

Osipovich M.V., 2nd year student
of the Bachelor's degree programme,
Speciality 242 «Tourism and Recreation»
Scientific supervisor – Candidate of Historical Sciences,
Liubchenko V. V.
Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University

The values of sustainable development in wine tourism through the lens of Generation Z

The wine market in Ukraine has undergone significant transformations over the past decade, demonstrating stable growth and a gradual expansion of its consumer audience. Wine is increasingly perceived not as a luxury item, but as an element of everyday life that combines pleasure, social culture, and conscious consumption. Wine tourism (enotourism, vinitourism) plays a vital role in promoting the wine industry. It is a type of gastronomic tourism that involves visiting wineries, wine cellars, learning about the history of winemaking, and tasting and purchasing local wines.

Today, wineries operate in 20 of Ukraine's 24 regions, and as of July 2025, there were 116 of them. In addition to quantitative growth, the industry is actively adapting to modern challenges. Environmental trends, the introduction of digital technologies, and growing public awareness of sustainable development are contributing to the adoption of environmentally friendly production practices, the efficient use of resources, and the development of a culture of responsible consumption. Adherence to the principles of sustainable development is becoming a prerequisite for the stability of the wine business and economic growth in the regions.

In 1998, The New York Times reported that young people aged 21 to 29 were gradually turning away from wine consumption, causing concern among wine producers. At the time, this referred to the millennial generation, which later became the primary consumer of wine products worldwide. Today, a similar trend can be observed among Generation Z. This observation is confirmed by the results of a recent study conducted in Ukraine in the summer of 2025. According to the study, the largest group of respondents were millennials, accounting for 52% of the total sample and the same proportion of wine tourists. This highlights the pivotal role of this group in shaping the development of wine tourism and the emergence of modern wine consumption culture in Ukraine. At the same time, Generation Z accounts for 24% of the total sample and only 14% of wine tourists, indicating a gradual involvement of younger consumers in wine culture, although their participation in themed events remains limited.

Among the main factors contributing to Generation Z's relatively low interest in wine, researchers highlight young age, lower income levels, a focus on healthy lifestyles, and a lack of knowledge about wine culture. In response to these challenges, Ukrainian wineries are actively adapting their marketing and production strategies by offering new product formats — non-alcoholic (e.g., My Wine by Eduard Gorodetsky, Odesa region), organic (e.g., Biologist, Kyiv region), and eco-certified wines. This approach enables producers not only to meet the needs of a new generation of consumers but also to support global trends in sustainable development and environmental responsibility within the wine industry.

Recent studies confirm that informative labelling and increased consumer awareness of sustainable production methods have a positive impact on their willingness to buy environmentally friendly wines. Although Generation Z shows an interest in sustainable consumption, it largely lacks established taste preferences and often relies on advice or brand reputation, if they are familiar with it. Despite growing attention to environmental issues, young consumers' knowledge of winemaking remains low, and their decisions are primarily influenced by marketing. Therefore, further study of the relationship between sustainability orientation, awareness, and Generation Z's attitude towards wine is a relevant area of contemporary research in the field of wine tourism.

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