THE WINE TOURISM IN YAMANASHI, JAPAN: VALORIZATION OF LOCAL PRODUCT AND THE TERRITORY

Le Tourisme du vin à Yamanshi, Japon : Valorisation d’un produit local et du territoire

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ABSTRACT

The paper aims to present a description and analysis about Yamanashi wine tourism and the local project to enhance the local wine reputation. Yamanashi is one of the three main wine production areas in Japan. The methodology is the case study. The results show that the wine tourists are usually a day visitor and during 1999-2008 the day visitors in Yamanashi had been increased. There is a collective effort in Yamanashi in order to promote the local wine in domestic and external market. The main hypothesis generated is that the rural tourism or wine tourism can promote the local product valorization and consequently the territorial valorization.

KEY WORDS: multi-functionality, wine tourism, Yamanashi, Japan

1. INTRODUCTION

The paper aims to present a description and analysis about Yamanashi wine tourism and the local project to enhance the local wine reputation. Yamanashi is one of the three main wine production areas in Japan. The Yamanashi province has historic background about wine and grapes. The Koshu grape has been produced since the Meiji Era. Recently it was found by technicians that Koshu grape is a Vitis viniferae appropriate for good wine. The farmers in the region are getting older and the government tries to revitalize the rural area by stimulating the rural tourism and the wine tourism. There is a strong social integration in order to achieve these objectives. The main question in this research is the following: if the rural tourism is a good way to local product valorization or local wine valorization? This study also has been interested in exploring the relationship of rural tourism with the wines and grapes and to identify the economic and social actors who lives in this rural area where the tourism are developing.

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology of this study is the case study. In order to conduct the research it was collected information and data through by deep interview with social actors involved with wine tourism and wine production in Yamanashi (Yin, 2004). Meetings and interviews with Yamanashi government officials from tourism, industry and agriculture departments are conducted. Also technical visits were carried out to farmers and wineries. Data as time series of area and production of wine grapes published for Yamanashi prefectural government were collected in order to analyze the potential of wine tourism. This paper is part of the JICA (Japan International Cooperation Agency) training program, carried out during September 2011.

3. Theoretical Approaches: Rural Tourism and Wine Tourism

The OEDC (2001) published a report about multi-functionality in agriculture to give support for public policies. The multi-functionality is connected with different services and tasks (no output commodity) in agriculture generated along with food production. Multi-functionality promotes the maintenance of the population in the rural area.

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areas and the preservation of landscape and natural environment. The multi-functionality also is expected to be effective on quality life in the rural area, sustainable development, to contribute for heritage preservation in the territorial space as well. According to OEDC (2001, 2005) the union between agricultural products and multi-functionality is a key element to define the public policies. The presence of scope economies in the agricultural production and multi-functionality implies potential advantage in cost and competitive advantage especially for those small farmers who don’t have scale economies.

The rural tourism in turn presents itself as the activities and services offered in rural areas with the aim of offering tourists a pleasure, different experiences as well an exotic experience and also it includes provision to see products in the rural area. Rural tourism is also represented by many different activities such as eco-rural tourism, educational tourism, historic tourism, wine tourism, among many others. This phenomenon involves different areas of studies as economics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, management, education, and natural sciences (Cesar Dachary, 2003; Basco, 2009). The rural areas where productive agricultural activity is carried out with the purpose of offering the product to market is currently undergoing a revitalization process through rural tourism and educational tourism, including the role of retirees who return to rural areas in Japan (Ohe, 2003, 2008).

According to Cambourne et al. (2000, apud Charters and Ali-knight, 2002) the concept of wine tourism is still a concept in construction and there is much to explore about the "industry" of tourism and wine industry and their collaboration. In the case of wine tourism, the tourists or visitors have a fundamental role, since that they choose the location to have a different experience with wine. The product has a very important weight in the decision to undertake this type of tourism. Tourism is a service activity and the economic forces that determine the price product and service are demand driven. Therefore, prices are formed by the nature of the producer service offered, seasonality, value added, and consumer demographics. On the other hand, the wine industry is influenced by the seasonal offer, temporal, global, and natural factors which have influence to the agriculture; therefore, it's characterized as a price taker. The joint of the two activities allows those farmers, to balance the economic forces of nature price with the advantages of demand driven, to reduce the risk improving the product to retail market and to stay in rural areas (Charters and Carlsen, 2006). Wine tourism represents options for strengthening and development of local products through integrated actions in the agrifood systems and wine industries located in rural areas.

4. RESULTS

Yamanashi is the major producer of grapes in Japan and also characterized by the production of wines with the presence of 80 wineries in the region. The most important wine grapes varieties produced in Yamanashi are Delaware, Koshu and Muscat. Koshu it’s elected as the main Vitis vinifera in Yamanashi. The total volume of wine producing Japan is 77000 kl and Yamanashi produce 30000kl, 32,5%. There are different typologies of wineries, since the small farmers producing wine with partnership and medium and big size wineries, part of the international beverage groups as Kirin, Suntory, and Kikoman. Since 1980 the production area and the volume of wine grapes has been dropping and there are three reasons for that: Firstly, the increase the production of the table grapes varieties. Secondly, the higher prices of table grapes. Thirdly, the aging of farmers and progress of part time less intensive farming (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year/Grapes</th>
<th>Delaware</th>
<th>Koshu</th>
<th>Moscato</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Area (ha)</td>
<td>Ton</td>
<td>Area (ha)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>1,050</td>
<td>11,900</td>
<td>565</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
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<td>10,200</td>
<td>554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>966</td>
<td>11,300</td>
<td>538</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>945</td>
<td>10,700</td>
<td>507</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>924</td>
<td>9,880</td>
<td>482</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>911</td>
<td>10,400</td>
<td>458</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>902</td>
<td>9,790</td>
<td>448</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1 –Area and Wine Grapes Production in Yamanashi, 2000-2006.

The wine tourism is a way to increase the domestic wine production in Japan. In Yamanashi the province government started in 2009, a project of wine tourism with participation of the community, farmers, and wineries. Also the government of Yamanashi started in Nov 2011 the program that cover 26 different tourism products and services offered in Yamanashi denominated by 26 Vitam Program, a big publicity project, and each month it’s elected one special product or service for an intensive communication and publicity. During autumn, the wine is the product elected for the local tourism, because is the beginning of the harvest. For wine two brands strategies are in development: the Koshu wine brand and the Yamanashi wine brand. The main strategy is to maintain the local wine
prices in the same level of the imported wine and also offer the same quality. This strategy is characterized as the promotion of the collective and local wine brand. The main concept is to do the valorization of local product and to spread out to the national market and abroad. In November 2010, it was carried out the brand event, the Yamanashi Noveau, in Hibiya Park, Tokyo, with 10,000 persons participation. This kind of event is sponsored by the government of Yamanashi, the wineries and cooperatives. Also the province government does extensive work to support the farmers to improve the quality of the grapes and wines. The Koshu of Japan Association, KOJ, is formed by 14 wineries in order to promote the Koshu wine abroad, starting by London and then the rest of Europe. The reason of the huge investments in Koshu wines is that it was discovered that the Koshu grapes is a Vitis vinifera, since 2000 it’s registered in OIV, Vine International Organization. Overseas promotion for Koshu wine started by London. The promotion is based on the fact of worldwide Japanese food boom and this wine has the distinctive flavor that’s goes well with Japanese cuisine. Jancis Robinson, famous sommelier, visited Yamanashi in 2010 and also participated on London Koshu competition to promote the Koshu brand in London, where many journalists made reports about Koshu wine. Also there is a community group working with the government in order to promote the wine tourism and also they organize activities for the local population to know and to taste the local wine.

Following the Osaka World Expo of 1970, there was a boom in the trade between Japan and the west and a trend toward more western culinary habits. There were active efforts to expand the wine market in Japan, and wine rapidly became a part of Japanese life, but the wine have to compete with many other alcohol drinks. Between many alcohol beverages in Japan, the beer is the largest consumed drink with 33,3% of the total. Despite the decreasing consumption for traditional drinks as sake, shochu and liquors in the small cities consumers still have preference for traditional drinks. Wine is small part of the alcohol drink, with 2,8% of total and the consumption is higher in the big city as Tokyo and Osaka. Despite this low percentage, the increase of wine consumption in the last four decades is very impressive, 240000 KL, considering imported and domestic wine. From 1981 until 2009, the total wine consumption in Japan increased 449,6%. The participation of imported wine was 26,5% and in 2009 is 66,8%. The participation of national wine was 73,5 % and decreased to 33,2% and Yamanashi wine participation was 36,9% and in 2009 is 10,0%. Since 1994, the consumption of imported wine is superior of national wine. The first boom of wine consumption in Japan was in 1990 with the Beaujolais nouveau entry and the second boom was in 1995-98 with the important information about wine benefits for wealth.

![Figure 1 – Wine Consumption in Japan, 1981-2009. Source: nta-jp (National Tax Agency)](image)

4.1- TWO CASES DESCRIPTION
The wine tourism in Kofu and Katsunuma present a strong contrasts, because the tourists can find a simple farm selling the wine in the plantation and also they can enjoy a tasting in the sophisticated winery, where it’s offering souvenirs, chocolates, candies, wine tasting, wine sales in the well decorated shopping. It was visited both,
a small farmer and a winery with infrastructure to receive the visitors. During the visit an interview was conducted about the tourism, agriculture, and wine production. Mitsumori Farm -Mitsumori farm is located in Katsunuma, 500 meters altitude, where the visitors have beautiful landscape of the valley. The owner of farm, Mitsumori, is a young man with around 40 years old, he was an employee in Hotel, and in this occasion he did a sommelier course when he got interest about wines. Five years ago he came back to home in Katsunuma to help his parents, who were getting old, to produce grapes. For the last 4 years he produces wines with collaboration of an Asary winery. The farmer has 1.5 ha shared in 90% with table grapes and 10% grapes for wine, Koshu grapes. The volume of production is around 9 ton of table grapes and 1 ton of Koshu grapes. The productivity is 10 t/ha. The people working there are 3 family persons, 3 part time employees. The visitor can do pick on the grapes during the harvest. Delaware is the earliest harvested variety and Koshu grapes are the lasted, October and November. The rural tourism in the Mitsumori farm has a few activities options for the visitors. The activities are the landscape view; pick your own the grapes during the grapes harvest and tasting of wine. The farm offers only a tables and chairs nearby the grapes plantation and the grapes, juices and wines are in exposition for sale on the table.”

Chateau Sakaori Winery - The owner of the company is doing trading business and he is located in Kobe. The trade company import beverages and is producing wines since 1991. The volume of grapes processed is 30 ton/year, also he imports 1 ton/year of the bulk wine from others countries as Chile, New Zealand, and USA. The winery is producing 0.5 ha of grapes only for the visitors. The winery buys grapes from a cooperative and the best grapes are produced by two collaborating farmers. In the cellar the visitors can find nice shop with many products related with wine and good wines. The winery produces 50,000 bottles of wine per year. Also the plum wine is produced. In addition, the visitor can do the tour in the plant and to learn about the processing of wines, and to see the equipment used to produce wine.

There a wine route in Katsunuma and the tourism agencies offer a wine tour for who are interested in wine experience, heritage, landscape, and to interact with local producers and to do a wine tasting. The tour includes 4-5 wineries visiting per day and the tourists usually come from other places by train or by bus. Generally the older farmers don’t like the presence of the visitors in the winery. However, there is a very serious convincing job done by officers of prefectural in order to demonstrate the importance of wine tourism for the income increase in the rural area.

5. CONCLUSION

The recent activities in wine tourism in Yamanashi, demonstrates that the tourism in wine sector generated positive results in this area or territory.

First, the positive impact is that this activity stimulated new generations families to continue in rural areas. In Japan the people in rural area are getting gold and the grapes production is dropping. This social problem has been presented in many studies about rural areas in Japan.

Second positive impact is that the farmers are improving the wine quality. The strategies to promote the Koshu wine demanded that the wine quality have to be competitive with imported wines. Great effort has been done in order to improve the wine quality as introducing new technologies and contracting experts from France.

Third positive impact is that the tourism promotes the valorization of local wine and adds an extra income to the farmers. The wine tourism has been attracting many tourists to the wine festival during October and November. Yamanashi has many different sources of tourism as Monte Fuji, the jewelry, the spa, the fruits, and so on, but now a days the tourism agencies has been explored the wine tourism as a new source of rural tourism. The main hypothesis generated is that the rural tourism or wine tourism can promote the local product valorization and consequently the territorial valorization.

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The wine tourist usually is a day tourist and during 1999-2008 the number of this tourist increased significantly in Yamanashi. In 2008 the day visitors was 41 million and overnight tourists was around 6 million. The wine area visitors in weekend are 2,000/day and the per capita spending is around 10,000 Yens per day. Interesting is that the market publicity has focus on women between 30-40 years old well educated.

Figure 3 - Overnight and Day tourists in Yamanashi Area, 1999-2008. Source: Yamanashi Pref. Government

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