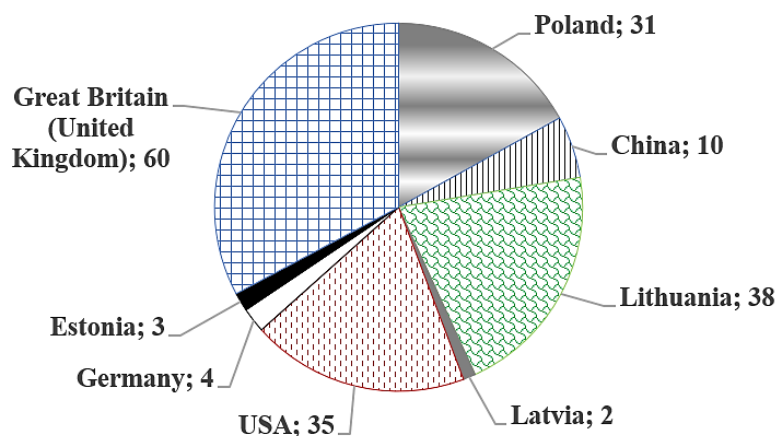


Figure 2. Distribution of Georgian wine exports in 6 months of 2021 (Ghvinis Erovnuli Saagento, 2021)

As can be seen from the diagram, the wine export figures are as follows: Poland – 31 %, China – 10 %, Lithuania – 38 %, Latvia – 2 %, USA – 35 %, Germany – 4 %, Estonia – 3 % and Great Britain – 60 %.

In 6 months of 2021, up to 46.4 million bottles (0.75 l) of wine were exported from Georgia to 56 countries of the world, which is 13 % more than the similar index of 2020. The income from exported wine reaches 104 million US dollars, which is 7 % more than the same data last year. This index also exceeds the data of pre-pandemic period, in 6 months of 2019, 40.5 million bottles of wine worth of 98 million US dollars were exported from Georgia. The export of wine, brandy, *chacha* (here: *grape distillate, or "Georgian Vodka"*), brandy spirit and bottling brand, resulted in earning 170 million USD, which is 13 % more than the figure of the same period last year (Ghvinis Erovnuli Saagento 2021).

For a long time, Georgian winemaking was mainly focused on export. However, over time, Georgian wine producers are becoming well aware of the importance of local market. Within the country, the largest amount of wine is consumed in catering establishments. Unfortunately, the restaurant chain is saturated with low-quality wine. Especially at parties, funeral reception luncheons and weddings, where at 400-500-person tables, often, drinks of unknown origin are consumed. This problem can be solved by supplying high-quality and relatively cheap wine to the market.

Georgian wine has several important preconditions, which can make it interesting for foreign buyers and visitors. First of all, unique local varieties, which promise many innovations to the modern consumer. Second, Georgia rightly earned the title of the homeland of wine. Ancient traces of cultural viticulture and winemaking have been found here. From this follows the third, also important precondition, which implies the traditional Georgian technology, the oldest in the world, fermentation and aging (*the technological process of brand wine processing, starts from the first wine extraction and ends with bottling*) of wine in pitcher (Kharbedia, 2017).

Our region-wide research in 2021 revealed that mainly 53 locals are employed in wine production, and several hundred additional workers are employed by the wine producers during the season (Figure 3).

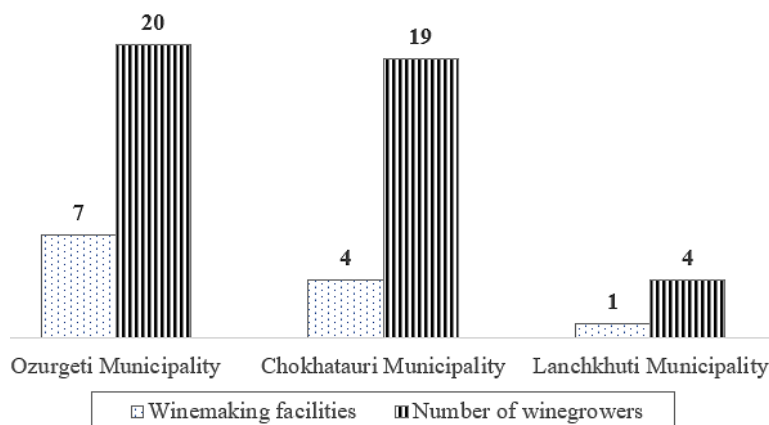


Figure 3. Number of wine enterprises and employees in Municipalities

Among the winemakers of the region, Andro Vashalomidze, Besarion Mzhavanadze, Besik Meparishvili, Davit Kobidze, Davit Khabeishvili, Valerian (Vako) Apkhazava, Zurab Chkhartishvili, Teimuraz Sharashidze, Ilia Chkhartishvili, Inga Dumbadze, Beka Menabde, Rezo Kotrikadze and Bichiko Chkhaidze are particularly noteworthy.

Andro Vashalomidze, individual entrepreneur, the field of activity - winemaking, lives in the village of Shemokmedi, Ozurgeti municipality. He has a small collection plot of old Gurian vines, where the following varieties are presented: *Chkhaveri*, *Mtevandidi*, *Jani*, *Sakmiela*, *Atinauri*, *Badagi*, *Aladasturi*, *Skhilatubani*, *Chumuta*, *Mtredispekha*, *Makhaturi*, *White and Black Kamuris*, and others. Nearby, a tasting corner is set up for guests, where visitors are told the history of Georgian vines and Gurian grape varieties. Visitors participate in the vintage; they are introduced to the winemaking technology.

In 2021, from one ton of grapes of the first plot 8,000 liters of wine were obtained. 6-7 tons from the second plot. They sell wine in the local market and have a chain of stores in Tbilisi. In the future, they are planning to set up a winery. In addition, Andro Vashalomidze is involved in the research of old Gurian grape varieties. He has already found 25 varieties of vines.

Besarion Mzhavanadze lives in Likhauri village, Ozurgeti municipality. He has a diverse farm: involving eleven species of old Gurian vines and thirty-two species of varieties common in different regions of Georgia. He also grows watermelon. He has a garden of citrus: lemon, mandarin, also a nut farm. He has set up a bamboo alley, which, in addition to being a good shade and aesthetically pleasing, it is also used as a material in shipbuilding and aircraft construction.

In addition, Besarion Mzhavanadze grows sunflower, feijoa, cucumber, tomato, potato, strawberry, and raspberry. He has a flower farm as well, with approximately 40-45 varieties. He shows the tourists and informs them about his agriculture. Visitors can enjoy natural products grown by him in his yard. He gives them possibility to prepare food themselves and engage in agricultural work.

Besik Meparishvili lives in Chokhatauri Municipality, in Zemo Partskhma village. In a small farm, he has grown *Chkhaveri*, *Tsolikouri*, *Aladasturi*, *Sakmiela* and different types of Gurian vine varieties. He has set up a family hotel and a winery. He offers visitors accommodation, meals, farm work, winery tour and wine tasting. In addition, he offers tours to interesting places in Chokhatauri municipality (tour to Bakhmaro, sightseeing of other interesting places and the like). Mostly, visitors are from Italy, America, Canada, Israel, locals - mainly from Tbilisi and Batumi. He plans to improve infrastructure and to expand buildings. He also wants to engage in the "Wine Road" project.

Davit Kobidze, individual entrepreneur, lives in Chokhatauri municipality, in the village of Erketi. Pursues winemaking. *Vineyard and winery of Kobidzes* is already 150 years old – here endemic old Gurian varieties of grapes has been sought out and life has been brought back to the collection plot. In 2014, winery of Kobidzes was renovated. In 2021, near the winery, a small building was built, in which, juice of pressed grape goes into pitchers with self-flow. The *winery of Kobidzes* currently produces 6 species of wine: *Chkhaveri* - white dry; *Chkhaveri* - pink dry; *Jani* - *Skhilatubani* - red dry; *Aladasturi* - red dry; *Sakmiela* – *Kamuri* - white dry; *Tsolikouri* - white dry.

In addition to wine, Davit Kobidze offers tourists to get to know the local cuisine and taste traditional dishes. Also, to learn the history of old varieties of Georgian wine and Gurian vine, to participate in vintage and wine tasting. He plans to engage visitors in wine tour and to set up family hotel.

Davit Khabeishvili lives in Chokhatauri municipality, in Dabaltsikhe village. He has a *Topuridze Winery*, where tourists can get to know the history of grapes and wine, wine making technology and to taste wine. Davit Khabeishvili has a restaurant where tourists are offered Gurian dishes. There is also a winery, which consists of several parts. In the main winery, thirteen pitchers, a cellar and stainless cisterns are located. In the small winery, there are seven small pitchers. There is a tasting corner near the winery. There are terraces in the yard, on which vines of the *Chkhaveri* variety are planted. In the farm, there are also represented Gurian vine varieties: *Chkhaveri*, *Kamuri*, *Tsolikouri*, and *Ojaleshi*. The French, Japanese, Italians, British, Canadians, Germans, among others, visit the winery every year. Also, people from Austria and Switzerland have been here.

Davit sells wine only in his own restaurant and winery. He also receives orders from various countries. During the year, about 300-300 bottles of wine of different brands are sent to Germany, Italy, France, Austria, and Great Britain. As Davit notes himself, in one of the best German laboratories in the world - "Eurofins", when testing several Georgian wine samples with microgram/kilogram accuracy (PPB) for more than 650 known poison-chemicals, as expected, in his natural wines, made with grapes of organic vineyards, have been found significantly less or no pesticides compared to the industrial ("factory") wines. The entrepreneur plans to expand the farm. His goal is to revive and develop the ancient traditions of making wine in pitcher, to produce natural wines made from unique local grapes and to gain a leadership position in this direction.

Valerian (Vako) Apkhazava lives in the Archeuli village of Nigvziani Community, Lanchkhuti Municipality. He pursues winemaking and viticulture. The wine enterprise *Co-operative "Archeuli 1920"* founded by him, produces various species of wine: *Chkhaveri*, *Tsolikouri*, *Aladasturi*, and *Saperavi*. The grapes obtained in the farm are not enough, so they buy additional ones from neighbouring winegrowers. He has a winery, where tourists and vacationers are welcomed and offered tasting as well.

Zurab Chkhartishvili lives in Mtispiri village, Ozurgeti municipality. He pursues viticulture and winemaking. He has planted *Chkhaveri Great Vineries - "Okroskedi Vineyards"*, under the municipal tourism project *History of Chkhaveri*. He offers tourists both an *agritour* and an Eco tour, visiting great vineries, getting to know the history of Georgian vines, observing the work process in the farm, tasting, and buying the wine, accommodation and meals in a family hotel. Also, they are offered tours, which include seeing and getting to know the history of Tamari Castle, tours to Bakhmaro, Gomismta and Ureki. Visitors mostly come from Italy, France, Russia and other countries. According to Zurab Chkhartishvili, Pelamushi (grape porridge) made with Chkhaveri juice earned special admiration among tourists.

Teimuraz Sharashidze is an individual entrepreneur, winemaker, and beekeeper. He lives in Chokhatauri municipality, in the village of Bukistsikhe. He has its own farm and winery and produces different species of wine: *Chkhaveri*, *Jani*, *Mtevandidi*, *Ojaleshi* and *Tsolikouri*. Besides, he has bee colonies (hives) and sells honey. Tourists are offered by him an accommodation, as well as food and tasting wine and honey. A winery decorated with traditional elements has been set up for them. There is a tasting and ethnographic corner with many interesting objects - traditional Georgian drinking vessels, working tools and so forth.

Ilia Chkhartishvili lives in Shemokmedi village of Ozurgeti municipality. Ilia Has a winery called *Ilia's Winery*. He is involved in the municipal tourism project *History of Chkhaveri*. The winery has a tasting corner and a café. During the year, he produces half a ton of grapes, and he plans to expand the farm and work in the direction of agritourism in the future.

Inga Dumbadze lives in Baghdati village of Ozurgeti municipality. She is engaged in the municipal tourism project *History of Chkhaveri*. Tourists are offered the services of the family hotel *Inga's Garden*, which can accommodate ten people at once. The service includes tasting natural village products, visiting the winery, and tasting wine, working in the farm and garden. Also, visitors are offered a tour, which includes getting to know the history of historical and modern Guria, wine road, Chkhaveri and tasting wine, combining wine tour and gastronomy. Nearby, there is the village of Satavado, with a

historical family house of Niko Mamasakhlisi, which can be visited and viewed by tourists. Visitors are mostly Germans, Italians, The French, Russians, among others.

Beka Menabde lives in Shemokmedi village of Ozurgeti municipality. He has a winery named *Menabde Winery* and he is engaged in the municipal tourism project *History of Chkhaveri*. Beka has Chkhaveri bio farming. In addition to the winery, it combines a vineyard, ethnographic yard, and hotel service. The century-old house has preserved the structure of ancient Gurian *Oda* (a wooden one-story house elevated from the ground and standing on stone walls, also characterized by exterior supporting facilities; more modern versions of the *Oda* are two-storied, and the first floor is used as a basement) - the rooms located around the fireplace built into the central wall are maintained with modern comfort. The hotel receives tourists from all over Georgia in five two-person hotel rooms. Here visitors are introduced to local wine history, traditions, ethnography, cuisine, they are offered wine tasting and tours to Gomismta, Ureki and Shekviteli beaches. Tourists mostly come from Spain, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Poland, Lithuania, Turkey, Tbilisi. Beka Menabde plans to expand the farm, build a hotel on Gomismta resort and organize tours (Sulaberidze et al., 2021).

Rezo Kotrikadze, an individual entrepreneur, lives in Goraberezhouli village of Chokhatauri municipality. He is a winemaker. On one hectare of his property, he has mainly planted *Tsolikouri* vines. Rezo has a winery.

In general, wine storage technology is important in wine production. In this regard, it is worthy also to note **Bichiko Chkhaidzes** pitchers and pottery manufacturing enterprise *Bichikos Pitchers* in Atsana village of Lanchkhuti municipality. It is often visited by visitors who view the object, attend the work process, get to know the technology of pottery - making pitchers and claywares. They buy pottery and pitchers at the place.

3. World Experience of Wine Tourism

Wine tourism should be considered as one of the types of agritourism. Tourists involved in a wine tour go to the vineyard with the farmers. In addition, they learn the technology of wine making, enjoy tasting different wines, get to know the history of wine and the culture of grapes. Farmers, in the case of properly using the above-mentioned possibility, can provide high quality products to visitors. For this, it is necessary to retrain them and to issue the appropriate licenses to improve the quality of service (Sekhniashvili et al., 2020).

Besides, emphasis should be placed on demonstrative and infrastructural measures. The possibility of visiting the ethnographic corner and the wine museum should also be considered, to make the tour more interesting and creative. Therefore, we think about the necessity of creating wine museums too, which we have only in Tbilisi, at this moment. The object of similar type should be in Guria as well, where ancient Gurian wine vessels and pitchers will be presented. It should include an *enoteca* (a local wine shop with a range of high-quality wines), where the old Gurian wine varieties also will be kept.

In addition to the *Chkhaveri History* and *Wine Road* project currently operating in the Guria region, other diverse routes should be elaborated, special events should be planned and arranged. These should include excursions, visits to vineyards and wineries, involvement of tourists in wine production, which will make the tour even more interesting. Tourists will take part not only in vineyard maintenance and vintage, but also in pressing and making the wine. In this regard, foreign experience is interesting. In modern conditions, regional wine tourism is gaining global importance. Discussing this in connection with the specific spatial, historical, and cultural peculiarities of individual places goes beyond the local significance of wine tourism and provides the opportunity to generalize the experience on the whole world scale (Fountain et al., 2020).

Let us briefly survey the experience of some countries.

France. There are approximately 5,000 wineries in France, but only eight regions of the country are officially open for tourists. Although we meet signboard with an inscription *Route du Vin* (Wine Road) at almost every highway, however, this does not necessarily mean that wine tasting is possible everywhere. The vineyards can only be visited from the road and the wine can only be tasted in the restaurant.

Spain. Large Cherez and Rioja wine houses have been welcoming guests from all over the world for a long time. Winemakers invite well-known architects and designers to make the infrastructure as modern and attractive as possible. Such businesses as *Finca Allende* in Rioja, which recently converted a 19th-century tower into a hotel, are mushrooming in Spain. Today, wine tourism in Spain is based on nineteen wine routes. Coordination is carried out by the organization *Acevin*, which is supported by the Spanish Ministry of Tourism and other national organizations.

Italians, unlike the French, meet wine tourists quite cheerfully. Agritourism is common here – which implies a hotel located in the vineyards. In Italy, everything is arranged in such a way that if you have spent several days in this type of hotel, you will not even want to visit other ones, because it offers all activities related to wine tourism. For example, Tuscan wine tours are designed to explore small villages surrounded by olive groves and vineyards. Perceiving the natural environment of the region, getting to know the viticulture activities, observing the process of wine making and tasting play an important role in the development of wine tourism (Senese et al., 2022). Like France and Spain, Italy also belongs to the oldest wine producing countries, where traditional methods of wine production are used. Wine tours are also important in this country (Marco-Lajara et al., 2023).

Canada competes with the above-mentioned countries, which is conditioned by high quality wine production (Okech et al., 2016). In this country, it is very popular to organize wine tasting festivals, which are conducted on international scale. Wine tourism is an integral part of rural development of the country. This helps them not only to improve tourism-related services, but also to raise the standard of living of the local population and the image of the region (Vesela et al., 2015).

German cities of Weimar, Leipzig and Dresden receive many tourists interested in wine. There, in addition to wine tours, beer tours are also popular (Tafel et al., 2020).

In the **United States of America**, like in Latin America, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand, the socio-economic mobility emerging since the 16th century led to the birth of *New World of Wine*. Wine producers expand in consolidated wine consumption markets according to comparative advantage, which is based on experimentation, development, and innovation (García-Rodea et al., 2022).

Portugal attracts tourists with local wine. Local farmers are actively trying to offer tourists different and interesting wine tours. Both in Portugal and Georgia, visitors are interested in tasting local wine and in traditional wine-making technology, so that it should be available for them to buy wine in farms, enterprises, and local shops. In addition, they should have the opportunity to taste the wine at the place, for example, there should be tasting corner in wineries and farms. Tasting involves several processes related to sight and taste, as well as touch or smell (Brochado et al., 2019). In addition to wine tasting, visitors like to participate in entertainment events, to learn about local traditions and cuisine (Colombini et al., 2015). Moreover, it would be beneficial for wine producers to offer additional activities: for example, hiking tracks in the vineyards, and thematic night parties or live music (Gaetjens et al., 2023).

So, the wine tourism sector includes two types of economic activity: combination of different activities related to travel, in which the main motivation is to discover a new world of wine, and activities related to wine in a trip, which has not the wine as the main motivation (Potevin, 2020).

Wine tourism is a *complex phenomenon* and it does not end with visits to wineries, production sites and tasting, and is not related only to forms of rural tourism or agritourism. It includes various components (Guzel et al., 2016). Wine, food, tourism, and art form together the core elements of the wine tourism product and provide the touristic package towards which wine enthusiasts aspire (Carlsen et al., 2004). Especially, tourists want to taste a natural and high-quality product. The word “natural” implies the existence of bio farming.

A farmer engaged in viticulture must realize that the soil is developed, transformed and restored by its own fauna. Any pesticide is prohibited if we want to preserve its biological diversity. Biological viticulture does not directly try nourishing the fruit, but to maintain the fertility of the soil by increasing its biological activity. This is done with the aid of compost or green manure (clover, rye) or mineral fertilizers and no herbicide may be used to clean from parasites the surrounding area of the farm. The grass is either removed by harrowing or mowed.

Besides growing of natural products, farmers should take care to increase popularity of the region, to protect and to preserve natural and cultural values (Mathieson et al., 1982). This can only be achieved when tourism sites are managed responsibly. It can be difficult for businesses to organize and refine wine tours according to the principles of sustainability, therefore, a standard has been developed that aims to help farmers and entrepreneurs to focus on business, to improve their performance, to adapt their business management to environmental, socio-cultural and climate conditions (Sosa, 2022).

At the same time, *wine tours* should cover cultural, ecological, and economic areas. Emphasis should be placed on the wine consumption within the constraints of cultural and social norm. The tour should inspire its participants to lead a healthy lifestyle, in order to prevent and reduce alcohol abuse and related harm (Filopoulos et al., 2019). Besides carrying out the above mentioned measures in agricultural works, it is necessary to connect wine tourism with rural development. In order to get maximal benefit from tourism, it is necessary for the local population to understand and know the importance of agritourism.

Wine tourism brings many benefits to the local economy: job creation, revenue generation, tourist attraction and so forth (McClain, 2022). Therefore, wine companies want to develop organized wine tourism activities should carefully consider whether wine tourism (*enotourism*) is compatible with the organization's culture, values, and strategic goals, and they should determine how it will help them to fulfil their mission (Filopoulos et al., 2019). It is in accordance with the above mentioned viewpoint that they should plan and conduct tours, in order to get desired result for the development and popularisation of regional tourism (Santos et al., 2019).

Conclusions

The information provided by the farmer-winemakers helped us to understand better the current conditions in the Guria region. According to this information, it became obvious that, most of them, consider agritourism as a profitable and interesting activity, and they are involved in the activity more or less. The reason is in existing problems. Some of them are listed below.

- Underdevelopment of local production is a significant loss for farmers, which makes impossible to employ local residents and to offer local products to tourists.
- Managing agritourism and farming is farmer's job, but he does not know how to advertise his business: how to make a booklet, how to place it on the website, how to register on the websites and no one helps him in this.
- For the development of viticulture, it is necessary to have access to innovations in the field, to have new technologies and to achieve perfection of services in the field of agritourism. They are absolutely not trained or informed in this direction.
- Some farmers do not understand that it is necessary to observe agricultural rules – often, with chemical poisons and pesticide sprays, they harm the environment, and the soil becomes less productive for a long time.
- The lack of measures on the part of the state and local self-government for promoting the activities of entrepreneurs and farmers involved in agritourism, is a problem.
- The infrastructure leading to Agro Houses needs to be fixed, roads need to be built.
- Lack of agritourist objects, inaccessibility of financial resources, shortage of selling markets, is obvious.
- Seeking out the old Gurian grape varieties is a difficulty. In this regard, the national center for the production of vine and fruit tree planting material operates in Saguramo - Jighauri village. It was transferred to the Ministry of Agriculture, and on its basis the Agricultural Research Center was created. Thanks to this center, about 41-42 of the 64 types of old Gurian vines have been found, seeking out the remaining 20-21 varieties is still in process. Thus, effective steps are needed in this direction.

This is a small list of the problems, solutions to which, as we consider, are the following.

- The development of *winemaking* at the country level should be considered in close connection with tourism. It is important to involve young people in this direction, which will be useful and beneficial for them, and interesting and attractive for tourists. For this, it is necessary to raise their level of knowledge, they should understand well: “What is needed in the service process? How to satisfy visitors' interests?” and so forth.

- An organization should be created, for example *Agro Houses Union*, where farmers engaged in these activities will meet each other, share each other's experience. Also, they will have an advisor, field specialist, who will give instructions and knowledge, to work better.
- To develop the field, a fund should be created, or a grant should be attracted, which will financially help farmers in conducting their activities. The development of the field is also supported by the fact that there are many sights for tourists within a radius of 50-100 km near any destination in Guria. In particular: sea and mountain climates are combined; the air is clean and the water is delicious; nature is beautiful, there are canyons, sea, mountains, noteworthy and interesting places, diversity of plants, local farming, traditional cuisine, which, we think, should be given the opportunity to develop.
- Besides, financial assistance can be provided to farmers with cheap and accessible agrocredit, state support, tax breaks and incentives for entrepreneurs.
- The rural population should be provided with both - drinking water and household facilities, infrastructure.
- To preserve and protect the natural environment, waste management should be taken into account.
- Farmers should increase determination to make their activities interesting and qualitative for tourists. In this job, the good impression and satisfaction of even one guest means attracting other guests.
- The country's government and local self-government should strive to improve the conditions of entrepreneurs. Entrepreneurship and business development should be really simplified and supported and not only *on paper* - in the form of a document. For this, the local self-government should create special programs for developing the sector at the municipality level.
- Farmers, with the help and support of municipalities, should take care to increase the popularity of the region.

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