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Family-friendly wine tourism? A debate with evidence from three Portuguese wine routes

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Abstract: Although wine tourism is predominantly described as an activity practised by middle-aged adults who travel without children to experience, learn about and buy wines, it has been considered to attract unexpected markets, such as families with children, mainly in rural destinations where wine and grape production occur in a particular natural, cultural and social context. However, research on families with children undertaking wine tourism is scarce and little is known about the features and heterogeneity of this market. This study analyses, through a survey research, visitors travelling as a family with children on three Portuguese wine routes (n=370), regarding general profile, travel motivation, attractions visited, satisfaction and loyalty. Results suggest two profiles of family visitors to Central Portugal wine routes: those focused on wine-related attractions and activities and those more interested in having fun and socialising in a wine region, enjoying its landscapes, culture and rural life. In our sample, the first group is almost totally composed of domestic visitors, accompanied mainly by children under 10 years. The second group includes some international visitors, and a higher presence of ‘older’ children and adolescents. Family visitors focused on wine attractions tend to indicate more suggestions for route improvement, primarily related to the availability of varied wine tourism experiences, including child-friendly activities.

Keywords: wine tourism, wine routes, family tourism, children, Portugal

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1 Introduction

Wine tourism is often conceptualised as a special-interest form of tourism, in which visiting a destination is motivated by tasting grape wine or exploring a wine region (Carlsen & Charters, 2006; Hall, 1996). Although it implies recognising diverse experiences and motivations related to grape wine culture and production, practitioners and scholars tend to describe wine tourists as middle-aged visitors, highly interested in and involved with wine, particularly in activities such as wine-tasting, food and wine pairing or learning about wine-making (Brown & Getz, 2005; Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Mitchell & Hall, 2006). Nevertheless, wine tourism may attract markets with other characteristics, given the multiple possibilities of the wine destination's touristic terroir, that is, the combination of the cultural and natural environment that determines the region's distinctive tourist appeal (Hall & Mitchell, 2002; Holland, Smith, & Jones, 2017). Meanwhile, a broader wine tourism concept progressively emerges, based on exploring wine-growing territories, landscapes, culture and people. Thus, the wine tourist market may be heterogeneous, including tourists not so focused on wine but appreciating it as a complementary regional element. Moreover, wine tourists often travel in groups of more or less wine-interested visitors (Cunha, Kastenholz, & Silva, 2023).

Family tourism has been suggested to be a potential market for wine destinations, constrained by the absence of suitable offerings in many regions (Cho, Bonn, & Brymer, 2017; Gu & Huang, 2019; Malerba, Kastenholz, Carneiro, & Carvalho, 2023; Sigala, 2019). Indeed, having children does not necessarily mean that individuals stop being interested in wine tourism; in addition, experiences related to the cultural, social and rural aspects of wine offer possibilities for learning, having fun and family bonding (Sigala, 2019). Still, there is a scarcity of wine tourism studies focusing on families, rarely considered a relevant target group, notably when including children. However, this group has been successfully targeted in some countries and by some wineries, notably in Spain, the United States, Australia and South Africa¹ (see also Malerba et al., 2023).

1 Some concrete examples: KOCK, A. T. Napa with the Family (Great Wine, Minimal Whine). In: *The New York Times*. 25 Jul. 2019. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/25/travel/napa-family-vacation.html>

Bordeaux Tourism & Conventions (s. d.). The vineyards in "family" mode. Retrieved from <https://www.bordeaux-tourism.co.uk/wine-chateaux/vineyards-family-mode>

Van Vuuren, L.J. (2021). Your Ultimate Guide to Kid Friendly Wine Estates in South Africa. In: *South Africa Visit our Wine Lands*. Retrieved from <https://www.visitwinelands.co.za/blog/2021/your-ultimate-guide-to-kid-friendly-wine-estates-in-south-africa>

In Central Portugal, the wine routes of Bairrada, Dão and Beira Interior – although at different stages of development – seek to boost wine tourism and, consequently, regional economies through the union between different private and public agents. By increasing the number of wine tourism audiences, the opportunities for regional and market development for destinations and producers are expanded (Getz & Brown, 2006), promoting socio-economic benefits for the local communities and agents (Cho et al., 2017; Gómez, Pratt, Molina, & Gómez, 2018). In fact, wine tourism has shown to be a significant activity for wine producers, tourism businesses and destinations in general, especially in rural environments (Alebaiki & Iakovidou, 2011; Getz & Brown, 2006).

This study aims to explore the family visitors on three Portuguese wine routes, regarding the profile, travel motivation, travel context, including attractions visited, as well as satisfaction, loyalty and suggestions for improvements in destinations. It also provides some insights into the specificities of this market and of some of its distinct segments, which may help create suitable and competitive wine tourism offerings.

The study is based on a sample of 370 visitors travelling with children, from a survey undertaken between 2018 and 2022 in the scope of TWINE – Cocreating sustainable Tourism & Wine Experiences in Rural Areas –, a research project conducted by the University of Aveiro, the Polytechnic Institute of Viseu and the University of Beira Interior.

After an introduction to family and wine tourism, methods for survey data collection and analyses are described. Next, results are presented and discussed. The conclusions highlight the study's contributions and present its limitations and implications, as well as recommendations for further research.

2 Literature review

2.1 Wine tourism

In addition to being a form of special interest tourism, wine tourism corresponds to a marketing opportunity for wineries and a development strategy for wine-producing regions (Getz & Brown, 2006). Meanwhile, it complements the product portfolio of traditional tourist destinations, inducing tourist flows in areas not yet explored (López-Guzmán, Sánchez, & García, 2009). Although it is conceptualised as a form of tourism primarily motivated by an interest in wine tasting and experiencing the attributes of a grape wine region (Hall, 1996), wine tourism may also include trips to visit wine sites and attractions for other reasons (Byrd et al., 2016; Cunha et al., 2023; Getz, 2000).

Wine tourism's primary motivations may include tasting, enjoying and buying wine. In contrast, secondary motivations may be socialising, learning about wine, experiencing the atmosphere, being entertained, meeting the winemaker, enjoying the rural setting and eating at the winery (Alant & Bruwer, 2004; Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Getz & Brown, 2006). For some tourists, however, these secondary motivations may be more significant due to the rural setting in which wine tourism occurs (Bruwer, Prayag, & Disegna, 2018), personal motivations or even the characteristics of the trip.

Indeed, three factors determine the tourist's attraction to a wine destination: the core wine product, the appeal of the destination and its essential destination features, and the cultural product and experiences associated (Getz & Brown, 2006). In line with this perspective, Sparks (2007) explains wine tourist behaviour according to three dimensions: core wine experience, related to the engagement with wine tasting or purchasing; destination experience, connected to the interaction with the destination; and personal development, concerning the personal growth that may arise from the wine tourism experience.

Previous research has attempted to understand and explain wine tourist behaviour. The typical wine tourist is described as a middle-aged individual with high levels of income and education, an increased interest in wine who travels in a couple without children (Charters & Ali-Knight, 2002; Cunha et al., 2023; Dawson, Holmes, Jacobs, & Wade, 2011; Getz & Brown, 2006; Grybovyč, Lankford, & Lankford, 2013). However, even if it is possible to draw conclusions about the main profile of the wine tourist, they should be applied with great caution since wine destinations have significant particularities and differences determined by their touristic terroir, traditions and industry's winescape – its vineyards, wineries and wines (Bruwer, 2003) – and they may attract a great diversity of visitors.

2.2 Family tourism in wine destinations

Families represent a significant, large and growing segment of the tourism industry (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015). Family tourism can be conceptualised as the tourism practised by a family group composed of at least one adult – parent or caregiver – and one child (Schänzel, Smith, & Weaver, 2005). Therefore, the particular characteristic of family tourism is the presence of children as travelling active members (Wu, Wall, Zu, & Ying, 2019).

Like other types of tourism, family trips may be motivated by the desire to have fun, relax and escape from everyday life (Carr, 2011; Gram, 2005; Shaw, Havitz, & Delemere, 2008). They are also seen as opportunities of spending time together, building and strengthening family bonds, and providing children with opportuni-

ties for learning and personal development (Li, Wang, Xu, & Mao, 2017; Lucena, Jarvis, & Weeden, 2015; Nickerson & Jurowski, 2001). Creating pleasant memories for the children is also a critical motivation (Li et al., 2017; Shaw et al., 2008). Family trips are also excellent for promoting children's well-being (Gram, 2005). Indeed, researchers have identified that parents also engage in family holidays to provide children learning and personal development opportunities, recognising the educational role of travel activities (Li et al., 2017).

Although children are not expected to be wine tourists, the lack of family programs has been reported as a constraint to practising wine tourism (Malerba et al., 2023). Gu and Huang (2019) identified a large group of Chinese potential wine tourists constrained by the lack of facilities and attractions, such as wine-related facilities and activities for their families and children. Cho et al. (2017) found that American married couples, highly educated and with high income, have a great interest in wine and wine tourism but are constrained by the lack of family programs. This group is especially sensitive to the offering of programs and activities for families of all ages, such as family-oriented outdoor products. According to Cho et al. (2017, p. 433), this segment "has the greatest potential to become the most important market segment if they can overcome their constraints". Sigala (2019) identified two main reasons for visiting a winery in family groups: the wish to continue practising wine tourism after having children and/or the interest in the wine process and the region. However, multilevel constraints inhibit this form of tourism, among them the lack of child-friendly facilities, services and products (Sigala, 2019).

Few studies on wineries' supply mention playgrounds, activities and experiences for families and children in wineries (Back, Lowry, & Higgins, 2021; Carlsen, 2011; Martínez Del Vas, Beltran Bueno, & Rubia Albert, 2021), but do not explore the tourist's perspective. Some researchers suggest that families are motivated to visit wine destinations and attractions by the desire to provide educational experiences to their children (Sigala, 2019; Singh, Wagner, & Raab, 2020), being very concerned about suitable facilities and activities (Calvi & Gonzalez, 2016; Yue, Govindasamy, & Kelley, 2019), which are crucial to a positive and memorable experience (Saayman & Merwe, 2015). Other studies evidence family visitors' dissatisfaction regarding the lack and inadequacy of child-friendly provisions (Dimitrovski & Joukes, 2017; Kotur, 2022; Szolnoki, 2016). In this context, very little is known about the profile, travelling characteristics and experiences of families and children visiting wine destinations, which stresses the relevance of this particular study.

2.3 Wine routes and the cases of Bairrada, Beira Interior and Dão

A wine route is a network of public and private wine and tourist agents in a given area, which work together to promote wine regions' development, increasing their appeal and competitiveness (Brás, Costa, & Buhalis, 2010; Bruwer, 2003; Brunori & Rossi, 2000). By combining different wineries, wine estates, natural and cultural attractions, equipment and landscapes, wine routes provide complex wine tourist experiences beyond wine tasting and buying (Barroco & Amaro, 2020; Bruwer, 2003).

In Portugal, wine culture and production are crucial for the country's identity and economy, while wine routes are considered strategic for strengthening the country's tourism attractiveness (Brás et al., 2010; Correia, Vaughan, Edwards, & Silva, 2014). Since 1995, twelve wine routes have been established in Portugal (Barroco & Amaro, 2020): The Alentejo Wine Route and the Algarve Wine Route, in their respective regions; the Vinho Verde (green wine) Route, the Távora-Varosa Wine Route and The Douro and Porto Wine Route in the North of the country; the Península de Setúbal Wine Route and the Carcavelos and Colares Wine Route, in the Lisbon Metropolitan area; the Tejo Wine Route and the Lisbon Wine Route between Lisbon and Central areas; and finally, the Bairrada Route, the Beira Interior Wine Route and the Dão Wine Route in the northern part of Portugal's Central region, which are analysed in this study. Figure 1 illustrates the areas covered by these three last routes.

The Dão Wine Route was established in 1995 and inaugurated in 1998, with 17 members among wineries, wine estates and wine cooperatives (Carneiro et al., 2022). Until 2015, it had a discrete development, but a readjustment process took place that year. Under a different strategy, new producers joined, and a new marketing strategy and initiatives were adopted (Barroco & Amaro, 2020). In 2022, the route brought together 49 producers distributed along five different itineraries spread over a territory surrounded by mountains, with a unique microclimate. The region produces elegant red wine and fresh whites, with Touriga Nacional and Encruzado recognised as the main grape varieties, respectively (Carneiro et al., 2022).

The Bairrada Wine Route was created in 1999, connecting producers from eight municipalities between the urban centres of Aveiro and Coimbra (Brás et al., 2010; Correia et al., 2007). In 2006, the wine route was incorporated into the Bairrada Route, with the creation of a regional public-private tourism association composed of more than 40 members among municipalities, accommodations, restaurants, tour operators, wine producers and the Bairrada Wine Commission (Castro, 2014; Lopes et al., 2018). The Bairrada region is a continuous territory between Coimbra

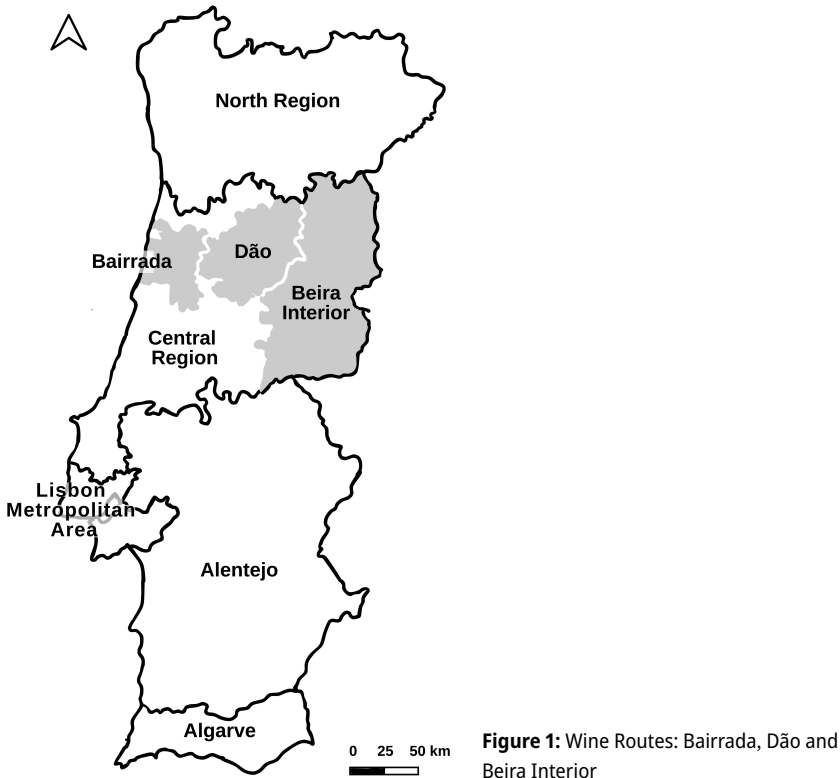


Figure 1: Wine Routes: Bairrada, Dão and Beira Interior

and Aveiro, with a Mediterranean climate and maritime influence, known for its natural sparkling wines (Carneiro et al., 2022).

The Beira Interior Route was established in 2019, joining 70 members among wineries, wine cooperatives, accommodations, restaurants, municipalities, and others. The route covers three wine-growing zones in Portugal’s highest wine region, characterised by high mountains, severe cold in winter and hot and dry summers, producing distinct high-altitude wines (Carneiro et al., 2023).

These three regions provide a wide range of experiences related to wine, culture, nature and rurality. Bairrada has a variety of attractions, such as museums, historical heritage, natural areas, nearby beaches and thermal springs. In the Beira Interior region, visitors can find historical heritage, villages, river beaches and natural areas, notably Serra da Estrela, where winter sports are practised. The Dão, in addition to natural elements, such as parks and river beaches, stands out for its historic villages and for the cultural heritage of Viseu, including the Grão-Vasco Museum, Viseu Cathedral and the Cave of Viriato, an important figure in the country’s history.

3 Methods

This paper adopts an exploratory approach based on descriptive statistics and bivariate statistical analyses, with data from a survey conducted in the scope of the previously mentioned TWINE Project, which analysed cocreated tourist experiences in wine route territories and their impacts on rural wine destinations, namely the mentioned wine regions of Bairrada, Dão and Beira Interior.

From 2019 to 2022, in different months and weekdays, a survey questionnaire was administered to 1550 visitors in different contexts of Bairrada, Dão and Beira Interior wine routes, including cellar doors, wineries, wine museums, hotels, local accommodation, wine events and festivals.

The present study explores data collected from 370 visitors travelling in groups with minors, that is, children, since their presence is the distinctive element of a family travel group (Wu et al., 2019). The questionnaire comprised multiple-choice, Likert-type scales and a few open-ended questions, resulting in data permitting analysis of visitor profile, travel motivation, travel characteristics, including attractions visited and activities undertaken, as well as satisfaction and loyalty.

Statistical analyses were carried out with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (IBM SPSS) software, version 28. For comparing groups of different family visitors, independent samples *t*-tests and *chi*-square tests were used, and a significance level of 5 % was considered for all the quantitative analyses.

4 Results

4.1 Profile of sample

Respondents are, on average, 46 years old, suggesting a male or female middle-aged visitor (Table 1). When observing the distribution by age group, there is a predominance of respondents between 35 and 49 years, especially in Dão (69.9 %) and Bairrada (58.3 %). In Beira Interior, the percentage of respondents aged 65 or over stands out, suggesting more seniors, as also visible in the fact that visitors of this region have fewer minors in their household than those of the other regions.

Most respondents are domestic visitors, particularly in the Beira Interior, which has few international visitors. Dão has relatively more international visitors, and Bairrada has the highest percentage (17.5 %), possibly suggesting a declining international market concentration from the coastal regions to the inland rural areas. Respondents tend to live in urban contexts, in households with around 3 individuals, including one dependent minor on average. Most of them are pro-

fessionally active, with a considerable percentage of retired individuals in Beira Interior (25.6 %), reflecting the already mentioned larger number of older visitors. Respondents have a moderate level of education: 27.7 % have at least secondary school, while 55.4 % have at least a Bachelor’s Degree. At Beira Interior, a higher percentage of respondents completed only primary or middle-school levels, which may also relate to the older visitors (Table 1).

Table 1: Sample sociodemographic characteristics

Variables		Bairrada			Beira Interior			Dão			Total		
		<i>n</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>
Age		103	43.3	11.7	151	47.45	15.7	106	45.5	9.6	360	45.7	13.0
Residence context:	1 rural to 7 urban	93	5.7	1.5	99	5.8	1.3	83	5.9	1.4	339	5.8	1.4
Household size		100	3.6	1.5	138	2.7	1.3	101	3.4	1.5	294	3.2	1.4
Number of minors in the household		93	1.4	1.1	108	0.8	0.9	93	1.5	0.8	275	1.2	1.0
		Bairrada		Beira Interior		Dão		Total					
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%				
Age ranges	up to 34	19	18.4	39	25.8	6	5.7	64	17.8				
	35 to 49	60	58.3	46	30.5	73	68.9	179	49.7				
	50 to 64	17	16.5	34	22.5	22	20.8	73	20.3				
	65 +	7	6.8	32	21.2	5	4.7	44	12.2				
	Total	103	100.0	151	100.0	106	100.0	360	100.0				
Gender	Female	61	59.2	94	61.8	61	57.0	216	59.7				
	Male	42	40.8	58	38.2	46	43.0	146	40.3				
	Total	103	100.0	152	100.0	107	100.0	361	100.0				
Educational level	Primary School	0	0.0	13	9.0	1	1.0	14	4.0				
	Middle school	14	14.0	27	18.6	4	3.8	45	12.9				
	Secondary school	19	19.0	31	21.4	25	23.8	75	21.4				
	Vocational	11	11.0	10	6.9	1	1.0	22	6.3				
	Bachelor Degree	34	34.0	40	27.6	37	35.2	111	31.7				
	Master or PhD	22	22.0	24	16.6	37	35.2	83	23.7				
	Total	100	100.0	145	100.0	105	100.0	350	100.0				
Professional status	Professionally active	78	80.4	85	63.9	86	88.7	250	76.2				
	Retired	10	10.3	34	25.6	7	7.2	51	15.5				
	Student	4	4.1	6	4.5	2	2.1	12	3.7				
	Managing household	3	3.1	4	3.0	0	0.0	7	2.1				
	Unemployed	2	2.1	4	3.0	2	2.1	8	2.4				
	Total	97	100.0	133	100.0	97	100.0	327	100.0				
Place of residence	Domestic	80	82.5	145	98.6	95	89.6	320	91.4				
	International	17	17.5	2	1.4	11	10.4	30	8.6				
	Total	97	100.0	147	100.0	106	100.0	351	100.0				

4.2 Motivations to visit the destination

When the whole sample is considered, *leisure, relaxing, having a good time with the family, getting to know the region better* and *having fun* correspond to the five most cited reasons to visit the destination (Table 2). However, some particularities can be observed when examining each region's main motivations. For instance, at Bairrada and Dão, *leisure, recreation and/or holiday* and *having a good time with the family* motivated almost at least half the respondents, while at Beira Interior, 21.7% and 25.7% referred to these reasons, respectively. In turn, Beira Interior respondents are more concerned with *socialising with others* than others. Notably, Beira Interior respondents indicated less motivation to visit the region, which can be observed in the smaller percentages for many items. In Table 2, the top five motivations per region are shaded.

Table 2: Motivations to visit the destination

Motivations	Bairrada		Beira Interior		Dão		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Leisure, recreation and/or holiday	71	67.6	39	25.7	74	68.5	184	50.4
To relax	53	49.5	52	34.2	43	39.8	148	40.5
To have a good time with my family	57	54.3	33	21.7	54	50.0	144	39.5
To get to know this region better	29	27.6	50	32.9	41	38.0	120	32.9
To have fun	38	36.2	52	34.2	24	22.2	114	31.2
To socialise with others	24	22.9	57	37.5	21	19.4	102	27.9
To be in contact with nature	39	37.1	42	27.6	17	15.7	98	26.8
To get away from the hustle and bustle of daily life	28	26.7	39	25.7	23	21.3	90	24.7
To experience something new	21	20.0	20	13.2	13	12.0	54	14.8
To taste wines	25	23.8	7	4.6	19	17.6	51	14.0
To visit friends or relatives	11	10.5	13	8.6	12	11.1	36	9.9
To learn about wine and winemaking	15	14.3	4	2.6	11	10.2	30	8.2
To be physically active	6	5.7	13	8.6	7	6.5	26	7.1
Total	105		152		108		365	

Despite these differences, which are probably connected to each region's offerings and attributes and dynamics of tourist flows, wine-related motives seem to be little relevant for the three regions' family visitors, notably for those in the Beira Interior. Although with much less weight than other motivations, Bairrada and then Dão, are the routes that seem to attract more family visitors to participate in traditional wine tourism activities, such as tasting (23.8% and 17.6%) and learning about

wine and winemaking (14.3 % and 10.2 %), which may indicate a more mature wine tourism supply or destination identity, which is expected given these routes earlier establishment comparing to the Beira Interior Wine Route.

4.3 Travel context

The region where each route is located, corresponds to the main destination for most respondents. Even so, especially in Dão and Bairrada, a significant percentage of tourists classified these regions as secondary or less important destinations (Table 3). This may be related to their location within or close to regions with other significant and renowned destinations and attractions, such as the cities of Coimbra and Aveiro, as well as the ocean beaches, in the case of Bairrada, and the city of Viseu, the Historic Villages and the Douro, in the case of the Dão route. As far as previous experience is concerned, most Bairrada and Beira Interior visitors have already visited these regions, while Dão respondents are generally first-time visitors. This result may indicate different tourism development stages among these three regions.

Table 3: Context and previous experience

Variables	Bairrada		Beira Interior		Dão		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Wine route relevance								
The main destination	43	41.7	78	57.4	54	50.9	175	50.7
An important destination, but not the main one	27	26.0	25	18.4	30	28.3	82	23.8
Just a minor destination on the way	33	31.7	33	24.3	22	20.8	88	25.5
Total	103	100.0	136	100.0	106	100.0	345	100.0
Previous visits								
At least 1	58	57.4	78	51.3	39	36.8	175	48.7
No	43	42.2	74	48.7	67	63.2	184	51.1
Total	102	100.0	152	100.0	106	100.0	360	100.0

As previously mentioned, this study's sample comprises individuals with children visiting three Portuguese wine routes (*n* = 370), who were surveyed in the scope of a broader investigation on wine routes' visitors (*n* = 1550): the TWINE Project. Therefore, as expected, all respondents were travelling with children (minors). Still, there are different travel groups: most visitors were members of groups including

children aged 10 years or under (Table 4). However, Bairrada and Dão have a significant presence of children aged 11 years or above. Apart from children, many respondents were travelling with their partner, although some were accompanied by friends, other family members or even an excursion group. In Beira Interior, a significant percentage of other family members suggest multigenerational family groups given the higher age of this route’s respondents.

Table 4: Travelling characteristics

Variables	Bairrada		Beira Interior		Dão		Total	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Travel group composition								
With children aged 10 or less	65	61.9	140	89.2	82	75.9	287	77.6
With children older than 10	52	49.2	36	22.9	52	48.1	140	37.8
With a partner (couples)	64	61.0	45	28.7	66	61.1	175	47.3
With other family members	28	26.4	58	36.9	20	18.5	106	28.6
With friends	16	15.1	5	3.2	25	23.1	46	12.4
With tour group members	9	8.5	85	54.1	2	1.9	96	25.9
Total	105	–	157	–	108	–	370	–
Length of stay								
At least 1 overnight	77	77.8	72	49.7	100	93.5	249	70.9
Day-tripper	22	22.2	73	50.3	7	6.5	102	29.1
Total	99	100.0	145	100.0	107	100.0	351	100.0
Means of transportation								
Car	88	83.0	40	25.6	99	91.6	224	61.4
Bus	6	5.7	114	75.0	7	6.5	127	34.7
Airplane	12	11.3	1	0.7	1	0.9	14	3.8
Train	7	6.7	1	0.7	1	0.9	9	2.5
Bike	3	2.8	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	0.8
Total	105	–	152	–	108	–	365	–
Accommodation								
Hotel or similar	65	75.6	46	69.7	76	85.4	187	77.6
Friend or family house	9	10.5	6	9.1	4	4.5	19	7.9
2 nd residence	9	10.5	6	9.1	3	3.4	18	7.5
At a winery/cellar	3	3.5	1	1.5	5	5.6	9	3.7
Camping/motorcaravan	0	0.0	1	1.5	0	0.0	1	0.4
Other	0	0.0	6	9.1	1	1.1	7	2.9
Total	86	100.0	66	100.0	89	100.0	241	100.0

The car was the most used means of transportation for Bairrada and Dão visitors. At the same time, in Beira Interior, buses were mentioned by 75 % of the sample, which is directly related to the large percentage of day-trippers and the presence of organised tours. Although very few respondents reported other means of transportation, it is remarkable that Bairrada visitors appear to use more varied alternatives, which is probably explained by the proximity to Porto International Airport and to a railway that crosses the region.

In Bairrada and Dão, most respondents spent at least one overnight, especially in hotels or similar accommodations. Around half of Beira Interior respondents were day-trippers, which is consistent with the occurrence of visitors in organised tour groups. Approximately 10 % of Bairrada and Dão respondents were staying with friends or relatives or in second residences, suggesting some familiarity with these destinations.

In an open-ended question, participants were asked to indicate the main sites and attractions visited in each region. The several places cited were grouped into six categories (Table 5). The main attractions visited reflect their motivations and each region’s features. Cultural attractions and historical heritage are relevant for families visiting the three wine routes, especially in Dão, where the Grão Vasco Museum, Viriato Cove and historic villages are the most cited places. Natural attractions, in turn, were referred by most of the Bairrada and Beira Interior respondents who alluded to forests and beaches in Bairrada, and to the Serra da Estrela Natural Park, in Beira Interior.

Table 5: Type of attractions and places visited

Attractions and places	Bairrada		Beira Interior		Dão		Total	
	N	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Cultural attractions and heritage	32	40.0	36	37.9	44	62.9	112	45.7
Natural attractions and places	41	51.2	51	53.7	18	25.7	110	44.9
Wineries, wine estates and wine museums	39	48.8	5	5.2	16	22.9	60	24.4
City centres or neighbourhoods	19	23.8	13	13.7	15	21.4	47	19.2
Thermal springs and baths	17	21.3	9	9.5	2	2.9	28	11.4
Places related to gastronomy (e. g., restaurants)	0	0	8	8.4	1	1.4	9	3.7
Total	80	-	95	-	70	-	245	-

Although very few visitors declared being motivated to visit the region due to its wine tourism attributes, a considerable part, notably in Bairrada, have visited wine-related attractions, such as wineries, wine estates and wine museums.

Respondents also referred to city centres and thermal springs, predominantly at Bairrada (Termas do Luso), followed by Beira Interior (Termas do Cró). Very few participants referred to gastronomy, which may suggest that respondents do not generally understand places related to food, like restaurants, as tourist attractions. However, this does not mean that these do not attract visitors.

4.4 Satisfaction and loyalty

The respondents classified their satisfaction with values from 1 (very unsatisfied) to 7 (very satisfied). Table 6 shows that *the visit to the destination* and *the experience with the place and its people* received higher scores than *the visit to wine-related places* and *tourism facilities and activities*, suggesting that, despite the regional natural, social and cultural attributes, the tourist supply may not fully meet the expectations, needs and particularities of the family wine visitors. Besides, it is noteworthy that wine-related places show lower scores in Beira Interior and Dão than in Bairrada.

Table 6: Satisfaction

Satisfaction regarding ...	Bairrada			Beira Interior			Dão			Total		
	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.
The visit to this destination	101	5.9	1.2	151	6.1	1.2	103	5.4	1.9	355	5.9	1.5
The visit to wine-related places	55	5.2	1.8	47	4.5	2.3	40	3.8	2.3	142	4.5	2.2
The experience with the place and its people	97	5.9	1.2	140	5.8	1.4	91	5.4	1.8	328	5.7	1.5
Tourism facilities and activities	86	4.5	2.1	117	5.1	1.9	70	4.1	1.9	272	4.7	2.0

This evaluation confirms the loyalty intentions of the respondents, who indicated the likelihood of returning to or recommending the destination with values from 1, meaning not likely at all, to 7, certainly (Table 7). While the probability of recommending the destination and repeating the visit is very high, visitors are not so likely to recommend wineries to their family and friends and to post information on social media.

Table 7: Loyalty

Probability of ...	Bairrada			Beira Interior			Dão			Total		
	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.
Recommending this destination to family and friends	100	6.1	1.1	153	6.1	1.2	106	6.1	1.1	359	6.1	1.1
Recommending the destination's wineries to family and friends	84	4.8	2.2	128	4.6	2.2	85	4.6	2.2	297	4.7	1.5
Repeating the visit to this destination	96	5.7	1.6	144	5.7	1.5	105	5.8	1.4	345	5.7	1.5
Posting information about the visit in social network sites	90	4.6	2.2	135	5.2	2.0	95	4.9	2.1	320	4.9	2.1

4.5 Types of family visitors to wine routes

In order to better understand families visiting wine routes, respondents were grouped according to the relevance of wine-related attractions and attributes to their experience. Thus, family visitors interviewed at wine-related places, declaring wine-related motivations or/and naming a wine attraction as one of the places visited, were classified as *wine-interested visitors*. For this study's purpose, the remaining respondents with valid answers were classified as general visitors.

Then, the variables analysed in this study were explored to assess statistically significant differences among them. According to the variable type and if the test's assumptions were met², *Chi-square* tests and *t-tests* were performed, revealing statistically significant differences that suggest particular travelling behaviour patterns.

Table 8 presents statistically significant differences related to travel context derived from *Chi-square* tests. While nearly all general family visitors came from other Portuguese regions, there are significantly more international family tourists visiting wine-related places (22.5 %). General visitors tend to consider the region where they were interviewed as their main destination. In contrast, for wine visitors, it is more likely to be a secondary or minor destination, suggesting that, for these families, wine-related regions and attractions are one of a set of travel interests, visited within a larger regional or even country visitation context.

2 Accommodation, use of train, bikes and airplanes, as well attractions related to gastronomy did not meet assumptions for *Chi-square* tests.

Table 8: Significant differences between wine visitors and general visitors concerning travel context

<i>Travel context's particular characteristics</i>		Wine-interested visitors		General visitors	
		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Wine route visited ($\chi^2 = 73.449, p < 0.00.1$)	Bairrada	63	57.3	41	18.2
	Dão	33	30.0	52	23.1
	Beira Interior	14	12.7	132	58.7
	Total	110	100.0	225	100.0
Origin ($\chi^2 = 31.898, p < .001$)	Domestic	79	77.9	208	97.2
	International	23	22.5	6	2.8
	Total	102	100.0	214	100.0
Context ($\chi^2 = 12.655, p = .002$)	Main Destination	40	37.4	121	58.2
	Important Destination	35	32.7	41	19.7
	Minor Destination	32	29.9	46	22.1
	Total	107	100.0	208	100.0
Travel group composition		<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Children aged 10 years or less ($\chi^2 = 22.565, p < .001$)		70	63.6	194	86.2
Children aged 11 or more ($\chi^2 = 6.996, p = .008$)		51	46.4	71	31.6
Travelling in tour groups ($\chi^2 = 23.193, p < .001$)		12	10.9	81	36.0
Total		110	–	225	–

Most wine-interested visitors were surveyed in Bairrada, suggesting that this region can already attract this market and, as previously indicated, may be a more mature wine destination. Children aged 10 or less are much more frequent among general visitors' groups, and those aged 11 or more are slightly more observed in wine-interested visitor groups, which may be connected to more constraints associated with visiting wine-related attractions with younger children, a hypothesis to be explored in further studies.

Differences concerning motivations, attractions visited, and improvements required provide evidence of each group's particular interests (Table 9). Besides wine-related motives, which obviously show a strong distinction between groups, there are also significant differences concerning other motivations, although at a moderate level. More wine visitors appear to be interested in leisure than general visitors, who, in turn, are more motivated by having fun and socialising with others. Regarding places visited, significant differences were observed only in the percentages of respondents citing natural attractions: half of the general visitors and only 26.8 % of wine-interested visitors.

Table 9: Significant differences between wine visitors and general visitors concerning their interests

Differences concerning visitors		Wine-interested visitors		General visitors	
		n	%	n	%
Motivations	Having fun ($\chi^2=4.046, p=.044$)	28	25.5	82	36.4
	Leisure, recreation and/or holiday ($\chi^2=4.895, p=.027$)	64	58.2	102	45.3
	Socialising with others ($\chi^2=4.706, p=.030$)	24	21.8	75	33.3
	Total	110	-	225	-
Visit to natural attractions	Yes ($\chi^2=12.684, p<.001$)	19	26.8	88	51.8
	No	52	73.2	82	48.2
	Total	71	-	170	-
Suggestions for improvements	Wine & food experiences ($\chi^2=18.469, p<.001$)	71	68.3	86	42.4
	Learning and tasting wine activities ($\chi^2=13.517, p<.001$)	59	56.7	78	38.4
	Wine events ($\chi^2 = 9.499, p = .002$)	36	34.6	38	18.7
	Activities for children ($\chi^2=9.327, p=.002$)	32	30.8	27	13.3
	Better access to wine-related places ($\chi^2=3.851, p=.050$)	21	20.2	24	11.8
	Accommodation at the wineries ($\chi^2=5.368, p = .021$)	26	25.0	29	14.3
	Interesting stories about the region & wines ($\chi^2=6.341, p=.012$)	34	32.7	40	19.7
	Total	104	-	203	-

When asked about suggestions for improvements, wine visitors, as expected, have shown to be more concerned about some wine experiences, such as wine-related activities for children, events, pairings, and storytelling. However, it is noteworthy that even general visitors refer to wine tourism offerings as relevant improvements for these destinations, suggesting they may be interested in wine tourism under different circumstances, constituting a potential market to be targeted. Moreover, the non-significant differences regarding other motivations, places visited, and suggestions for improvements indicate not only common interests for both groups but an interest in wine tourism by tourists in search of leisure, fun and socialising with others, especially in contact with nature.

Finally, *t*-tests revealed peculiar significant differences in satisfaction and loyalty (Table 10).

Table 10: Significant differences between wine visitors and general visitors concerning satisfaction and loyalty

Variables	Wine visitors			General visitors		
	n	mean	s.d.	n	mean	s.d.
Satisfaction with the visit to this destination	105	5.4	1.9	218	6.1	1.2
Probability of recommending the destination's wineries to family and friends	96	5.8	1.5	177	4.1	2.2

Although general family tourists are more satisfied with the visit to the destination, wine-interested family tourists are more likely to recommend destinations' wineries for family and friends, highlighting a possible benefit of properly catering to this market.

5 Discussion

This study's results align with previous research emphasising a broad wine tourism concept, since it provides evidence of the multiple nature of wine tourists' motivations, activities and profiles (Byrd et al., 2016). Respondents are motivated by both core wine product elements and by wine terroir attributes (Hall & Mitchell, 2002; Holland et al., 2017).

Wine visitors are driven by primary wine tourism motivations, while general visitors are moved by secondary motivations, which aligns with the studies of Alant and Bruwer (2004) and Sparks (2007). The results also reinforce the importance of fun, leisure, relaxation and socialising as reasons for family travel, albeit with different weights for each route, corroborating findings by Carr (2011), Li et al. (2017) and Shaw et al. (2008). On the other hand, it is observed that – especially in the Bairrada Route – the presence of visitors with children is not only motivated by wine-related reasons, but also involves an engagement with wine-related attractions and interest in improvements regarding wine tourism activities and facilities, contemplating not only experiences inside the cellar door, but also at the vineyard, taking advantage of the attributes of the terroir. Interest in wine tourism offerings, even by general visitors, reveals groups with children as a potential market for wine tourism, albeit constrained by the lack of adequate offerings, as indicated by Cho et al. (2017), Gu and Huang (2019) and Sigala (2019), as their satisfaction level with wineries and facilities suggest.

The results also indicate differences among these three wine routes concerning levels of development, tourism offerings and visitor profiles. Bairrada and Dão

have a more similar profile. However, the first stands out in groups with children with wine-related interests and places visited, as well as international travellers. This might also be explained by better accessibility and proximity to destinations with attractions traditionally associated with family tourism – beaches and thermal springs. However, the presence of families in the Beira Interior cannot be ignored. Even if motivated by the natural elements – mountains and snow – their suggestions for improvements reveal some interest in wine tourism.

Families thus seem to constitute a potential market for wine tourism and, in certain destinations, an effective demand. Whether they are *wine lovers* or merely *hangers-on* (Charters & Ali-Knight's, 2002), families can benefit from innovative, engaging and suitable wine tourism experiences for all ages. Therefore, the inclusion of families and children in wine tourism can – due to its varied configuration and potential, connecting different interests in the common search for leisure, fun, relaxation and togetherness – stimulate wine routes due to their potential to boost general tourist activity in wine-producing territories.

6 Conclusions

This study explores the behaviour of family visitors to three wine routes in Portugal. Results elucidate the possibilities of families as a potential market for wine tourism, especially in regions where winemaking, culture, nature and people are distinguishing dimensions of the region's identity. The sample of families selected for this study corresponds to 24 % of the respondents of the TWINE Project. However, this percentage does not accurately reflect family tourism representativeness in the three regions analysed since the original survey was applied, to a large degree, in wine-related settings. On the other hand, having emerged from data collection within wine route territories, results point at these territories' potential for the often neglected family market.

By revealing the behaviour and the profile of families visiting wine routes, results provide relevant information to understand family wine tourism, a neglected topic in wine tourism studies. Besides, by revealing the participation and interest in wine-related experiences of families with children, results point to innovation possibilities by wine routes, destinations and attractions, as already found in some examples worldwide (Malerba et al., 2023). Nevertheless, this group's specificities, needs and constraints must be understood and addressed.

The example of these Portuguese wine routes suggests that wine tourism may attract more than classic middle-aged couples. This study's findings, thus, invite wine-related attractions, wine routes and destination managers to recognise the

potentialities of family tourism markets for their destinations, comprehend their particular needs and interests and consider providing services for them within a strategic, inclusive and sustainable approach, possibly further distinguishing family groups according to the age of children involved (Schänzel & Yeoman, 2015).

Although, on the one hand, the study is limited to a specific look at three routes in Portugal (with additional regional differences), on the other hand, it contributes to bringing to light an underexplored theme. In this sense, the questions raised by the study indicate new directions for further research, namely, the differences between the behaviour of wine visitors with and without children, the need to study also perceptions of supply managers and their receptivity to this market, the identification of best family-friendly wine tourism practices, as well as understanding the needs, experiences and benefits expected by this unique profile of wine tourists. The results also reinforce the need for further studies directly focused on families' interest – or not – in wine tourism. This study contributes by bringing information about an understudied market, signalling new possibilities for wine destination and attraction managers and, especially, suggesting additional studies in this scope.

A wine route corresponds to a privileged instrument for organising and publicising wine tourism and is often the main attraction factor in rural areas (Brás et al., 2010; Brunori & Rossi, 2000; Bruwer, 2003). Hence, it would make sense for the routes to plan and manage their supply from a holistic perspective, covering different markets, such as families and children. In this sense, DMO may help wine tourism suppliers to recognise families with children as potential markets that require a creative and innovative marketing approach, including family-friendly experiences, child-care facilities and fun activities. Wineries, tourism providers, destination managers and other regional agents should develop partnerships to provide a wide and varied experience integrating the different products and attributes of the wine region in a cooperative approach (Salvado et al., 2023). Just as families are multigenerational and multi-motivated groups, wine routes are multifaceted networks integrating various attractions, suppliers, organisations and destinations, which may be a privileged context to meet and satisfy different publics, in the present case, distinct family members' expectations through integrated experience approaches.

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