

Exploring the Impact of Wildfires on Cyprus' Wine Tourism

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Abstract: This paper investigates the impact of wildfires on the wine tourism sector in Cyprus, where viticulture constitutes a vital pillar of rural development and cultural heritage. The primary objective is to understand how recent wildfires have affected wine tourism operations, infrastructure, and visitor perceptions, as well as to explore pathways for sustainable recovery and sectoral resilience. The study adopts a qualitative methodology. Primary data were collected through semi-structured interviews with winery owners, tourism stakeholders, and local policymakers in fire-affected areas. Secondary data through the form of content analysis—including regional tourism statistics, environmental assessments, and industry reports were analysed to contextualise the findings. Preliminary results revealed significant disruptions to vineyard landscapes, supply chains, and tourism flows. Nonetheless, interviews uncovered a growing awareness among stakeholders of the need for adaptive strategies, such as fire-resilient vineyard practices, climate-conscious marketing, and the integration of eco-tourism narratives. These strategies are seen not only as recovery tools but also as long-term opportunities for repositioning Cyprus's wine tourism identity. The findings offer valuable implications for post-crisis rural destination management and regeneration. Further, the results contribute to the broader discussions on climate resilience in tourism planning, particularly for Mediterranean regions increasingly vulnerable to environmental hazards.

Keywords: Wine Tourism, Wildfires, Sustainable Recovery, Stakeholder Perceptions, Rural Resilience

1. Introduction

Wildfires have increasingly become a significant threat in Mediterranean regions, adversely affecting natural ecosystems, human settlements, and economic sectors that rely on a stable environment (Penuelas et al., 2017). The wine tourism industry, in particular, faces multifaceted challenges due to both direct damage to vineyards and related infrastructure as well as indirect effects including shifts in stakeholder perceptions and disruptions to tourism flows (Kutlu et al., 2025). Cyprus, renowned for its scenic vineyards, historic wineries, and a growing reputation as a wine tourism destination, has not been immune to these challenges. While several studies have discussed the overall impacts of wildfires on tourism and agricultural sectors in Mediterranean Europe (Abraham et al., 2025; Boustras and Boukas, 2013; Molina et al., 2019) the specific case of Cyprus merits an in-depth examination.

This research paper evaluates the multifaceted impacts of recent wildfires on Cyprus' wine tourism sector. It explores disruptions to operations, infrastructure damage, and the perceptions of key stakeholders such as wine producers, tourism operators, and local communities. Moreover, the study examines sustainable recovery strategies and rural resilience measures that can aid in mitigating future risks and supporting long-term economic and environmental recovery. By integrating insights from broader research on wildfire impacts with new observations from the Cypriot context, this paper aims to provide actionable recommendations for policymakers, tourism stakeholders, and winery owners.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Wildfires in the Mediterranean Context

Wildfires in the Mediterranean have severe implications, not only for ecosystems and rural communities, but also for tourism-dependent economies, which rely heavily on natural landscapes, protected areas, and cultural rural environments. In contexts like Cyprus, particularly in wine-producing regions, such as the Krasochoria of Limassol, the Troodos foothills, and agritourism villages, fires directly threaten vineyards, orchards, forest trails, and rural accommodation units. Comparable impacts have been recorded internationally: case studies from Canada (Hystad & Keller, 2006, 2008) and Australia (Cioccio & Michael, 2007) show that wildfire crises can lead

to immediate and prolonged declines in tourism visitation, business closures, and millions in revenue losses. These findings offer useful analogues for Mediterranean destinations, where small, family-run tourism enterprises and agritourism units may possess even lower resilience to prolonged visitation drops or landscape degradation (Boukas, 2019; Marneros et al., 2025).

The Mediterranean region has witnessed a sustained escalation in wildfire frequency and intensity over recent decades, a trend consistently documented across Southern Europe (Marques et al., 2011; Pausas et al., 2008; Pereira et al., 2005). These patterns are driven largely by climate change, with rising temperatures, prolonged drought periods, and more frequently, extreme fire-weather days contributing to heightened fire risks—a dynamic also strongly relevant for countries such as Cyprus and Greece, where summer heatwaves and dry winds increasingly create conditions conducive to uncontrollable fires. Research from Portugal shows that approximately two-thirds of fires can be attributed to climatic conditions (Pereira et al., 2005), a finding that parallels the experiences of Eastern Mediterranean islands and mainland Greece, where similar climatic regimes prevail. For Mediterranean rural economies, this multidimensional loss profile is particularly salient: fires can disrupt local supply chains (e.g., wine production, local food processing), halt seasonal agricultural labour, damage cultural heritage sites, and reduce domestic and international tourist flows (Boustras & Boukas, 2013). Moreover, for agritourism operations, which rely heavily on experiential offerings tied to landscape quality (vineyard tours, hiking, nature-based activities), even short-term environmental degradation can undermine core value propositions.

Furthermore, there is also evidence that wildfires affect individuals' psychological well-being and influence tourist behaviour. Studies from Southern Europe show that large fire events significantly reduce population life satisfaction and generate emotional stress, even among individuals not directly affected (by them) (Kountouris & Remoundou, 2011). This has important implications for tourism demand in Mediterranean destinations, where safety perceptions, environmental quality, and destination image are central to travel decision-making. Findings from the United States further demonstrate that a substantial proportion of tourists would cancel or postpone trips in the presence of wildfires (Thapa et al., 2013), suggesting similar behavioural responses in Mediterranean islands and mainland regions during fire crises.

Research on post-fire recreational demand offers additional insights relevant to Cyprus and Greece. Studies suggest that activities such as hiking, cycling, and nature-based recreation typically decline in fire-affected areas, in the short term (Boxall & Englin, 2008), though certain forms of outdoor recreation, such as hiking, may gradually recover or even temporarily increase following ecological regeneration (Hilger & Englin, 2009). For Mediterranean agritourism areas, this underscores the importance of rapid landscape restoration, trail maintenance, and ecosystem recovery strategies to preserve the attractiveness of rural experiences.

In this regard, the literature suggests that intensifying wildfire activity, driven by climatic change and land-use transformations, poses substantial risks for rural tourism and agritourism across the Mediterranean (Molina et al., 2019). Case studies from North America and Australia provide critical benchmarks for understanding potential short- and long-term consequences for Cyprus and Greece, where the combination of climate vulnerability, dense forest-agriculture interfaces, and heavy dependence on tourism heightens the socio-economic stakes (Boukas, 2025; Georgiou, 2021). Wildfires not only damage agricultural production, vineyards, and landscapes central to agritourism identity, but also disrupt tourism flows, affect destination image, and undermine community resilience—making wildfire adaptation a core priority for sustainable rural and agritourism development in the region.

The Mediterranean region has, over recent decades, experienced an increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires due to climate change, prolonged droughts, and changes in land use patterns (Marques et al., 2011). Many studies have highlighted that areas with a combination of dense natural vegetation and abandoned agricultural lands are particularly vulnerable (Fayet et al., 2022). Wildfires not only destroy natural habitats but also impact infrastructure, disrupt agricultural practices, and indirectly affect tourism sectors by diminishing landscape aesthetics and altering the local economy (Fraser et al., 2002; Kim & Kwon, 2023). For instance, evidence from Portugal links wildfire incidence to shifting climatic conditions, especially increases in days with extreme fire-weather risk (Gomes & Radovanovic, 2008).

Similarly, the wine and forestry sectors have been identified as particularly sensitive to wildfire risks since vineyards often border forested areas, and the incidence of wildfire not only poses a physical threat to crops but also affects the market image and consumer confidence in the products produced in these regions (Zakowski et al., 2023). In this respect, as wine produce is a significant resource for tourism in rural areas (Marneros et al., 2024) the evident impacts of wildfires of the wine tourism context needs to be thoroughly examined.

2.2 The Wine Tourism Sector in Mediterranean Europe

Wine tourism, an industry that blends agricultural production with tourism services, has emerged as a powerful tool for economic development in Mediterranean countries (Marneros et al., 2024). Traditionally, wine-producing regions have leveraged their cultural heritage, scenic landscapes, and environmental authenticity to attract visitors (Hall et al., 2009). However, the occurrence of wildfires threatens this delicate balance by directly damaging vineyards, wineries, and ancillary tourist infrastructure (Bauman et al., 2020; Zakowski et al., 2023). For example, recent studies have shown that wildfires, while sometimes playing a role in natural rejuvenation, can lead to smoke taint, decreased vineyard yields, and increased operational costs for wineries due to necessary post-fire interventions (Daler, 2024).

Moreover, the literature consistently points to the “agro-forestry interface” as a critical zone where overlapping land uses require innovative risk mitigation strategies (Ramachandran, 2023). Research in areas such as Spain, Italy, and France has demonstrated that sustainable management of these transitional zones through practices like integrated forest management, formation of fire-smart territories, and financial incentives for affected land managers can reduce overall wildfire risks (Fernandes, 2013; Sil et al., 2024). Although comparable studies on Cyprus are limited, the underlying principles remain applicable.

2.3 Previous Studies and Their Relevance to Cyprus

Recent wildfire events in Cyprus highlight the island’s growing vulnerability to climate-driven fire regimes, with particularly acute impacts on vineyards in the Troodos mountain region. Table 1 below summarises key wildfire incidents in Cyprus (Forest Department, 2025).

Table 1: Wildfire incidents in Cyprus that have directly affected the wine tourism industry

Incident Date	Location	Area Affected (sq km)	Estimated Economic Loss (Million Euros)	Infrastructure Affected
July 2025	Malia Limassol	125	Not publicly reported yet!	Direct / Indirect, Vineyards, winery buildings, roads
July 2021	Arakapas Region	55	60 million reconstruction / restoration of buildings. Does not include farms, businesses, lost ecosystem	10 Communities, houses, farms, local businesses
June 2016	Solea / Troodos Region	18.5	100 million	State forest land, private property.

Source: Forest Department (2025), Statistical data for forest fires in Cyprus, Forest Department, Republic of Cyprus

The most catastrophic one in Malia – Limassol indicates that 125 square kilometers of vineyard land have been affected, disrupting both agricultural production and wine-related tourism activities (Forest Department, 2025) (Figure 1).

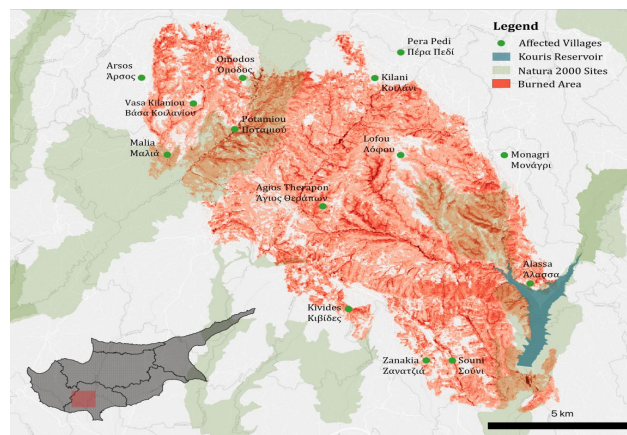


Figure 1: Losses and damages to wineries, vineyards, and wine-tourism caused by the 2025 Limassol wildfires originating near Malia

Source: Eftychiou (2025), How Cyprus entered 2025 wildfire season hotter, drier and underprepared, September 10, Cyprus Mail, Cyprus-mail.com/2025.

Although most existing research focuses on Western Mediterranean contexts, the insights derived, such as operational disruptions, damage to tourism infrastructure, and shifting stakeholder perceptions of safety, provide a foundation for understanding similar emerging patterns in Cyprus. The broader Mediterranean literature documents an escalation in wildfire frequency and severity (Pausas et al., 2008; Pereira et al., 2005), driven largely by extreme weather conditions. Portugal exemplifies this trend, where two-thirds of wildfires are weather-related and nearly 40% of the country’s area burned between 1975 and 2007, generating wide-ranging social, economic, and ecological impacts (Gomes, 2006; Marques et al., 2011). Hence, this body of work positions Cyprus within a wider framework of increasing wildfire risk and its complex repercussions for tourism, agriculture, and community resilience.

3. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research design through in-depth interviews as well as, content analysis through the collection and examination of secondary data sources including government reports regarding tourism and agricultural development in the area, tourism statistics (e.g., tourist arrivals, seasonal trends, purpose of visit, tourism economic impact etc.), and financial statements from affected wineries. Additionally, satellite imagery and fire incident reports have been examined to ascertain the spatial extent of wildfire damage in key wine regions of Cyprus. In the qualitative phase, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with winery owners, tourism stakeholders, local government policymakers, and community representatives in Cyprus mainly from the area of Limassol, and Nicosia (see Table 2). These interviews were carried out in both affected and neighbouring regions to capture a comprehensive understanding of stakeholder perceptions and adaptive responses. Interviews took place at the respective establishments of the interviewees, during September and November 2025, and lasted approximately one to one and half hours.

Table 2: Demographic Profile of Interviewees

Respondent	Gender	Profession	Area
A.	Male	Tourism Stakeholder	Limassol
B.	Male	Sales and Marketing Manager	Limassol
C.	Male	Wine Professional - Sommelier	Limassol
D.	Female	Journalist, Wine Writer	Limassol
E.	Female	Ministry of Agriculture – Policymaker	Nicosia
F.	Male	Leader of Affected Community	Limassol
G.	Male	Leader of Affected Community	Limassol
H.	Male	Winery Owner - Oenologist	Limassol
I.	Female	Winery Owner - Oenologist	Limassol
J.	Female	Tourism Stakeholder	Limassol
K.	Female	Winery Owner - Oenologist	Limassol

Source: authors’ fieldwork

Qualitative data were subjected to thematic analysis to identify recurring themes related to the challenges and opportunities faced by the wine tourism sector in the wake of wildfire incidents. Key themes included operational disruptions, financial stress, stakeholder perceptions regarding risk and safety, and the effectiveness of ongoing recovery measures. Together, these analyses provide a multi-dimensional view of the impact of wildfires on wine tourism in Cyprus.

4. Findings

4.1 The Impact of the 2025 Wildfires on Wine-producing Region

The devastating wildfires that struck the Krasochoria (wine villages) of the Limassol district in Cyprus have severely affected the country's most historically significant wine-producing region. As producers were granted access to the fire zones shortly after containment, initial reports confirmed both physical and psychological distress among vine-growers, with many vineyards completely destroyed and some wineries suffering infrastructural damage or loss of equipment, something also noted in the news during that period (Eftychiou, 2025; Kassianos, 2025).

Prominent wineries in the region, including Zambartas, Vlassides, Argyrides, Ayia Mavri, Oenou Yi, and Gerolemo, reported safety of personnel but noted extensive damage to vineyards. Social media posts from affected wineries and associations, such as the Cyprus Sommeliers Association, highlighted the scale of vineyard loss—amounting to several hundreds of hectares. Notably, Papaioannou Winery in Vasa Koilaniou as mentioned in the interviews (Respondent H), shared distressing images of cultivated vineyards reduced to ash, challenging the common assumption that vineyards function as natural firebreaks. Overall, interviews as well as report data indicated a hit on the wine tourism industry during the specific wildfire. For instance, a chief oenologist and owner of an affected winery (Respondent K), confirmed that although vineyards can act as protective zones when well-maintained and free of wild vegetation, extreme fire conditions—intensified by strong winds—can still cause substantial damage. The respondent's winery faced minor infrastructural issues, including prolonged power outages, which could affect wine storage and processing.

4.2 Impact Assessment and Response to the Limassol Wildfires from Local Policy Makers

In the aftermath of the recent wildfires in Cyprus, a tourism stakeholder and a member of the Limassol Chamber of Commerce and Industry (LCCI) (Respondent A), provided an update on the status of industrial and business facilities in the Limassol district. As of the latest reports, no widespread damage to industrial infrastructure was recorded, with the exception of a single incident. Notably, the Industrial Area of Agios Syllas and a major paper manufacturing facility were narrowly spared from destruction.

The primary concern expressed by the Chamber pertains to the agricultural sector, particularly local wineries. While most winery facilities escaped significant structural damage, Respondent A highlighted the complete loss of extensive vineyard areas—many of which were ready for harvest. As stated, this agricultural devastation is expected to have long-term implications for local wine production due to the extended period required for vineyard regeneration.

In terms of tourism, tourism infrastructure was also affected, particularly in the mountainous regions of Limassol. Several hospitality establishments were evacuated as a precaution, temporarily displacing tourists until conditions stabilise and safety can be ensured. This caused, loss of significant revenues not only on the bookings during that period but also for future ones, as several potential tourists cancelled their trips (Respondent B). In response to the crisis, LCCI issued an appeal to its members for financial and material support for those affected. The business community mobilised promptly, with numerous enterprises offering essential goods and resources. Respondent A emphasised the solidarity and humanitarian engagement of local businesses during this critical period. Until now, the Chamber awaits the completion of a formal damage assessment to better allocate resources and aid. Respondent A also lamented the environmental destruction and long-term ecological consequences of the fires, expressing concern over the apparent systemic inability to respond swiftly to such disasters in 2025. Overall, interviewees indicated a foggy landscape for the recent future in their tourism operations, due to the specific wildfire incident, highlighting the importance of the speedy recovery in the post-crisis period.

4.3 Resilience and Recovery in Cyprus's Wine Villages Following the 2025 Limassol Wildfires

In the immediate epilogue of the devastating wildfire that struck the wine-producing villages of Limassol, Cypriot vine-growers have begun assessing the extent of the damage. While early reports confirm significant losses to vineyards, based on the interviews, producers assert that the 2025 vintage—though diminished—will proceed.

The blaze caused widespread ecological damage across the region, particularly impacting vineyard zones critical to the country's viticulture. Fortunately, winery infrastructure narrowly escaped major structural damage, thanks in part to the efforts of local winemakers and residents. For instance, as claimed at Zambartas Winery in

Agios Amvrosios and Linos Winery in Omodos, vineyards were lost, but core facilities were preserved (Respondent I). However, damage across other areas—such as Omodos, Vasa, Arsos, and Mallia—was severe, with some growers reporting losses of over 80% of cultivated land (Respondent F).

As stated in the interviews, both state authorities and wine producers are currently undertaking detailed assessments. At present, individual vine-growers are estimating losses independently. According to Respondent B, formal evaluations are pending assistance from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Respondent underline the urge of this situation. Early approximations suggest losses of up to 20% in some estates, but concerns also extend to surviving vines that may suffer from heat stress, ash contamination, and smoke exposure. These factors could negatively affect the quality of the grapes and the final wine product. This is turn, as argued, will have also an impact on the visitation in these areas for wine tourist activities.

Despite the destruction, winemakers have pledged to maintain production. Even in severely affected wineries, such as Linos Winery, efforts are underway to source grapes externally to fulfil both domestic and international obligations. The timing of the wildfire—approximately ten days before the harvest of certain varieties like Xynisteri—has raised concerns about grape viability, but the full extent of the impact will only become clear during vinification.

However, some premium or terroir-specific wines derived from single-vineyard plots are unlikely to be produced in 2025, and possibly 2026 (Respondents F and K). Compensation from the state is expected, but the majority of the interviewees emphasize that support based solely on raw grape value inadequately reflects the broader economic losses associated with brand equity and value-added production.

Additionally, as claimed by the respondents, the fire further compounds the challenges faced by the Cypriot wine sector, which has already experienced declining yields due to adverse weather and shifting climatic conditions, affecting also tourist visitation (Respondent J). Climate change, drought, and the degradation of soil structure—often due to past wildfires—have exacerbated the spread and severity of fires, as natural firebreaks and underground water retention have weakened. However, vineyards have shown potential as natural fire-protection zones due to their structure and higher moisture content, prompting calls for state-backed investment in vineyard-based fire-prevention infrastructure.

Despite current difficulties, there is cautious optimism according to the interviews. As Respondent K) argued, vines are biologically resilient, capable of regenerating within two to three years if root systems remain intact—a contrast to forest trees that require decades to regrow. Furthermore, as noted by Responded C, the president of a local professional body, similar recoveries have occurred in Crete, where post-fire replanting restored productivity within a few years and rejuvenated also the wine tourism industry.

In addition, Responded D contextualises the wildfire within broader structural issues in Cyprus's viticulture. According to the respondent, the fire highlighted the long-term consequences of policy-driven vineyard abandonment and land mismanagement dating back to the 1990s. While recent efforts have aimed to revive local grape varieties and re-establish Cyprus's wine identity, this momentum is now under threat. As she complements, a comprehensive and visionary recovery plan that reconnects communities with the land, emphasising that vineyard restoration cannot rely solely on fragmented subsidies. As an act of immediate solidarity, the respondent claims that she urges consumers to support local producers by choosing Cypriot wines over imported alternatives and supports visitation to wineries to locals. In sum, while the wildfires of 2025 present severe challenges for Cyprus's wine sector, they also offer a critical juncture for reflection, reform, and sustainable regeneration, something reflected also in the tourism sector; interviews revealed that wine could be play a vital role on the affected areas sustainable -tourism- development.

4.4 Post-Wildfire Recovery and Policy Measures in the Wine-Producing Region of Limassol, Cyprus

Following the devastating wildfires of July 2025 in the wine-producing regions, Respondent F claimed that conducted an official visit to the village of Omodos, accompanied by representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture, the Water Development Department, the Forestry Department, and other relevant agencies. The visit aimed to monitor the implementation of state-led recovery measures and gather feedback from local officials and producers.

In this respect, Respondent F reported that more than 1,000 farmers have already received compensation, with only a few pending cases due to incomplete documentation. She also announced that applications for reactivation schemes—designed to support the resumption of agricultural activities, such as viticulture and tree cultivation—have exceeded 500 submissions. The deadline for these applications was extended to September

15. The overarching goal, she emphasised, is to bring life back to the fire-affected areas through re-cultivation and targeted youth engagement programs in agriculture and pertinent industries such as tourism.

In the same lines, Respondents G and H, local community leaders, acknowledged the rapid implementation of government measures and advocated for further decentralisation. Specifically, they called for the delegation of authority to local communities for the maintenance of natural channels and streams, as a means of safeguarding agricultural land and infrastructure.

Additionally, during the Respondent F's visit to local wineries, concerns were raised by producers regarding the long-term consequences of the fire on the 2025 vintage. Respondent I, a local Winemaker emphasised that although initial government compensation addressed immediate losses—particularly the destruction of vineyards and unharvested crops—the broader economic impact is much more complex. Wineries now face a loss of income, inability to produce final products, and damage to the region's image as a green, high-quality wine destination, affecting thus, visitation. In this regard, many wine villages, characterised as representative wine tourism destinations in the region, now face insecurity in terms of tourism development, something that, as claimed, may alter the overall long-term image of the destination.

Simultaneously, investigations into the origin of the July wildfires continue. A specialised team of ten American experts from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF) is currently in Cyprus, having arrived at the invitation of the President of the Republic (Respondent F). Their presence reflects international collaboration in disaster response and accountability efforts. Overall, it is claimed that the government's response so far, has been met with cautious approval. However, producers continue to stress the importance of long-term planning, including structural reforms, sustained support for replanting, and economic assistance to mitigate the indirect impacts on the wine industry and in expansion the wine tourism business.

Importantly, the concept of vineyards as firebreaks, while valid in theory due to the moisture content and structured layout of vineyards, was complicated in practice by the intensity of the flames and environmental factors, such as wind. This is something mentioned almost by the entire sample of the interviews. Damage was also reported in vineyards located several dozen meters from the fire line, attributed to radiant heat and fire-induced wind effects.

For instance, Respondent J, a well-known oenologist, explained that beyond physical fire damage, the phenomenon of smoke taint poses a significant threat to grape and wine quality. As grapes approach full ripeness, they develop a waxy skin that readily absorbs volatile phenolic compounds from smoke—such as guaiacol and cresols. These compounds, if absorbed in high concentrations, result in wines with undesirable flavours reminiscent of ash, burnt rubber, or iodine. If contamination is severe, the grapes may be rendered unfit for vinification.

Respondent J emphasised that timing is critical. A wildfire several months prior to harvest could potentially allow for rain or mechanical cleaning to mitigate damage. However, with this fire occurring just days before harvest, remediation is unlikely. Wines—particularly international white varieties harvested in early autumn—will be the most affected in terms of both harvest viability and final product quality.

The rapid spread of the fire was attributed, in part, to land abandonment. Respondent J noted that previously cultivated agricultural zones, now overtaken by dry, resinous vegetation, acted as fuel for the fire. Similarly, neglected or poorly maintained vineyards contributed to the uncontrolled spread of flames.

Overall, despite the challenges, winemakers expressed cautious hope. Surviving vines may still yield usable fruit, and efforts are being made to support impacted producers. Respondent K, a professional sommelier called on consumers to actively support the industry by choosing Cypriot wines—particularly those from the wine villages—to help preserve and revitalise the island's vinicultural heritage. The respondent also argued that the role of tourists is also crucial for the support of these areas, especially the locals. These vineyards are not only economically vital but also represent a living cultural legacy with the deepest winemaking roots in Cyprus, representing therefore a very appropriate representative of the Cypriot environmental authenticity, natural and cultural, for the international tourist that visit the island.

5. Conclusion and Implications

Based on the findings, several key recommendations emerge for policymakers and industry practitioners in Cyprus. These are presented below:

5.1 Enhanced Risk Mitigation Infrastructure

Investing in physical infrastructure improvements—such as building fire-resistant structures, creating effective firebreaks, and upgrading emergency response mechanisms—is essential. Financial incentives and subsidies should be made available to support these investments, especially for small and medium-sized vineyard operators. Additionally, investing in this infrastructure is tightly connected to tourism as the specific spaces are important tourism assets. As wine tourism depends a lot on conditions such as visitor safety, accessible areas, preservation of natural landscapes, culinary activities, as well as accommodation, this support and incentives for small and medium wine tourism companies would facilitate these destinations to remain safe and operational, in the long-term. This would ensure, hence, their future sustainability.

5.2 Integrated Public-Private Partnerships

Establishing formal channels for coordination between government agencies, local communities, and private stakeholders can improve both preventive measures and disaster response. Collaborative frameworks that include academic and technical expertise ensure that efforts are both comprehensive and sustained. Overall, according to theory, as tourism is a fragmented sector that requires the cooperation of several stakeholders, something vital for small destination, such as Cyprus, there is a need for goals' alignment between the policy makers in various levels, and the private sector (Boukas & Ziakas, 2016). In this respect, these partnerships will benefit both the wine industry as well as the wine tourism business, specifically.

5.3 Support for Technology Adoption

Encouraging the use of advanced monitoring systems, mobile communication platforms, and data analytics is crucial for early warning and proactive risk management. Technical training and financial support should be provided to assist local operators in integrating these solutions into daily operations. This is also evident for the tourism sector. As Ural (2016) argues, the viability of a tourism destination is greatly affected by its ability to adapt to dynamic environmental forces, proper utilisation of resources and formulating and implementing innovative strategies regarding its risk management. The technology adaptation would help towards this direction.

5.4 Development of Eco-Certification Programs

Launching a “fire-smart” certification program could help differentiate Cypriot wines in the international marketplace while providing tangible signalling benefits to consumers who value sustainable practices. Such programs also incentivise vineyard operators to maintain rigorous risk mitigation standards and would also have a great acceptance by tourists.

5.5 Community Engagement and Educational Initiatives

Regular workshops, training sessions, and public awareness campaigns are vital for building local capacity. Empowering communities with practical knowledge about wildfire prevention can foster a culture of preparedness and collective action, ultimately reducing the overall risk exposure. Additionally, the incorporation of locals in the tourism planning of the rural wine destination would enhance their sense of hospitality and decrease any possible contradictions (Boukas, 2019).

In conclusion, the resilience of the wine tourism sector in Cyprus depends on the rapid implementation of comprehensive wildfire mitigation strategies, innovative financial support mechanisms, and the active engagement of local communities. By harnessing lessons learned from other Mediterranean or similar regions and adopting tailored, technology-enhanced solutions, Cyprus has the potential not only to recover from recent disasters but also to transform wildfire risks into opportunities for sustainable rural development and enhanced market competitiveness in tourism and overall.

6. Challenges and Opportunities for Future Research

While this study provides an extensive evaluation of wildfire impacts on wine tourism in Cyprus, several avenues for future research remain. Longitudinal studies that track recovery measures and adaptive strategies over multiple fire seasons would yield deeper insights into the long-term effectiveness of implemented policies. Additionally, further exploration into consumer behaviour—specifically how eco-certification and fire-smart

labels influence purchasing decisions—would be valuable for refining marketing and operational strategies in the wine tourism sector.

The role of climate change, with its potential to further exacerbate wildfire frequency and intensity, also warrants more focused research. Integrating climate models with local risk assessments could provide predictive insights that allow stakeholders to pre-emptively adjust their strategies.

Ethics Declaration (Not applicable)

AI Declaration

AI was used in the translation of the interviews from the Greek language to English language.

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