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# A glass of wine a day: Daily Wine tours in the Douro Valley

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Dissertation written under the supervision of Doctor Helena Rodrigues

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## **A Glass of wine a day: Daily wine tours in the Douro Valley**

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### **Abstract.**

Wine tourism results from the junction of two sectors, wine, and tourism. Due to the fast-growing of the internet access, tourists are choosing to go online and search for experiences beforehand and use websites such as Tripadvisor and Get Your Guide to evaluate the quality of the offers available. This study identifies the main themes and concepts related to daily wine tours experiences with the main objective of evaluating the Douro region while analyzing daily wine tours and the Food and Beverage Clusters based on reviews shared online by wine tourists.

For that purpose, a qualitative approach is being developed by taking into consideration 641 reviews from ten different daily wine tours in the Douro Valley available on TripAdvisor and Get Your Guide and a conceptual analysis was elaborated using Leximancer Software where the main five themes retrieved from the online reviews were identified: “Wine”, “Tour”, “Guide”, “Trip”, “Lunch”. These themes were then divided into two clusters, Daily tour and Food & Beverages. “Wine” can be interpreted as the most important theme while “Guide” is the most important concept. Overall, there is a positive propensity in rating these experiences, having a low sample of badly rated reviews. However, there should be some improvements regarding the cruises as the results show that they create value but being sometimes “overcrowded” or “boring”.

The goal of this study is to help managers understand the demand side of wine tours by developing a conceptual analysis of the narratives shared online about daily wine tours.

**Keywords:** Wine tourism, Wine experiences, Wine Tours, Online reviews, Douro Region

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### **Resumo**

O enoturismo resulta da junção de dois setores, o vinho e o turismo. Devido ao fácil acesso à Internet, os turistas estão a optar por utilizar a Internet e procurar previamente as experiências em sites como: Tripadvisor e o Get Your Guide para avaliar a qualidade das ofertas disponíveis. Este estudo explora e identifica os principais temas e conceitos relacionados com tours de vinho diários com o objetivo principal de avaliar a região do Douro e ao mesmo tempo analisar os grupos tours diários de vinhos e Comida e Bebidas com base em avaliações partilhadas online por enoturistas.

Para o efeito, vai ser desenvolvida uma abordagem qualitativa tendo em consideração 641 avaliações online de dez tours diferentes no Douro disponíveis nestes sites e uma análise conceptual foi elaborada utilizando o Leximancer onde os cinco temas principais foram identificados: “vinho”, “passeio”, “guia”, “viagem”, “almoço”. Esses temas foram então, divididos em dois grupos, Tours diária e Comidas e Bebidas. “Vinho” pode ser interpretado como o tema mais importante, enquanto “Guia” é o conceito mais importante. No geral, há uma tendência positiva na avaliação destas experiências, tendo uma amostra baixa de avaliações más. No entanto, deve haver algumas melhorias em relação aos passeios de barco, pois os resultados mostram que eles criam valor, mas por vezes são "sobrelotados" ou "aborrecidos".

O objetivo deste estudo é ajudar os gerentes a compreender o lado da procura destas experiências, desenvolvendo uma análise conceitual das narrativas partilhadas online sobre os tours diários.

**Palavras-Chave:** Enoturismo, Experiencias de vinho, Tours de Vinho, Avaliações Online, Região do Douro

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*“A dream doesn’t become reality through magic, it takes sweat, determination and hard work”*

- Colin Powell

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## 1. Introduction

Due to the establishment and an increasing number of cellar doors and new wineries, wine tourism boosted its importance in the tourism industry, followed by investment and further development of this sector (Sanders, 2004). Hall & Mitchell (2000, p.447) describe wine tourism as “*visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting and or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivation for visitors*”. This leads us to understand that wine tourism does not focus only on wine visits but on wine-related experiences and complements such as heritage, education, tastings, hospitality, cellar door sales, tours (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002) and, as very commonly done, paired with food. Wine consumption can be seen as a hedonic activity, with the goal of individual satisfaction and pleasure, whether the consumer is a basic wine drinker or an expert (Bruwer & Alant, 2009), and its image has been shifting from its production value to a more experiential and emotional value (Williams, 2001; Filopoulos & Fritella, 2019).

Portugal is the fifth largest wine producer in the EU (OIV, 2020) and the eleventh worldwide, being the main wine production regions Douro-Porto, Lisboa, and Alentejo. The Portuguese territory has a wide variety of sights, vineyards, and types of wine throughout its area, such as Vinho Verde (Literal translation is “green wine”), that has its origin in Minho, and Port Wines, the most recognized worldwide and the one that counts for the big majority of the national wine exports (Gouveia et al., 2018).

The Demarcated Douro Region is one of the oldest (Lourenço-Gomes et al., 2015), largest and most heterogeneous mountainous wine regions in the world, according to the Centre for the Research, Study, and Advancement of Mountain Viticulture, and is considered a world heritage site by UNESCO, filling three out of the ten criteria:

(iii) - The Alto Douro Region has been producing wine for nearly two thousand years and its landscape has been molded by human activities;

(iv) - The components of the Alto Douro landscape are representative of the full range of activities associated with winemaking - terraces, quintas (wine-producing farm complexes), villages, chapels, and roads;

(v) - the cultural landscape of the Alto Douro is an outstanding example of a traditional European wine-producing region, reflecting the evolution of this human activity over time.

Due to its diversified resources and natural environment, and subsequently, to the North (where the Douro Region is situated), Portugal has been showing an increasing propensity of incoming tourists (Pêra et al., 2017).

Tourism has been hugely impacted and changed by the Internet and technology, with consumers planning their trips in advance online (Choi et al., 2007), and the wine tourists are following the same processes. At first wine tourism was viewed as a secondary activity to wine production but the development of Web 2.0 allowed producers to enter social media and it has been a very important tool for wine tourism marketing because online reviews shared on social media websites such as Tripadvisor and Get Your Guide are considered by Cassar et al. (2018; Filieri et al., 2015) as more trustworthy than other traditional sources and company sites used in the past, and are very useful reference points prior to visitation.

Organized tours can combine several elements in one package such as wine, food, history, landscapes, wine tastings, sightseeing, and more, so it is necessary to evaluate how these complex packaged tours are valued and perceived in a specific wine region such as the Douro Valley as there is little information about this kind of specific daily tours in the region. At the same time, Alebaki and Lakovidou (2011) refer that previous research focus mostly on the supply side instead of looking for the demand side, the wine tourist, introducing the research gap for this study. By looking at the demand side, the wine tourists' perspectives and satisfaction is being analyzed to increase long-term loyalty as the degree of satisfaction can increase the probability of return visits (Roberts & Sparks, 2006). Pearce and Lee (2005) also mention that understanding this type of tourist's preferences and wanted activities is a good direction when it comes to linking visitors' needs to the attributes of the experiences and destinations.

Carlsen (2004, p.9) identified the ability of wineries to become price-makers instead of price-takers as one of the fundamental issues for wineries and wine regions in the future. In the same study, a framework was demonstrated where price-making is when the 'price range is determined by nature of product/ service offered, seasonal demand and value-adding experiences' (linking with a demand-driven focus), as observed in Appendix 1. Furthermore,

to develop a demand-side analysis, the main objective of this study is to answer the following research question:

*RQ1:* What are the key concepts and narratives shared online by wine tourists on daily tours?

*Objective 1:* Focus specifically on the Douro region, by only retrieving reviews from this geographical area.

*Objective 2:* Analyze separately the clusters Daily tours and Food & Beverage.

The project aims to contribute to the literature by further understanding the importance of online reviews and consumer voluntary testimonials in order to identify the topics linked to daily wine tour experiences in the Douro region and evaluate what themes are highlighted in the highest-rated reviews. As it will evaluate tourist points of view about wine daily tours, the results from this study can provide useful information for both the wine and the tourism sectors managers on how to operate and improve the quality of the services and products offered and increase the value perceived of the overall wine tours. Also, the understanding of what wine tourists most value and share is going to be important to maintain or promote certain characteristics when developing or creating new wine tours or services for tourism. Finally, understanding the reasons for bad reviews is an advantage for both the wine and the tourism sector as they can faster remedy their failures and problems.

This dissertation is designed to have 6 chapters in order to go through all the main points and findings to answer the research question. The introduction explains the line to follow of this research and its context. Following, the Literary review, a piece of deeper knowledge about what has been written and studied in the past in well-ranked journals. The methodology explains in detail how the research question will be answered, ending with the results and discussion that will enumerate the main findings of this dissertation and further contribute to the knowledge about tourist wine tours experiences in the Douro region. The last chapter will retrieve the main conclusions of this project, while also pointing the main limitations and future possible research to be developed.

## **2. Literary review**

Tourism is a growing trend worldwide, and new sectors are appearing. In the Food and Beverage industries, wine represents a significant percentage, especially in Portugal which presents a wide variety, having their own essence and recognition around the globe for centuries (Pina, 2013). On the other hand, tourism in Portugal has an increasing tendency of incoming tourists yearly, presenting an opportunity that must be further studied and improved. By joining these sectors of wine and tourism via organizing wine tours, companies and entrepreneurs can not only enter a market of beginners in the wine world but also engage with connoisseurs in the area, creating new products and services for a new variety of consumers (Madeira et al., 2019).

As people expectations are increasing every day due to the easiness of information and choice, selecting experiences is becoming harder because influence can come from everywhere, even from people you have never met (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

A literary review about wine tourism, wine experiences and tours, tourism in the Douro region, and Online Reviews is presented to gather the current available information in these areas.

### **2.1. Wine tourism**

Wine tourism is an important concept not only to the wine industry but also to tourism. Back in 1998 was held the first Australian Wine tourism conference (Carlsen, 1999), and the result was the beginning of the exploration of the potential synergy between wine and tourism, at first to increase cellar door sales and increase regional value and production. Several authors tried to describe wine tourism, as observed in Table 1. Although its definition does not have only one answer (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009), it can be found a wider definition using approaches from three authors: the first, about the product, describing the product and services made available to the final customer (Hall et al., 2000); the second is defined by the Western Australian Tourism Commission (2000) about the experiences that engage and attract the visitors; and finally, the strategy with a long-term vision to create adventures that mirror tourists' desires and create loyalty (Getz, 2000).

Nowadays, wine, food, tourism and the arts collectively comprise the core elements of the wine tourism product (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002). Several studies defined tourism as a five-stage experience (eg. Pearce, 1982; Mitchell et al., 2000): pre-visit, travel-to, on-site, travel from and

post-visit. Wine tourism is the experience that can be analyzed through all these stages as wine is a tangible and durable product that can be transported and experienced in several locations before, during and after the actual winery experience (Mitchell et al., 2000). Getz & Brown (2006) also describe this tourism as a strategy to market wine-related activities, attractions, and imagery, and consequently an opportunity for wineries to sell their products directly to consumers and further educate consumers creating a marketing opportunity.

*Table 1- Definitions of Wine tourism*

Dowling (1998)	Experiential tourism occurring within wine regions, providing a unique experience that includes wine, gastronomy, culture, arts, education and travel
Getz (2000)	Simultaneously, a form of consumer behavior, a strategy whereby destinations and markets related to the appeal and image of wine are developed, and a marketing opportunity for wineries to educate and sell their products directly to consumers
Getz et al. (1999)	A form of consumer behavior based on the appeal of wine and wine regions, and the development of marketing strategies for the wine industry and destinations in which the wineries and the experiences related to wine are the main attractions
Hall and Macionis (1998)	Visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows, for which grape wine tasting and or experiencing the attributes of a grape and wine region are the primary motivations for the visitor
Hall et al. (2000)	Visits to vineyards, wineries and wine and grape festivals, which are made available for wine tasting and/or contact with the attributes of the region's wines
Johnson (1997)	Visitation to vineyards, wineries, wine festivals and wine shows for which grape wine tasting or experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region are the prime motivating factors for visitors
Van Westering (1999)	The attractions of the wine region such as heritage, landscape and the wine produced
VINTUR (2006)	Integration, under the same thematic concept, of the existing and potential tourism resources and services of interest in a wine producing region
Western Australian Tourism Commission (2000)	Travel for the purpose of experiencing wineries and wine regions and their links to (Australian) lifestyle. Wine tourism encompasses both service provision and destination marketing.

A study written by Thomas et al. (2016) explains a growing interest in topics related to imagery and “Winescapes” during the years. At first, the definition of winescapes was a cultural or viticultural landscape (Peters, 1997) and more recently more dimensions were added to this definition such as heritage, signage, and layout, ambient and even staff, locals and activities (eg. Bruwer & Leschaeve, 2012; Thomas et al., 2016).

There are several channels used to create this imagery and create value for tourists such as travel agents, tour operators (Garibaldi et al., 2017), and social media, that shows a future opportunity as it is still not being used by wineries to its full potential (Duarte Alonso et al., 2013).

## **2.2 Wine experiences and wine tours**

The establishment of experiences can be challenging since they are intangible but they “touch” people better than products and services that are tangible (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2009). In a study executed by Morgan (2006) it can be recognized that the experience is a result that comes from the co-creation of the extrinsic factors, saying the destination and the individuals needs and desires.

Nowadays, the wine tourist is looking forward to a wider range of activities than merely drinking wine (Hall et al., 2000, Charters & Ali-knight, 2002). Most researches focus on the supply side instead of looking for the demand side, the wine tourist (Alebaki & Lakovidou, 2011).

According to (Charters, 2006, p. 214) wine tourists are looking for experiences that are a *“complex interaction of natural setting, wine, food, cultural and historical inputs and above all, the people who service them”* (p.214). Guides have been increasing their importance and they serve as intermediaries between tourists and destinations as they represent the first contact and influence the first impression the visitors have of the wine region (Rabotic, 2010).

Nowadays tourists are more experienced and more demanding (Pikkemaat et al., 2009, 240) and expect and desire a memorable experience integrating both product and services (Joy et al., 2018). The Canadian Ministry of Tourism (2007) conducted a survey to understand the main travel activities of interest and motivators for leisure traveling related to wine and food among North Americans, and only around 17% described that wine - and cuisine - associated

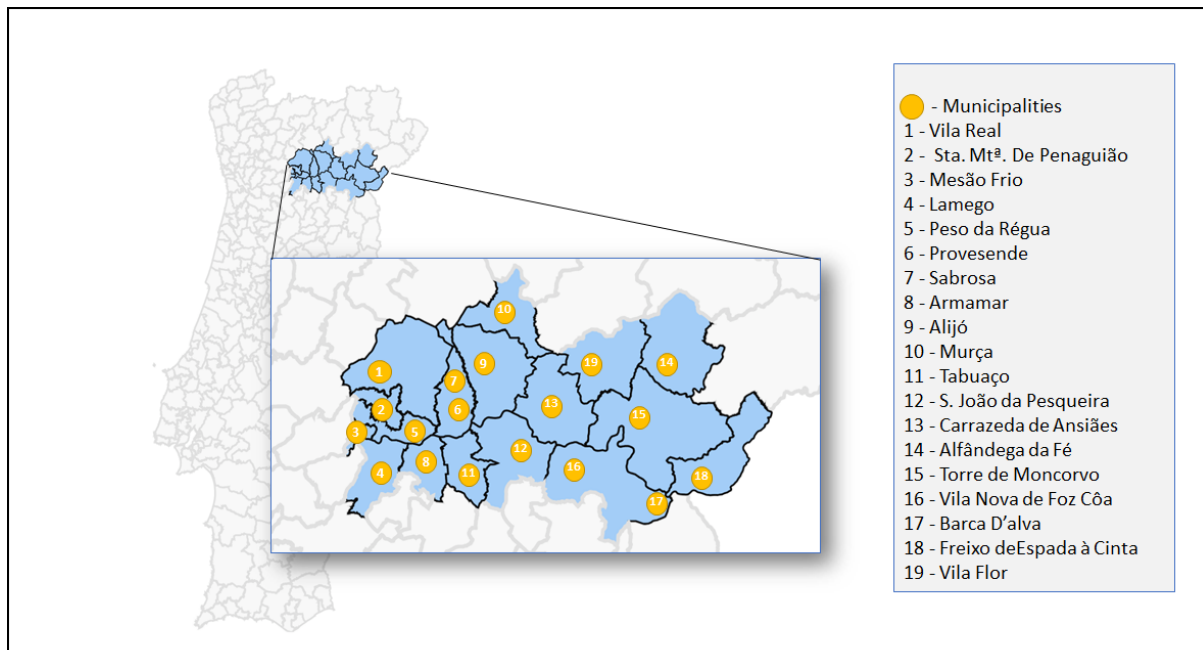
activities were the main reason for the trip, showing that wine tourism must engage in other activities in the region besides the described above (Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009).

Wine experiences can integrate both educational and leisure activities as wine tourists want to learn something new while having fun (Leri & Theodoris, 2019). For example, on wine tours visitors are looking for different activities other than wine tastings where tourists become more engrossed such as wine-making workshops, harvesting activities, grape crushing, hiking and others (Quadri-Felitti & Fiori, 2012).

A 2014 study executed by the Tourism Research Australia, found that wine tours represent 11.9% of all tourism and that the main motivations to engage in this type of experience (food and wine tours) are: takes place in beautiful or spectacular surroundings (important to 86% of respondents); ability to experience the best product that is available locally (83% important); is unique to the area (81% important); offers the chance to visit a lot of places (79% important). Another study explained the customer preferences of these wine tours, finding that 69% of the respondents (in the United States of America) were interested in daily tours, characterizing them as “short authentic trips”, and the most wanted tour activities being wine tastings (97%) and visit wineries (90%) being complemented with cultural and environmental attractions, finalizing saying that wine shouldn’t be the only element of a wine tour (Garibaldi et al., 2017).

### **2.3. Tourism in the Douro Region**

Douro Region is located in the north of Portugal and is one of the oldest delimited and regulated viticulture mountains in the world dated 1756 (Santos et al., 2020; Rebelo & Caldas, 2013). Douro takes 19 municipalities, as observed in figure 1, but has low population density, having as the main activities electric power and wine related activities (Pessoa, 2008) which in the years 2020/2021 produced around 20% of the national wine production representing 1.264.349 hl (IVV, 2021). In the Douro Region high-quality wines are produced with different price ranges and different kinds of grape varieties (Tinta Amarela, Tinta Barroca, and others) planted on the precipitous slopes along the Douro River (Pina, 2013).



*Figure 1 - The Demarcated Douro Region. (Source: Pordata)*

Tourism is a growing activity in the Douro region, which is struggling to fight against the demographic and economic decline due to challenges in population decrease and aging (Bock et al., 2017). In fact, there was a decrease in population from 206,641 in 2010 to 190,958 in 2019 increasing the amount of elderly per 100 young people from 165 in 2010 to 236 in 2019 (Pordata, 2021). The number of tourists and activities are increasing yearly such as visits to wineries and cruises in the Douro River. In the early 2000s, the Alto Douro Wine Region was recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site. The recognition was essential to the development of the region, having doubled the number of hotels and establishments in the area and also attracted multiple luxury investments in high-quality hotels (Carvalho et al., 2011).

In September 2021, seven quintas (wine-producing farm complexes) in Portugal were awarded and ranked top 50 World's Best Vineyards and five of them were located in the Douro Region such as Quinta do Crasto (#16) and Quinta do Noval (#29). The landscape is mainly constituted by “valleys strongly embedded in steep high slopes along the Douro River and its tributaries, dominated by shale and cold winters, hot summers and low rainfall (...), which makes mechanization very difficult, requiring manual labor and consequently leading to high production costs” (Rebello & Caldas, 2013, p.26).

Another relevant aspect of the Douro region is its hydraulic component, being formed by the valley of the Douro River, this is one of the main rivers Portugal shares with Spain and flows

into the Atlantic Ocean in Oporto (Andresen et al., 2004). The presence of this river is also a source of tourism as in 2013 there were already thirty five companies operating with more than eighty boats and eleven hotel boats with occupancy of more than six thousand passengers (Lourenço-Gomes et al., 2015), however, the author of this study also references that this water-born sector will keep growing.

#### **2.4. Online Reviews in Tourism**

With the use of the internet, news media and large businesses no longer have all the power over information. Now, it is easier to spread information as everyone can post, comment, or like and share their thoughts online and millions of users will have access to it, creating an inevitable influence on other people decisions through online Word-of-Mouth (WOM) (Duan et al.,2008). Consumer reviews are becoming a very important source of user generated content (Cassar et al., 2020). Vickery & Wunsch-Vincent (2007) identified three main characteristics to further understand the User generated content:

- Publication requirement: it must be accessible to everyone or a specific group of people (eg. college students) without restriction.
- Creative effort: it has to come from the user's mind and not copied from somewhere else to be valuable;
- Creation outside of professional routines and practices: it has to be voluntary without any expectation of extra benefits.

WOM includes all different forms of communications about the products/services between consumers (Hu et al., 2008), e-WOM differs from traditional WOM due to its scalability and speed of diffusion (Cheung & Thadani, 2012). This new form of WOM can be positive or negative statements about specific products or services (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). In a study published in the Harvard Business Review, Reichheld (2003) found that one of the most important metrics for businesses is the propensity to referrals and that customer feedback should not be seen only as market research but also management tool, because the information on social media creates new insights for other customers, as internet users trust anonymous online reviews more than traditional media (Cheung & Thadani, 2012).

Mudambi and Schuff (2010b) research found a positive effect between the length (word count) and quantity of the reviews and its helpfulness to consumers and that this effect is greater for search goods than experience goods. Several studies show a positive correlation between

positive reviews and an increase of the product sales (Hu et al,2008), and increase loyalty, trust, and brand evaluation and recognition (So et al., 2016) however negative WOM has a greater impact compared to the positive one (Chatterjee, 2001).

Many people confuse the terms e-WOM with User generated content. For UGC to become e-Word of Mouth, it has to be seen by other users, which means that on the Tripadvisor platform e-WOM occurs when the online reviews (UGC) are read by others (Cassar et al., 2020)

### **3. Methodology**

To approach the research question - What are the key concepts and narratives shared online by wine tourists on daily tours? - an explanatory methodology was chosen. In this chapter you can find a detailed research approach, followed by a clarification of data collection including a summarized demographic finding, finalizing with a brief description of the Data analysis tool used, Leximancer, explaining the reasons and how to interpret the outcomes.

#### **3.1. Research Approach**

As previously discussed in the introduction chapter, this work has the final goal to better understand the key narratives shared by wine tourists on daily tours (9/10-hour tours). The research will have an exploratory qualitative approach with the aim to answer the main objective of finding the most memorable post-visit narratives of wine tour experiences. Qualitative thinking has been increasing in importance in areas such as marketing and strategy (Malhotra et al., 2017), as this type of research focuses more on social and community dynamics that cannot be quantified (Queirós et al., 2017).

For the qualitative analysis, the most adequate method is the gathering and analysis of user generated content on social media. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated content” (p.61). This study will focus on online reviews from websites such as TripAdvisor and Get your Guide as this method shows the most spontaneous, heartfelt, and immediate responses with the widest range of participants that share the same experience but never met each other (Malhotra et al., 2017).

Finally, the online reviews gathered are analyzed in a content analysis software that automatically analyzes large quantities of qualitative data based on statistical properties of text (Sotiriadou et al., 2014, Tseng et al., 2015). The results provided by Leximancer will release a conceptual map that will be further investigated by the researcher. The findings will add to the current literature about the tourists narratives about wine tours in the Douro region.

### **3.2. Data Collection**

The text content will be retrieved from the review area of TripAdvisor, the largest traveling platform having been visited by more than one million users in the past month, November 2021 (Tripadvisor, 2021), and Get your Guide, a Berlin-based online marketplace for tours, having been visited more than 100 thousand times the past month, November 2021 (Get Your Guide, 2021). Both websites were chosen because they presented the widest variety of Douro tours and an array of reviews, and both website terms were checked to ensure legitimacy for the use of the data to develop the research. The target was daily tours in the Douro River that include Wine tasting, Douro River Cruise and Lunch, the standard duration of nine hours, as these tours are the ones people are more interested in and are characterized as “short authentic trips” (Garibaldi et al., 2017) as mentioned above.

For every wine tour the information was stored in an Excel spreadsheet, in individual cells:

- Tours (names on the respective websites)
- URL
- Highlights (describing the main tour characteristics and places to visit)
- Full Description (deeper description of the entire tour, with timings and stops)
- Inclusions (what is included, e.g. How many tastings, lunch)
- Duration (duration of the entire tour since pick-up to delivery in the agreed place)
- Itinerary (where it starts, locations of vineyards, boat checkpoints, and itinerary, lunch location)
- Overall rating of the tour (being 5 stars the highest rate and 1 the lowest)
- Online reviews:
  - Individual Ratings (being 5 stars the highest rate and 1 the lowest)
  - Body (entire text of the online review)
  - Nationality of the reviewer (if possible)
  - Tourist profiles - if possible (i.e. family, couples or friends)

For this process, 641 reviews were collected with 39,162 words from 10 wine tours that included Wine tastings, Douro River Cruise, Lunch, and the standard duration of nine hours. To guarantee that the reviews are accurate for the services, no reviews were collected prior to 2019 and similarly to with other studies using the same methodology (Brochado et al., 2021, Brochado et al., 2019, Tkaczynski et al., 2015 Wu et al., 2014), all the reviews were collected in English.

### **3.3. Data Analysis tool**

To elaborate the content analysis, the data collected from the Websites were qualitatively analyzed by Leximancer software 4.5. This tool has been used in studies to explore various topics (McKenna & Waddell, 2007; Robson et al., 2013, Sotiriadou et al., 2014), Cassar et al., 2020 says that “Leximancer is a reliable tool as it can avoid human bias and provides the possibility for qualitative interpretation of the text”.

Differently to other softwares, Leximancer is working with its own algorithm and is used for analyzing the meanings within chunks of text by extracting the main concepts and ideas (Tseng et al., 2015). Instead of only applying word frequency and coding of terms and phrases, Leximancer employs both relational and conceptual analysis (Weber, 1990).

To answer the research questions, the results will be presented graphically through a conceptual map format. The interpretation depends both on size and color: Leximancer (2018) explains that the most important themes are red-colored (Cretchley et al., 2010) while the purple is the least important; at the same time, the greater the frequency of occurrence of the individual concepts, the bigger the gray point will be. The co-occurrence and interrelation between concepts will also be demonstrated through a line connecting them.

## **4. Results**

The following chapter discloses the data collected and the results given in the Leximancer software, it includes the conceptual map (see Figure 2) and the findings to further understand the key narratives shared online related to daily wine tours in the Douro region.

More than half of the reviews were shared by Europeans with the highest contribution from the United Kingdom (13.9%) and France (7.04%), however, the largest amount from one single country came from the United States of America with 22.6 percent of the total number of

reviews. Also, it was not possible to gather the tourist profile of all the reviewers but from the ones who shared that information, 53.9 percent were couples followed by friends (28.7%). As can be consulted in Table 2, the majority of the reviewers gave 5 stars to the experience (84.4%) with a big distance to the number of reviewers that gave 4 stars (11.39%), having only 3 people out of the 641 reviews given 1 star (0.47%).

**Table 2** - Number of reviews and individual ratings per wine tours

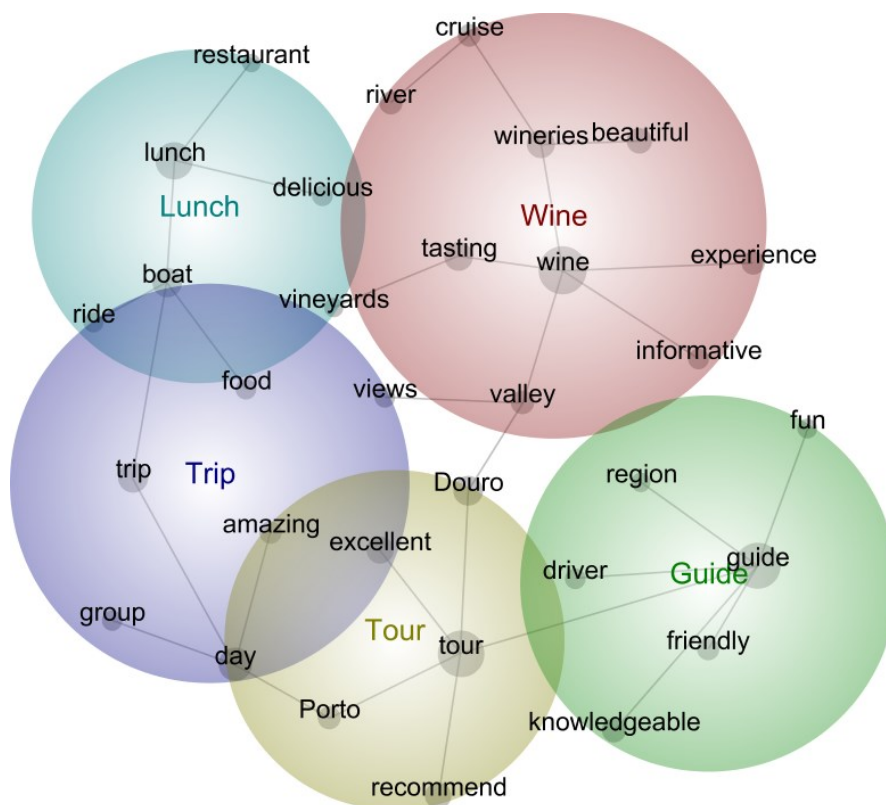
Stars	Wine tour 1	Wine tour 2	Wine tour 3	Wine tour 4	Wine tour 5	Wine tour 6	Wine tour 7	Wine tour 8	Wine tour 9	Wine tour 10	Total
5	47	56	43	39	53	43	120	19	89	34	543
4	11	6	7	3	1	2	27	4	6	5	72
3	4	3	1	0	0	0	3	1	3	4	19
2	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	4
1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	3
No. of reviews	63	65	52	42	54	45	151	25	99	45	641

From the conceptual map retrieved from Leximancer, five main themes associated with their experiences in the daily tours were encountered, which are the colored circles that group clusters of concepts (Leximancer, 2021). As said previously, the hot colors represent the most important themes, and the cold colors the least important. Also, it is relevant to note that the closer the circles are to one another, the stronger is the relation and attraction between them. The five themes found as seen in Figure 2 (with the number of hits in parenthesis) are: Wine (858 hits), Tour (953 hits), Guide (628 hits), Trip (501 hits) and Lunch (482 hits).

In Figure 2 it can be observed that the theme “Wine” is not only the most important but also the one with more concepts associated with it. The results demonstrate that in spite of tourists being mainly interested in the wine aspect they also value the experiences, that includes several components such as wine tastings, visiting the beautiful wineries, and the river cruise. The visitors also like to receive information about the wines they are tasting, and the Douro valley views.

In spite of the main theme being “Wine”, the most mentioned concept is “Guide” (523 hits) with a relevance percentage of 100 (representation of the count value of each concept), the reviewers link the guides main traits as being fun, knowledgeable and friendly, the concept “Guide” is also directly linked to the concept “Tour” and the main themes even overlap each other creating the feeling that both themes strongly attract one another and cannot exist without each other.

The second most mentioned concept is “Tour” with 506 hits, being the second most relevant theme (953 hits) with more hits than “Wine”. Related to this theme are concepts such as “Amazing”, “Excellent” and “Recommend”. Explaining a high degree of satisfaction on the part of the reviewers. As tours are the main experience being evaluated in this project, having these concepts related to the theme shows that the narratives most likely will be in line with the overall rating averaging 5 stars and are a great experience when visiting the North of Portugal as “Douro” and “Porto” are also concepts with a significance inside the theme “Tour”.



**Figure 2** - Conceptual Map generated by Leximancer representing daily Wine tour online Reviews from TripAdvisor and Get Your Guide

## 5. Discussion

In order to try to answer the research question what are the key concepts and narratives shared online by wine tourists on daily tours (9/10-hour tours) in the Douro region, Leximancer software was used to retrieve a conceptual map with the most found words, dividing it into main themes and concepts from the online reviews (Figure 2).

The five themes found can be divided into two major groups, explaining different parts of the experience in these daily tours. Firstly, it can identify themes related to Daily tours including themes such as “Trip”, “Guide” and “Tour” and on the other hand the Food and Beverages group including the “Lunch” and “Wine” themes as demonstrated in Table 3. The analysis is going to be divided into two parts: the first, a collection of phrases from the retrieved web reviews that will exemplify and explain the results gathered in Figure 2, and in second place an evaluation of each theme comparing it to the gathered literature to support or counteract the findings.

**Table 3** - Groups, Themes, and Concepts

Groups	Themes	Concepts
Food and Beverages	Wine	Wine, Wineries, Beautiful, Tasting, Experience, Informative, Valley, Cruise, River
	Lunch	Lunch, Boat, Ride, Restaurant, Vineyards, Delicious, Food
	Guide	Guide, Friendly, Knowledgeable, Driver, Region, Fun
Daily Tours	Trip	Trip, Food, Amazing, Day, Group, Excellent, Views, Boat
	Tour	Tour, Excellent, Douro, Porto, Day, Recommend, Amazing

### 5.1. Daily tours

The first themes being analyzed were related to daily tours. In Figure 2, the themes more associated with travel are “Trip”, “Tour” and “Guide”.

**Tour (953 hits); Concepts: Tour, Excellent, Douro, Porto, Day, Recommend, Amazing**

*“I would **recommend** this tour to anyone in **Porto** looking for a **day** trip or if you are in the **Douro** region and would like a wine **tour** as well. The structure: winery with 2 tastings, lunch (which was exceptional!)”*

*“I highly **recommend** this tour if you want to see the **Douro** Valley, sample wine and port wine and have some **excellent** food. Brilliant day!!!”*

*“Our **guide** Amerigo was fantastic - extremely helpful and very attentive and patient. This **tour** is a must for anyone visiting **Porto**.”*

### **Trip (501 hits); Concepts: Trip, Food, Amazing, Day, Group, Excellent, Views, Boat**

*“The **food** was good, not great, but we did not expect it to be the highlight of the **trip**.”*

*“Lovely **day trip** to the Douro Valley in a small **group**.”*

*“The **food** and service at the River restaurants were **excellent**. The **boat trip** was a bit of a letdown, too many people, not everyone was equally able to enjoy the **views**, and some of the passengers blatantly flaunted the mask requirement.”*

*“Very complete tour of the Douro Valley with a visit to a small farm and **boat trip**. Very good guides and driver”*

### **Guide (628 hits): Guide, Friendly, Knowledgeable, Driver, Region, Fun**

All the names written are made up for confidentiality purposes.

*“João, our **guide** was absolutely incredible. Our entire group left feeling like we made new friends.”*

*“Maria, our **guide**, was super-**friendly**, very **knowledgeable**, and was able to flawlessly switch between English, Spanish and Portuguese during the tour.”*

*“It was awesome! Our French speaking **guide** gave us additional information with a touch of **humor**! Our pleasant **driver**. The meal is more than correct and the beauty of the Douro valley is no longer to be proven. We highly recommend”*

*“This was one of our favorite things my husband and I did during our trip to Portugal. Our tour **guide** Pedro was tons of **fun** and very **knowledgeable** about the history of the Douro **region**.”*

As previously referred, the most relevant theme in this group is “Tour”, which is expected since it is the subject being evaluated. Inside these themes, one concept mentioned more than once are the beautiful views of the Douro region, explaining that nowadays tourists are also looking for an imagery side when deciding the destinations and experiences, in the Douro region they call it “Winescapes” (Thomas et al., 2006).

One thing that can also be seen in table 3 is that the concept “Day” is present in both “Tour” and “Trip”, jointly with the concepts “Amazing” and “Excellent”, this comes to corroborate the idea of Garibaldi et al. (2017) that daily tours are evaluated by tourists as more enjoying and authentic, also it is notable that the theme Tour is also related with the word “recommend”, this measure is one of the most important management tools as it is very valuable for other consumers that previous users will further recommend this experience to others (Reichheld, 2013), this result is not abnormal as 84.4 percent of the reviewers rated the tours five stars.

When it comes to the guide, one of the most important concepts, as seen in figure 2, it is interesting to evaluate that tourists spent time talking about the individuals that accompanied them and recommending specific individuals by their proper names with details about their personalities paying special attention to give good adjectives such as “fun” and “knowledgeable” and “informative”, creating the idea that these are traits a good tour guide must present and that the tour guides were an essential part of their experience as they chose the tour but were very impressed by the service offered, making the facts agreeable with Charters (2006) that said that people are looking for a collection of wine, culture, history but most importantly, they want to be well serviced, although a big part of the reviews were about the guide, the concept driver (person who picked the tourists from the hotel in Oporto and brought to the meeting point near the Douro valley) also got 81 hits.

On the other hand, regarding the boat tour, some controversy appeared out of the three reviews with a single star, two had major complaints about the boat trip reviewer #139 described it as likely to “*be bored on the one-hour river trip*” while the reviewer #624 said that “*The boat tour was ridiculous- uncomfortable chairs - no facilities on the boat and no information of any kind as to what we were looking at.*” having some other higher rated reviews with some complaints such as crowded, impersonal and uninteresting regarding these boat cruises.

## 5.2. Food and Beverages

On the other side, the tour included “Wine” experiences and “Lunch”, and these themes will be further analyzed as only one main cluster, Food, and Beverages.

**Wine (858 hits); Concepts: Wine, Wineries, Beautiful, Tasting, Experience, Informative, Valley, Cruise, River**

*“Overall a great **experience**: In a single day, you get to see a lot and get a great impression of the Douro **Valley** and its **wine**. The short tours at the **wineries** and the **tastings** are quite good and a memorable **experience** - also the **lunch** is exceptionally good for a day tour. However, there were some details that left a rather "touristy" shade over the **experience**: The group was a bit bigger than expected and the boat **cruise** was nothing special.”*

*“Both **wineries** were amazing! The owners had explained the process in a very entertaining way, which will make you remember every little detail about Porto. Their **wine**, olive oil and honey were absolutely brilliant - recommend to all!”*

*“The tour - WOW! We had **beautiful** sweeping views of the valley, and made a stop for refreshments and rest before the fabulous tour! The **river cruise** was great and lunch and a vineyard stop in Sombra was superb! (...) The second vineyard was fantastic and so **informative**. I have a whole new appreciation for Douro **Valley** that I would have never **experienced** without the tour! And a new love and appreciation for Port **wine** and other **wines** of Douro.”*

**Lunch (482 hits); Concepts: Lunch, Boat, Ride, Restaurant, Vineyards, Delicious, Food.**

*“The **food** and service at the River **restaurants** were excellent.”*

*“**Lunch** in Pinhao was **delicious**, and there simply aren't enough superlatives to describe the scenery. Our thanks for a fantastic day.”*

*“The boat cruise while brief, was a nice addition, and the lunch was excellent.”*

*“The **vineyard** there was beautiful. (...) Then we moved to Sabrosa village and had **lunch**. (...) The **restaurant** might have been a winery and was a beautiful place with nice dishes, **wines**, and viewing. The second winery Quinta dos Castelares was not so far from the **restaurant**. We tasted red and white wines and various flavors of honeys as well. The winery was really beautiful again. “*

As referred to in the previous chapter, the most relevant theme is “Wine”, this wine tour however do not consist in only wine and tasting, having been complemented with more activities such as boat cruises, visiting different wineries, and lunch to increase quality and value of the experience (Cohen & Ben-Nun, 2009).

Related to F&B, one important theme was the concept “informative” with 84 hits, which can be coupled with the concept “knowledgeable” as a study from Leri and Theodoris (2019) discovered that wine tourists are not only looking for pleasure and a sole leisure trip, they also need to be stimulated and have a final goal to learn something at the end, they are looking for activities such as boat cruises and visits to wineries. Some reviews mention that the boat cruise did not go as expected, so maybe something to consider is new dynamic activities that can motivate the tourists such as walks in the wineries or grape harvesting (Quadri-Felitti & Fiori, 2012).

Still, the main attractiveness of the wine tours is still the product “Wine” (Getz and Brown, 2006), as it is heavily mentioned, “*The wine was fantastic*” and “*excellent wine tasting experience with plenty to taste*” having occurred simultaneously with the reference of another regional cuisine such as honey and olive oil, presenting an opportunity for differentiation of offerings.

It is expected that the tourists pay attention to the “Lunch” aspect of the tour as it is one of the core elements of Wine tourism (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002), the scenery surrounding the restaurants, and the transportation are also mentioned in this theme.

## **6. Conclusion**

In this chapter, the main conclusions will be developed, and the research question is going to be answered as previously defined in the Introduction chapter. Following, the theoretical and practical implications of this project will be underlined. With the development of this project some limitations were identified and are described in this chapter followed by suggestions of future research in the topic.

Although there are already several wine tourism definitions, it is a concept that is always developing, having no single definition (Marzo-Navarro & Pedraja-Iglesias, 2009, Cambourne et al., 2000) and joining three approaches - the product, the experience, and the strategy - a wider definition can be found.

In response to the current literature, this project has the objective to find the main narratives shared online about daily tours in order to help improve knowledge about visitor desires and expectations about these experiences and the sector. To do so, 641 online reviews from ten different wineries were collected in order to provide the most diversified, critical, and accurate analysis of the topic in discussion. As follows, a conceptual map was retrieved from the data collected using the Leximancer software.

The results show that the people are mainly interested in the wine product, however, it is not enough to satisfy the increasing expectation of the visitors, having referred to other experiences that are more dynamic, such as tastings of another regional cuisine, for example, honey and olive oil. All the daily tours offered had a river cruise which created a dual opinion on the visitors: on one hand, it allowed a view of the Douro valley that could not be compared to other parts of the tour; but, on the other side, the boat was described as uncomfortable and sometimes crowded. The evaluation leads to assuming that the conditions offered in this part of the tour need to be improved to increase the overall satisfaction of the visitors.

The findings advance tours dependence on the guides, as most reviews praised their guides and the service they provided with knowledge and humor. These individuals show one of the most important parts of the services and should have the training, being foreign languages one of the most important as most visitors are non-Portuguese speakers as they are the intermediaries between the tourists and the destination. Furthermore, the drivers are also important as the drive from Porto to the Douro Valley is around one and a half-hour drive. They should be informed about the history of the region to answer the tourists questions and make the drives interesting and not boring and further improve the service.

The results of the study confirm that customers of these experiences have high expectations and do not forgive mistakes made by organizations and management, such as wrong pick-ups or overcrowded boats. Also, it is important for these organizations to highlight the beautiful scenery and views when promoting daily tours in the Douro Valley as these characteristics are competitive advantages against other experiences, as the steep slopes and beautiful vineyards and history are traits rare to see in any other place.

### **6.1. Theoretical Contribution**

There is little number of previous studies about organized wine tours, so the findings of this study endorse the previous literature in understanding the demand side of daily wine tours as

the existing literary content available looks mainly to the supply side (Alebaki and Lakovidou, 2011), by evaluating online reviews shared by tourists that already used these experiences.

The application of Leximancer to elaborate the qualitative analysis allowed the identification of the main themes and concepts about wine daily tours that may lead to individuals happiness and further referrals to others, Reichheld (2003) mentioned the ability of referral as one of the most important metrics for products and services, on the other hand, it is also relevant to understand what are the services that are failing during these trips and winery visits, to quickly improve and change. Overall, albeit the results highlight that these tours are a complex service as it offers multiple activities and visitors expectations are high (Charters, 2006), there is a tendency to rate positively these experiences.

The research corroborated the importance of main characteristics such as the quality of the wine product, the relationship between food and wine, the importance of the landscapes and the environment (Thomas et al. (2016), but also added some more specific characteristics of the services related to the training of the guides and the transference of knowledge from guide to the tourist. Although tourists are looking for different types of experiences (Leri & Theodoris, 2019, Quadri-Felitti & Fiori, 2012), these must be studied to better serve customer wants and needs, because some of the services the wine tour managers are using to differentiate themselves are creating friction in the reviews.

The research gap is filled by using real online reviews posted voluntarily on websites such as Tripadvisor and Get Your Guide, and these reviews represent real exhaustive answers and Leximancer has the ability to avoid human bias, guaranteeing real preferences and judgments of consumers and avoiding strategic responses.

## **6.2. Practical Contribution**

Regarding the Practical contributions, this paper uses contextual analysis from TripAdvisor and Get Your Guide reviews, this methodology made it possible to identify not only elements of service quality but also some points of service improvement. As described previously, the guides play a key role in the success of the daily tours, as they serve as intermediation between the location, winemakers, and the visitors and influence the first impression these visitors will have of the experiences, as so, they must be trained and have traits such as humor and knowledge about the region and must present linguistic skills to include foreign tourists (as

seen in the results, at least should be fluent in English as the majority of the tourist come from English speaking countries).

Regarding the boat trips, this service shows dual opinion as it has some reviews that highlight the beautiful scenery of the Douro Region that otherwise could not be accessed on one hand, but on the other this service shows a lack of organization and potential for improvement as it is sometimes “overcrowded” and “boring”.

The perception of the territory and the historical interest and its heritage are also important and valuable elements and so is the quality of the wine and the food served as it all affects the overall satisfaction of the experience for the visitors and any one of these elements can cause a bad perception in the tourists’ minds and ruin the whole tour.

The research analysis of the positive reviews in this context can represent guidelines for further planning of new tours either daily or longer in this sector in other regions where these services are still not common, on the other side, the negative reviews should be taken into consideration to avoid negative perceptions and maintain quality of existing tours.

### **6.3 Limitations**

The main limitation came from the source of the data, as neither TripAdvisor nor Get Your Guide provide social and personal information about the visitors who wrote the reviews, limiting the demographic data available to be analyzed, also by only using the two Websites, the study does not consider consumers that do not use sites such as Tripadvisor, this can also be seen as a limitation as the information about these consumers is not considered, therefore could be a statistically biased sample.

Another limitation is that, in the Douro region, several daily wine tours could be found, with a set of reviews for each tour, however they were all grouped in a single excel spreadsheet for analysis, with the results referring to an entire wine region, the Douro region. With this, it was not possible to characterize and compare the difference between tours, presenting a limitation and missing the opportunity of evaluating what are the factors of competitive advantage among tours.

## 6.4 Future Research

The dissertation aspires to contribute to a deeper comprehension of wine tourism dimensions by understanding the narratives shared online about daily wine tours in the Douro Region, however, it is a study that keeps evolving and future research should be developed.

It is relevant to evaluate that this study was conducted in a specific region and in a specific country with a specific culture, and had this study been elsewhere, the results would have shown different outcomes either because of different offerings, nature, cultures. Therefore, it is needed for future research to validate this method for other contexts.

In the development of this study, a positive tendency of reviews towards daily tours was encountered, however, management levels should also focus on badly rated user generated content (rated one or two stars) and compare with the positive ones (four or five stars) and find how can they improve failures, current services, and overall offerings for the future.

Also, this study only presented a qualitative view on the subject. To further elaborate a mixed method research with both qualitative and quantitative analysis should be elaborated in order to attain a more complete and less biased sample, with more demographic and sociological data.

Finally, tour managers should continuously seek to improve their services by “listening” to consumers by monitoring electronic Word-of-mouth data to understand people’s perceptions of their tours and resolve their issues in a faster manner.

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