

Sustainability and wine tourism in emerging wine-producing regions: a multidimensional analysis of wineries in the Vales da Uva Goethe, SC

Sustentabilidade e enoturismo em regiões vitivinícolas emergentes: análise multidimensional das vinícolas dos Vales da Uva Goethe, SC

Sostenibilidad y enoturismo en regiones vitivinícolas emergentes: un análisis multidimensional de las bodegas de los Vales de la Uva Goethe, SC

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ABSTRACT

Objective: To analyze environmental, economic, and social sustainability practices in wineries with an Indication of Provenance and their potential to foster sustainable wine tourism in the Vales da Uva Goethe (Urussanga, SC), relating sustainability indicators to territorial competitiveness in emerging regions. **Methodology/approach:** A descriptive, quantitative study conducted with four wineries belonging to the ProGoethe Association. Data were collected through a structured instrument adapted from the Corporate Sustainability Grid, applied to managers. Sustainability was quantitatively measured using a Likert scale across the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of the analyzed organizations. **Originality/relevance:** The study integrates three-dimensional sustainability, wine tourism, and Geographical Indication in an emerging wine-producing region in southern Brazil. Unlike consolidated European contexts, it examines how small wineries use sustainability as a competitive strategy, highlighting gaps between discourse and practice. It stands out for applying the Corporate Sustainability Grid in a territory still underexplored in the literature. **Main results:** The findings indicate that managers demonstrate a low perception of the effectiveness of sustainability indicators in fostering wine tourism, as the adopted practices do not generate concrete improvement actions in sustainability dimensions in the medium and long term. **Theoretical contributions:** The study expands the theoretical body of knowledge regarding the interconnection between viticulture, wine tourism, and sustainability. **Contributions to management:** The data and information on the sector's reality, geographic location, and activities developed, among others, may serve as parameters for understanding, analyzing, and implementing public and private initiatives related to the addressed themes.

Keywords: Wine tourism. Sustainability indicators. Sustainable tourism. Viticulture. Geographical Indication.

RESUMO

Objetivo: Analisar práticas de sustentabilidade ambiental, econômica e social em vinícolas com Indicação de Procedência e seu potencial para impulsionar o enoturismo sustentável nos Vales da Uva Goethe (Urussanga, SC), relacionando indicadores de sustentabilidade à competitividade territorial em regiões emergentes. **Metodologia/abordagem:** Pesquisa descritiva, quantitativa, com quatro vinícolas integrantes da Associação ProGoethe. Dados coletados por roteiro adaptado do Grid de Sustentabilidade Empresarial aplicado aos gestores. A sustentabilidade foi mensurada quantitativamente, por meio de escala Likert, nas dimensões ambiental, econômica e social das organizações analisadas. **Originalidade/relevância:** O estudo integra sustentabilidade tridimensional, enoturismo e Indicação Geográfica em uma região vitivinícola emergente do sul do Brasil. Diferentemente de contextos europeus consolidados, analisa como pequenas vinícolas utilizam a sustentabilidade como estratégia competitiva, evidenciando lacunas entre discurso e prática. Destaca-se pela aplicação do Grid de Sustentabilidade Empresarial em um território ainda pouco explorado pela literatura. **Principais resultados:** Indicam que os gestores apresentam baixa percepção sobre a efetividade do uso dos indicadores de sustentabilidade para impulsionar o enoturismo, uma vez que as práticas adotadas não geram ações concretas de melhoria nas dimensões de sustentabilidade, tanto a médio quanto a longo prazo. **Contribuições teóricas:** Aumenta o acervo teórico em relação à interligação dos temas: vitivinicultura, enoturismo e sustentabilidade. **Contribuições para a gestão:** Os dados e as informações sobre a realidade vivenciada no setor, a localização geográfica, as atividades desenvolvidas, entre outros, podem servir de parâmetros para o conhecimento, à análise e implementação de iniciativas públicas e privadas nas temáticas abordadas.

Palavras-chave: Enoturismo. Indicadores de sustentabilidade. Turismo sustentável. Vitivinicultura. Indicação Geográfica.

RESUMEN

Objetivo: Analizar las prácticas de sostenibilidad ambiental, económica y social en bodegas con Indicación de Procedencia y su potencial para impulsar el enoturismo sostenible en los Vales de la Uva Goethe (Urussanga, SC), relacionando indicadores de sostenibilidad con la competitividad territorial en regiones emergentes. **Metodología/enfoque:** Investigación descriptiva de enfoque cuantitativo, realizada con cuatro bodegas integrantes de la Asociación ProGoethe. Los datos fueron recolectados mediante un instrumento estructurado adaptado del Grid de Sostenibilidad Empresarial, aplicado a los gestores. La sostenibilidad fue medida cuantitativamente mediante una escala Likert en las dimensiones ambiental, económica y social de las organizaciones analizadas. **Originalidad/relevancia:** El estudio integra sostenibilidad tridimensional, enoturismo e Indicación Geográfica en una región vitivinícola emergente del sur de Brasil. A diferencia de contextos europeos consolidados, examina cómo pequeñas bodegas utilizan la sostenibilidad como estrategia competitiva, evidenciando brechas entre el discurso y la práctica efectiva. Asimismo, destaca por la aplicación del Grid de Sostenibilidad Empresarial en un territorio aún poco explorado por la literatura. **Resultados principales:** Los resultados indican una baja percepción de los gestores respecto a la efectividad de los indicadores de sostenibilidad para impulsar el enoturismo, ya que las prácticas adoptadas no generan acciones concretas de mejora en las dimensiones de sostenibilidad en el mediano y largo plazo. **Contribuciones teóricas:** Amplía el acervo teórico sobre la interrelación entre vitivinicultura, enoturismo y sostenibilidad en contextos emergentes. **Contribuciones para la gestión:** Los hallazgos ofrecen insumos relevantes para el análisis y la implementación de iniciativas públicas y privadas orientadas al desarrollo sostenible del sector vitivinícola.

Palabras clave: Enoturismo. Indicadores de sostenibilidad. Turismo sostenible. Vitivinicultura. Indicación Geográfica.

■ INTRODUCTION

Wine tourism, in its broadest sense, may be understood as the set of activities developed around grapes and wine, encompassing both their production (viticulture) and commercialization (viniculture), carried out in wineries, festivals, and other venues (Hojman & Hunter-Jones, 2012). Thus, wine tourism combines grape cultivation, gastronomic services, wine consumption, and festive and tourism-related activities. It therefore comprises the set of economic and tourism activities associated with viticulture (Trigo & Silva, 2022).

Sustainability refers to the interaction between human beings and the environment, particularly regarding actions capable of influencing the relationship between natural resources and socioeconomic development. It represents a holistic view of sustainable development (across environmental, social, and economic dimensions), based on a process capable of promoting economic growth without depleting existing resources (Arruda, 2021).

In 2015, the United Nations (UN), during the Sustainable Development Summit, established a set of goals aimed at ensuring the survival of the planet and the diversity of living beings that inhabit it through its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Among other objectives, the SDGs seek to eradicate poverty, protect the environment, and promote a sustainable international agenda (Nave & Paço, 2017).

Several industrial sectors have adopted new production and consumption practices aimed at contributing, wholly or partially, to the achievement of these goals by 2030. In this context, viticulture has also become part of this movement, since, according to Nave & Paço (2017), one of its main challenges is achieving vineyard sustainability across all dimensions.

Following the Sustainable Development Summit held in September 2015, the 2030 Agenda was established (United Nations Brazil, 2015), representing one of the global initiatives promoted by the UN to achieve sustainable development. The 2030 Agenda comprises 17 SDGs and 169 targets, among which Goal 8, particularly Target 8.9, has the strongest connection with tourism activities.

According to the World Tourism Organization (1998), tourism development should be managed and planned in a manner that avoids generating environmental or sociocultural problems. Furthermore, a high level of visitor satisfaction should be maintained while preserving the destination's commercial potential and reputation.

The dissemination of the sustainability concept and its articulation with tourism and the SDGs have stimulated discussions regarding management models oriented toward the adoption of sustainable practices involving environmental, economic, social, political, and cultural dimensions (Nogueira, 2022).

From a contemporary perspective, sustainability and sustainable development encompass variables that extend beyond strictly environmental and ecological concerns, incorporating social, cultural, economic, historical, and political aspects (Trigo & Silva, 2022). In this context, viticulture, when approached from a sustainability perspective and within the scope of tourism,

has the fundamental objective of promoting a balance among economic viability, environmental conservation, social equity, and the strengthening of cultural aspects throughout the entire production and transformation chain (Leston, 2020).

In Brazil, viticulture has gained increasing economic and territorial relevance, being present in several states and exhibiting distinct characteristics and particularities (Maciel *et al.*, 2023). However, the most traditional wine-producing regions include Serra Gaúcha in Rio Grande do Sul and, in Santa Catarina, the Vale do Rio do Peixe and the Vales da Uva Goethe (Wurz *et al.*, 2018).

The area known as the Vales da Uva Goethe is located within the Urussanga and Tubarão River basins, encompassing the municipalities of Urussanga, Morro da Fumaça, Cocal do Sul, Orleans, Nova Veneza, and Içara, which belong to the Association of Municipalities of the Coal Region (AMREC), as well as the municipalities of Treze de Maio and Pedras Grandes, which are members of the Association of Municipalities of Laguna (AMUREL) (Réus *et al.*, 2016).

Of the territory's 458.9 km², the municipality of Pedras Grandes accounts for the largest vineyard area, totaling 122 hectares. Urussanga follows with 89 hectares (Data Sebrae, 2023). However, Urussanga, recognized as the "Cradle of Brazilian Viticulture", is home to most of the region's wineries (Felisberto *et al.*, 2017) and is therefore also known as the "Wine Capital" (Data Sebrae, 2023). In addition to wine production, the region produces juices, alcoholic beverages (sparkling and semi-sparkling wines), vinegars, sweets, jams, and other derivatives. Within the territory, wine tourism has emerged as a promising activity, offering services such as winery and vineyard visits, tastings, wine-pairing meals, product sales, accommodations, and even grape harvesting and traditional grape stomping during the harvest season in January.

Wine tourism, as a segment of rural tourism, integrates experiences associated with wine production and consumption with the cultural and landscape appreciation of the territory (Hojman & Hunter-Jones, 2012). Its relationship with sustainability is structural, requiring a balance among economic viability, environmental conservation, and social equity through the integrated use of resources (Dinya, 2023).

Almeida *et al.* (2023) demonstrate that wine tourism can promote sustainable strategic diversification when grounded in territorial distinctiveness and management aligned with the three pillars of sustainability. Mihalic (2016) highlights the gap between discourse and practice, proposing the integration of Responsible Tourism and Sustainable Tourism to connect Awareness and Action in a measurable and verifiable manner.

From a territorial perspective, Carrà *et al.* (2016) emphasize that participatory planning involving multiple stakeholders is essential for the sustainable development of wine routes. Bramwell & Lane (2011) argue that governance depends on flexible institutional arrangements and continuous learning, framing sustainability as an integrated strategic system.

Sustainable development in the production of wine and its derivatives is highly relevant to wine tourism. The incorporation of sustainability (social, economic, environmental, and cultural) into wine production and commercialization enhances the potential of regional tourism (Mecca *et al.*, 2023), making it a fundamental aspect for analysis.

The interaction between wine tourism and sustainability has gained increasing academic attention, particularly in emerging contexts. Dinya

(2023) identifies global challenges that require innovation and cooperation throughout the wine value chain, while Almeida *et al.* (2023) present wine tourism as a sustainable diversification strategy aligned with the three pillars of sustainability. Bramwell & Lane (2011) reinforce the importance of participatory governance in sustainable tourism. In this regard, the integration of local actors, public policies, and business practices is fundamental to consolidating sustainable models. Furthermore, the articulation between theory and practice is essential for enhancing the effectiveness of these strategies within the territory.

At the conceptual level, Mihalic (2016) proposes the responsustable model, integrating responsible and sustainable tourism, while Carrà *et al.* (2016) emphasize participatory strategic analysis as essential for territorial planning. In light of this scenario, the need for greater empirical investigation in emerging regions such as the Vales da Uva Goethe becomes evident, corroborating the gaps identified by Nave & Paço (2017). Applied research can therefore contribute to reducing the distance between sustainable discourse and practice. Moreover, such investigations strengthen territorial competitiveness and value creation in wine tourism.

The theoretical contribution of this study lies in articulating sustainability indicators (environmental, economic, and social), wine tourism as a territorial development strategy, and the analysis of an emerging wine-producing region with a Geographical Indication. Unlike the consolidated European contexts examined by Almeida *et al.* (2023) and Dinya (2023), this study investigates how small wineries operationalize sustainability as a driver of wine tourism. Based on Bramwell & Lane's (2011) sustainable tourism governance framework and Mihalic's (2016) Triple-A model, the study highlights the gap between awareness and practice. Accordingly, these theoretical approaches are applied in an integrated manner within an emerging territory in southern Brazil, contributing to the advancement of the sustainable wine tourism literature

With regard to its practical contribution, the study provides data and information concerning the reality investigated, which may support knowledge generation, analysis, and the implementation of initiatives in the areas addressed based on the results obtained.

From a social perspective, the relevance of this study lies in addressing a topic of growing importance across different sectors of society: sustainability and its dimensions, articulated with wine tourism, an activity involving cultural, economic, territorial, and traditional aspects.

In light of the foregoing, this study was developed based on the following guiding research question: Do the wineries located in the Vales da Uva Goethe region of the municipality of Urussanga adopt sustainable practices that may be used as mechanisms for promoting wine tourism?

Guided by this question, the study aims to analyze environmental, economic, and social sustainability practices in wineries holding an Indication of Provenance and their potential to foster sustainable wine tourism in the Vales da Uva Goethe (Urussanga, Santa Catarina, Brazil), relating sustainability indicators to territorial competitiveness in emerging regions.

Accordingly, the study seeks to examine the sustainable practices adopted by the wineries analyzed and their capacity to promote the development of wine tourism activities.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

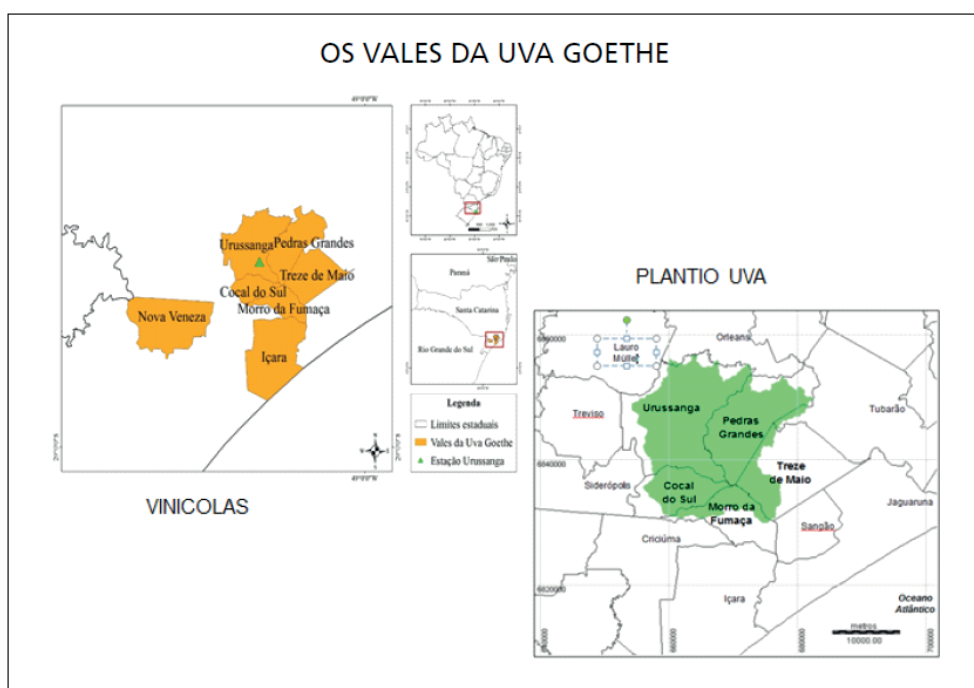
Vales da Uva Goethe

The Vales da Uva Goethe constitute one of Brazil's leading emerging wine-producing regions (Figure 1), located between the coastal zone and the slopes of the Serra Geral mountain range, in the southern portion of the state of Santa Catarina. The region encompasses the municipalities of Urussanga, Treze de Maio, Pedras Grandes, Orleans, Nova Veneza, Morro da Fumaça, Içara, and Cocal do Sul, covering a total area of 458.9 km² (Arruda, 2021).

The territory is characterized by rugged topography, crossed by the Azambuja, Tubarão, and Urussanga rivers, and covered by 21% Submontane Dense Ombrophilous Forest within the Atlantic Forest biome (Velloso, 2008). Although Serra Gaúcha and Vale do Rio do Peixe are recognized as more established wine-producing regions in Brazil (Wurz et al., 2018), the Vales da Uva Goethe stand out for cultivating a genetically unique grape variety and for adopting a territorial governance model based on a Geographical Indication. These elements provide the territory with a distinctive competitive advantage in the sustainable wine tourism market.

Figure 1

Delimited Area of the Vales da Uva Goethe in Southern Santa Catarina State.



Note: By the Authors (2026)

The Goethe grape, which gives the territory both its name and its distinctive identity, is a hybrid resulting from the crossing of American and European grape varieties, adapted to local edaphoclimatic conditions through more than a century of cultivation (Zanatta et al., 2021). Within the Vales territory, three varieties are cultivated, Goethe Clássica, Goethe Primo, and Goethe Cristal, which differ in must acidity, alcohol content, and berry coloration

(Schuck et al., 2010; Della Bruna et al., 2016). The grape is exclusively suited for industrial processing, particularly for the production of juices and artisanal white wines with a complex aromatic profile, and exhibits greater hardiness than other cultivars, contributing to reduced use of agrochemical inputs (Arruda, 2021; Sônego et al., 2022). Its genetic uniqueness was demonstrated by Schuck et al. (2010) through microsatellite markers, which identified Goethe as a novel genotype with no correspondence to any cultivar registered in international catalogs. This characteristic supports both the product's market differentiation and the scientific legitimacy of the Geographical Indication granted to the territory.

The institutionalization of the productive sector was marked by the establishment, in 2005, of the Goethe Grape and Wine Producers Association (ProGoethe), resulting from a collective initiative involving local producers, Epagri, the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), and Sebrae. The association was created with the purpose of seeking recognition of the region's Geographical Indication from the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI) (Schuck et al., 2010).

In 2012, the INPI officially recognized the Vales da Uva Goethe Indication of Provenance (IPVUG), covering products bearing the geographical certification, including white wine, light white wine (sweet, dry, sweet, or demi-sec), sparkling wine (brut or demi-sec), and fortified wine (Portal Embrapa, 2021). It is noteworthy that Goethe grapes and their derivatives were the first products to receive a Geographical Indication certification in the state of Santa Catarina (Medeiros et al., 2022).

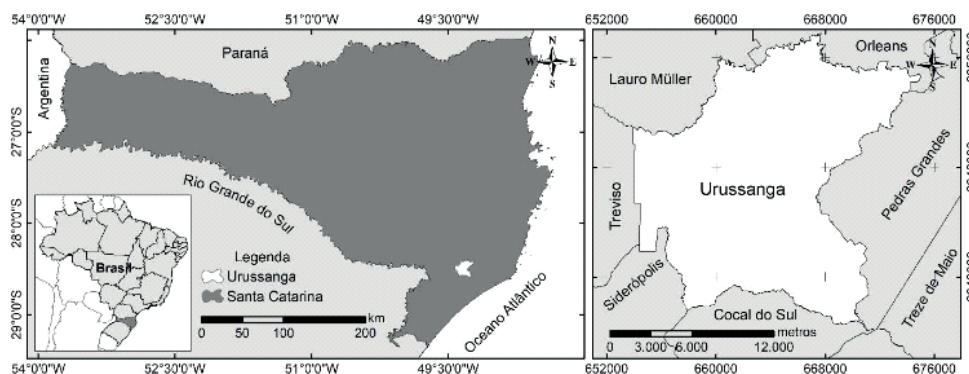
As an industrial property instrument, the Indication of Provenance identifies products originating from a specific geographical area whose reputation or quality derives from natural and human factors (Brazil, 2019). It functions simultaneously as a reputational asset and as a territorial governance mechanism that conditions producers' participation on compliance with minimum standards of quality and traceability. The tension between the minimum regulatory requirements of the Indication of Provenance and the need for broader sustainability practices constitutes one of the central analytical axes of this study.

The Municipality of Urussanga

The municipality of Urussanga, located in the state of Santa Catarina (Figure 2), originated with the arrival of Italian immigrants from the regions of Lombardy, Veneto, Trentino, and Friuli in 1878 and was emancipated in 1900 (Urussanga Tourism Portal, 2022). Viticulture emerged from the settlers' need for adaptation. Given the failure of European grapevines to acclimatize, the immigrants adopted American varieties and their hybrids, including the Goethe grape, which was introduced in the early twentieth century (Zanatta et al., 2021). The rapid commercial expansion of this activity, favored by the extension of railway branches, consolidated Urussanga as a regional wine-producing hub and granted the municipality recognition as the State Capital of Good Wine (Brazilian Micro and Small Business Support Service, 2016), in addition to its status as the cradle of Brazilian viticulture (Felisberto et al., 2017). This trajectory positions viticulture as a structuring element of both territorial identity and the local wine tourism vocation.

Figure 2

Location of the Municipality of Urussanga in the State of Santa Catarina



Note: By the Authors (2026)

With a territorial area of 254.918 km², an estimated population of 20,919 inhabitants, and predominantly rugged terrain, with 70% of the land presenting slopes greater than 20%, Urussanga has a humid subtropical climate that favors grape cultivation, although it imposes challenges during the ripening and harvesting period, between December and January (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2024; Sônego et al., 2022). The municipal economy diversified throughout the twentieth century with the incorporation of industrial sectors, but viticulture remains a structuring activity, with a per capita GDP of BRL 50,731.67 in 2021 (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, 2024).

The municipality concentrates most of the wineries of the Vales da Uva Goethe (Felisberto et al., 2017) and is configured as the epicenter of regional wine tourism, with offerings that include winery visits, tastings, Italian gastronomy, cultural events, and participatory harvesting during the grape harvest season. The articulation among cultural identity, official geographical recognition, and emerging tourism infrastructure positions Urussanga as a privileged context for investigating the relationship between organizational sustainability and competitiveness in wine tourism, the central object of this study.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

To conduct the study, a research instrument was developed comprising sustainability indicators distributed across the Environmental (12 closed-ended questions), Economic (11 closed-ended questions), and Social (8 closed-ended questions) dimensions, as presented in Table 1.

In applying the research instrument, the four wineries affiliated with the ProGoethe Association operating in the municipality of Urussanga, southern Santa Catarina, were considered. It is important to note that the association consists of five affiliated wineries; however, one of them is located in the municipality of Içara and was therefore not included in this study.

Among the organizations analyzed, three operate as wine-producing enterprises integrating grape cultivation and wine production, whereas one

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operates exclusively as a winery (Company D). All organizations develop wine tourism-related activities to varying degrees.

Table 1

Sustainability Dimensions and Their Respective Indicators

Environmental Variables	Economic Variables	Social Variables
Use of pesticides	Investment (financial resources) in the development of balanced technologies	Educational support and training for employees
Use of fertilizers	Investment (financial resources) in Environmental Management Systems	Occupational safety standards
Composting of production residues	Investment (financial resources) in Environmental Education for employees	Local workforce hiring policy
Green fertilization (legume cultivation)	Investment (financial resources) in processes for environmental certifications	Inclusion policy in employee recruitment (women, older adults, and people with disabilities)
Operating license	Investment (financial resources) in audits conducted by external bodies for environmental certification	Actions aimed at local community development
Use of grape residues, pomace, or wine lees to produce other products	Investment (financial resources) in clean technologies	Profit-sharing policy
Wastewater treatment for use in the production process	Investment (financial resources) in cultural products	Incentives for cultural activities
Water reuse in the production process	Bargaining power with customers	Incentives for the sale of products and services produced/offered in the region
Rainwater harvesting	Bargaining power with suppliers	—
Reuse of bottles/containers	Investment (financial resources) in environmental prevention	—
Adoption of hygiene protocols	Investment (financial resources) in quality seals/certifications	—
Selective waste collection	—	—

Note: Adapted from Mattia & Scortegagna (2018) and Cittadin & Rosa (2022)

This study is characterized as descriptive and quantitative, consistent with the objective of measuring and comparing sustainability practices through standardized indicators (Dinya, 2023). The data collection instrument was based on the studies of Mattia & Scortegagna (2018) and Cittadin & Rosa (2022) and was adapted to incorporate aspects related to wine tourism. Content validity was ensured through the instrument's adherence to the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of sustainability, following the frameworks proposed by Trigo & Silva (2022) and Bramwell & Lane (2011).

A limitation of the study is its small sample size ($n = 4$ wineries), resulting from the geographical delimitation to the municipality of Urussanga. Nevertheless, according to Yin (2015), descriptive studies with small samples allow for in-depth analyses without the intention of statistical generalization. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted as indicative of trends within the analyzed context, with potential transferability to similar settings, rather than as a comprehensive representation of the wine sector.

A five-point Likert scale (Table 2) was employed to measure the frequency of sustainability practices and enable comparisons among the organizations analyzed (Silva Júnior & Costa, 2014).

Table 2

Applied Likert Scale

Score	Description
1	Never occurs
2	Rarely occurs
3	Occasionally occurs
4	Frequently occurs
5	Always occurs

Note: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Informal conversations and documentary research techniques were also employed for data collection. The documents consulted included strategic plans, business plans, sales plans, reports, accounting statements, statistical data, and historical records, among other materials provided by the companies and related to the themes investigated.

To classify organizational performance regarding sustainability, the companies were grouped into four distinct categories according to the total score obtained for each variable within their respective dimensions. Additionally, an effectiveness percentage was calculated relative to the maximum possible score for each dimension. This approach was adopted to provide a clearer visualization and understanding of performance differences among organizations, facilitating the comparative analysis of the variables assessed in each dimension.

After systematizing the scores obtained by each company in the dimensions considered, performance levels were categorized according to the score classification presented in Table 3. This table presents the classification ranges and the corresponding effectiveness percentages achieved by the companies in the environmental, economic, and social dimensions.

Table 3

Sustainability Classification Scale by Score and Effectiveness Percentage

Score Variation and Effectiveness Percentage	Rating scale for the group of companies regarding the variable within the dimension			
	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent
Variable score within the group of companies	1 a 5	6 a 10	11 a 15	16 a 20
Variable effectiveness percentage within the group of companies	0,1% a 25,0%	25,1% a 50,0%	50,1% a 75,0%	75,1% a 100%

Note: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Regarding the classification scale, it should be noted that the differences observed among the effectiveness percentage intervals of the environmental, economic, and social dimensions correspond to 1.7%, 1.8%, and 2.5%, respectively. These differences are attributed to the adoption of a scoring scale composed of integer values.

Data collection was conducted on-site at the participating organizations through previously scheduled visits accompanied by each company's principal manager between January 16 and January 27, 2023. To ensure anonymity, the participating organizations were identified as "Company A," "Company B," "Company C," and "Company D." The results obtained were analyzed and discussed in light of the specialized literature.

■ RESULTS

The results related to the measurement of sustainability within the organizations are presented in the following tables, organized according to each dimension analyzed and based on the adopted methodology, as well as on the Likert scale employed, parameterized in terms of scores and effectiveness percentages.

Environmental Dimension

Regarding the environmental dimension of sustainability, the data obtained are presented in Table 4. Considering the 12 variables assessed and the application of the Likert scale, the maximum possible score corresponds to 60 points.

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Table 4

Classification of Environmental Dimension Variables by Score and Effectiveness within the Group of Companies, where P = Points

Items	Environmental Variables	Company								Total Score of Companies in the Variable	Companies' Effectiveness (%) in the Variable
		A		B		C		D			
		P	%	P	%	P	%	P	%		
1	Use of pesticides	3	15%	4	20%	3	15%	1	5%	11	55%
2	Use of fertilizers	2	10%	3	15%	2	10%	1	5%	8	40%
3	Composting of production residues	5	25%	3	15%	4	20%	4	20%	16	80%
4	Green fertilization (legume cultivation)	5	25%	5	25%	1	5%	2	10%	13	65%
5	Operating license	5	25%	5	25%	5	25%	5	25%	20	100%
6	Use of grape residues, pomace, or wine lees to produce other products	5	25%	3	15%	4	20%	1	5%	13	65%
7	Wastewater treatment for use in the production process	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	4	20%
8	Water reuse in the production process	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	4	20%
9	Rainwater harvesting	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	4	20%
10	Reuse of bottles/containers	5	25%	3	15%	5	25%	1	5%	14	70%
11	Adoption of hygiene protocols	5	25%	5	25%	5	25%	5	25%	20	100%
12	Selective waste collection	5	25%	4	20%	4	20%	2	10%	15	75%
Total score per company		43	—	38	—	36	—	25	—	Mean¹:	59,2%

Note: Prepared by the authors (2025).

¹ Mean effectiveness percentage of variables within the group

The analysis of the environmental variables indicates that Company A achieved the highest performance (43 points), followed by Companies B (38 points) and C (36 points), whereas Company D recorded the lowest result (25 points), with a greater incidence of non-existent or rarely adopted practices. Overall, all organizations demonstrate a partial commitment to environmental sustainability, with particularly positive performance in the indicators related to operating licenses, hygiene protocols, and composting practices. However, weaknesses remain, especially in the indicators associated with wastewater treatment, water reuse, and rainwater harvesting. Therefore, the findings highlight the need to expand sustainable practices, invest in clean technologies, and establish more robust targets aimed at reducing the environmental impacts associated with wine tourism.

Economic Dimension

Table 5 presents the results obtained from the organizations analyzed regarding sustainability in the economic dimension. Eleven indicators were analyzed, totaling a maximum possible score of 55 points, according to the sustainability classification adopted.

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The analysis of the economic dimension reveals insufficient investment in environmental prevention, clean technologies, environmental management, and employee education, with effectiveness ranging from 40% to 50%. Companies C and D show low performance in these indicators, whereas Companies A and B stand out, although they still need to expand their investments. The overall mean effectiveness observed was 62.7%. Conversely, a high level of commitment is observed in cultural investments, the acquisition of quality seals/certifications, and the strengthening of bargaining power, with effectiveness exceeding 85% across the group of companies analyzed. Even so, Company D presents an opportunity for improvement in investments related to cultural products, moving closer to the performance observed in the other organizations.

Table 5

Classification of Economic Dimension Variables by Score and Effectiveness within the Group of Companies, where P = Points

Items	Economic Variables	Company								Total Score of Companies in the Variable	Companies' Effectiveness (%) in the Variable
		A		B		C		D			
		P	%	P	%	P	%	P	%		
1	Investment (financial resources) in the development of balanced technologies	5	25%	4	20%	2	10%	2	10%	13	65%
2	Investment (financial resources) in Environmental Management Systems	3	15%	3	15%	1	5%	1	5%	8	40%
3	Investment (financial resources) in Environmental Education for employees	4	20%	2	10%	1	5%	1	5%	8	40%
4	Investment (financial resources) in processes for environmental certifications	4	20%	5	25%	4	20%	1	5%	14	70%
5	Investment (financial resources) in audits conducted by external bodies for environmental certification	4	20%	5	25%	1	5%	1	5%	11	55%
6	Investment (financial resources) in clean technologies	2	10%	5	25%	1	5%	1	5%	9	45%
7	Investment (financial resources) in cultural products	5	25%	4	20%	5	25%	3	15%	17	85%
8	Bargaining power with customers	5	25%	4	20%	4	20%	4	20%	17	85%
9	Bargaining power with suppliers	4	20%	2	10%	3	15%	4	20%	13	65%
10	Investment (financial resources) in environmental prevention	4	20%	4	20%	1	5%	1	5%	10	50%
11	Investment (financial resources) in quality seals/certifications	5	25%	4	20%	5	25%	4	20%	18	90%
Total score per company		45	—	42	—	28	—	23	—	Mean¹:	62,7%

Note: Prepared by the authors (2025).

¹ Mean effectiveness percentage of variables within the group

Social Dimension

With regard to the social dimension of sustainability, the companies were evaluated using eight indicators, for which the maximum possible score was 40 points, according to the established criteria. The results are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Classification of Social Dimension Variables by Score and Effectiveness within the Group of Companies, where P = Points

Items	Social Variables	Company								Total Score of Companies in the Variable	Companies' Effectiveness (%) in the Variable
		A		B		C		D			
		P	%	P	%	P	%	P	%		
1	Educational support and training for employees	5	25%	4	20%	1	5%	3	15%	13	65%
2	Occupational safety standards	4	20%	5	25%	4	20%	3	15%	16	80%
3	Local workforce hiring policy	5	25%	3	15%	2	10%	2	10%	12	60%
4	Inclusion policy in employee recruitment (women, older adults, and people with disabilities)	5	25%	4	20%	1	5%	3	15%	13	65%
5	Actions aimed at local community development	5	25%	5	25%	1	5%	1	5%	12	60%
6	Profit-sharing policy	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	1	5%	4	20%
7	Incentives for cultural activities	5	25%	4	20%	5	25%	1	5%	15	75%
8	Incentives for the sale of products and services produced/offered in the region	5	25%	5	25%	5	25%	1	5%	16	80%
Total score per company		35	—	31	—	20	—	15	—	Mean ¹ :	63,1%

Note: Prepared by the authors (2025).

¹ Mean effectiveness percentage of variables within the group

Nota: Elaboração própria (2025).

The analysis of the social dimension shows that Company A achieved the highest performance (35 points), followed by Company B (31 points), whereas Companies C (20 points) and D (15 points) obtained lower results. Accordingly, Companies A and B are classified as “Excellent”, while Companies C and D are classified as “Fair”, highlighting significant differences in effectiveness and opportunities for improvement, particularly among the latter organizations.

Although most indicators exhibit effectiveness levels above 60%, the low score attributed to the profit-sharing policy indicator reduces the overall average to 63.1%. The indicators related to workplace safety standards and encouragement of the local economy stand out positively, both achieving 80% effectiveness, reinforcing the importance of the social dimension for enhancing wine tourism and fostering continuous investment.

Classification of Companies Across Sustainability Dimensions

Table 7 presents a summary of the scores assigned and the corresponding classifications of the companies across the dimensions evaluated, providing a consolidated and comparative view of the performance observed in each sustainability dimension. In addition to the scores obtained, effectiveness percentages are presented, calculated as the ratio between the total points achieved by a company in a given dimension and the maximum possible score for that same dimension, multiplied by 100. This indicator enables a standardized assessment of the degree to which sustainability criteria are met, facilitating comparisons among companies and supporting the interpretation of the results obtained.

Table 7

Summary of Scores and Classification of Companies Across Sustainability Dimensions, where P = Points

Company	Sustainability Dimensions								
	Environmental			Economic			Social		
	P	Efective %	Classif.	P	Efective %	Classif.	P	Efective %	Classif.
A	43	71,7%	Good	45	81,8%	Excellent	35	87,5%	Excellent
B	38	63,3%	Good	42	76,4%	Good	31	77,5%	Excellent
C	36	60,0%	Good	28	50,9%	Fair	20	50,0%	Fair
D	25	41,7%	Fair	23	41,8%	Fair	15	37,5%	Fair
Mean ¹ :	35,5	59,2%	—	34,5	62,7%	—	25,3	63,1%	—

Note: Prepared by the authors (2025).

¹ Mean effectiveness percentage of variables within the group

The analysis of the data (Table 7) reveals significant asymmetries among the organizations studied. Company A, which achieved the highest scores across the three dimensions (43 points in the environmental dimension, 45 in the economic dimension, and 35 in the social dimension), approaches what Mihalic (2016) defines as the Action stage within the Responsustable Model, as its practices demonstrate not only sustainability awareness but also the effective implementation of measurable actions. In contrast, Company D, which recorded the lowest scores across the three dimensions evaluated (25 points in the environmental dimension, 23 in the economic dimension, and 15 in the social dimension), is predominantly situated at the Awareness stage, characterized by the absence of concrete actions. This differentiation has direct implications for wine tourism potential. According to Dinya (2023), sustainability performance constitutes a competitive advantage that is increasingly valued by visitors, and wineries with higher sustainability levels tend to provide more authentic experiences and stronger reputational benefits. The low effectiveness of the indicators related to wastewater treatment, water reuse, and rainwater harvesting, observed across all companies, reflects a pattern that Rauta et al. (2014) classify as environmental reactivity, whereby environmental concerns are internalized only to the extent required for legal compliance, without strategic integration. This approach contrasts with

what Bramwell & Lane (2011) describe as second-order governance change, which presupposes strategic transformations driven by institutional learning rather than mere regulatory compliance. For wine tourism, the absence of proactive sustainability practices represents, according to Almeida *et al.* (2023), a limitation to business diversification strategies, as wineries that fail to internalize sustainability as a core value tend to offer wine tourism experiences with lower levels of depth and attractiveness.

■ DISCUSSION

The consolidated results presented in Tables 4, 5, and 6 reveal, across the three dimensions of sustainability, the existence of a consistent structural pattern that cannot be interpreted merely as a variation in performance among the companies analyzed. The indicators with the lowest effectiveness are systematically concentrated in voluntary and strategic practices, such as water and wastewater management, the adoption of clean technologies, environmental education for employees, profit-sharing policies, and community development initiatives. In contrast, the highest-scoring indicators are associated with regulatory requirements or with conditions directly linked to the maintenance of the Indication of Provenance. This asymmetry reveals the predominance of a reactive organizational behavior, as characterized by Rauta *et al.* (2014) and Cittadin & Rosa (2022), in which sustainability is internalized primarily as a response to legal compliance requirements and external institutional pressures. In this context, sustainability is not perceived as a strategic driver of competitive differentiation, nor as a source of value creation in the medium and long term.

In contrast to this reactive logic, proactive behavior, understood as the voluntary expansion of sustainable practices beyond legal requirements in pursuit of competitive advantage, is observed only to a limited extent and is largely restricted to Companies A and B. The organizational profiles summarized in Table 7 indicate that these companies invest in certifications and the enhancement of cultural identity, thereby exceeding the boundaries of minimum compliance. In light of the Triple-A Model proposed by Mihalic (2016), the organizations investigated are predominantly positioned at the Awareness stage, which is characterized by recognition of the environmental impacts associated with wine-producing activities. However, there is no evidence of the formalization of an organizational Agenda, understood as the systematic integration of sustainability principles into organizational strategies and management instruments, thereby preventing progression to the Action stage. The absence of such advancement undermines the consolidation of effective and measurable practices across the three pillars of sustainability, creating a gap between intention and practice. This gap constitutes a central element of the concept of responsustainability, which presupposes the integration of responsibility and sustainability within tourism activities.

The structural gap between sustainability discourse and sustainable action has direct implications for the development potential of sustainable wine tourism in the Vales da Uva Goethe region. As demonstrated by Almeida *et al.* (2023), the consolidation of wine tourism as a competitive diversification strategy in emerging regions depends on the intentional and coherent inte-

gration of the three pillars of sustainability throughout the entire production chain. The authenticity of the tourism experience and the reputation of the destination are directly conditioned by the consistency between declared values and the practices effectively implemented. Furthermore, Dinya (2023) highlights that sustainability is playing an increasingly important role in visitors' decision-making processes, thereby creating significant competitive pressure on wine-producing enterprises. In this context, the reactive pattern identified among the organizations analyzed indicates a still limited capacity to respond to emerging market demands, which may compromise their future competitiveness.

From a territorial perspective, the Vales da Uva Goethe Indication of Provenance constitutes a relevant strategic asset; however, it is not without risks. By concentrating wine tourism attractiveness on official geographical recognition, organizations may underestimate the need to internalize sustainable practices capable of sustaining the legitimacy of this recognition among an audience that is increasingly attentive to the environmental and social performance of the production chain. Studies such as that of Carrà *et al.* (2016), which examined similar emerging contexts, demonstrate that the absence of participatory strategies and the asymmetric distribution of commitments among territorial stakeholders limit the collective capacity to generate authentic and scalable experiences. This dynamic is reflected in the heterogeneity observed among the organizations analyzed and in the absence of systematic environmental monitoring mechanisms involving partner grape growers, indicating that the advancement of regional wine tourism depends on the development of territorial governance grounded in collective learning and strategic alignment.

The contribution of the organizations investigated to Target 8.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) reveals a scenario of partial and selective adherence. The results indicate higher levels of effectiveness in the economic and social dimensions, particularly in aspects such as workplace safety, the promotion of regional products, the enhancement of cultural identity, and the maintenance of quality certifications. These elements demonstrate a relevant contribution to the promotion of decent work and territorial valorization, aligning with the principles of SDG 8. However, the systematic neglect of voluntary environmental indicators demonstrates that the dimension related to the minimization of negative impacts remains structurally underdeveloped, thereby compromising the holistic implementation of the sustainable tourism concept.

From the perspective of sustainable tourism governance, the analysis of the wineries in the Vales da Uva Goethe region reveals the predominance of a pattern of institutional learning limited to regulatory and instrumental adjustments. As argued by Bramwell & Lane (2011), this type of response characterizes first-order learning, in which the paradigms guiding organizational action remain unchanged. This interpretation is consistent with the empirical findings of the study, which indicate the centrality of compliance with formal requirements, without the structured incorporation of sustainability as a strategic guideline. In this context, the transition to more advanced levels of governance requires the development of institutional learning processes capable of promoting substantive change, greater stakeholder engagement, and the reconfiguration of organizational practices. From an analytical perspective, such progress implies advancement from the Awareness stage

to the Action stage, as proposed by Mihalic (2016) model, transforming sustainability indicators into effective instruments of territorial competitiveness and alignment with the principles of the 2030 Agenda.

The integrated analysis of the environmental, economic, and social dimensions provides a deeper theoretical interpretation of the results and enhances the understanding of the dynamics underlying the development of sustainable wine tourism in the region. The findings indicate that this process is still at an early stage and is driven primarily by the territorial recognition associated with the Vales da Uva Goethe Indication of Provenance, rather than by well-established sustainable practices within the organizations. This result reveals a configuration that differs from that commonly reported in the literature, where sustainability is treated as a central element of differentiation in wine tourism (Almeida et al., 2023; Dinya, 2023). In the case analyzed, geographical recognition functions as the primary driver of attractiveness, whereas sustainability remains a secondary consideration, with a low degree of institutionalization within organizational practices. This configuration reinforces the interpretation that regional governance has not yet fully incorporated sustainability as a structuring value, indicating the need for a deliberate process of strategic internalization aligned with the responsustable perspective proposed by Mihalic (2016) in order to consolidate sustainable wine tourism within the territory.

■ CONCLUSÃO

This study assessed sustainability across the environmental, economic, and social dimensions of the wineries located in the Vales da Uva Goethe region (Urussanga, Santa Catarina, Brazil) and examined their potential for sustainable wine tourism development. The findings reveal a predominantly reactive organizational pattern, as characterized by Rauta et al. (2014) and Cittadin & Rosa (2022), in which the highest levels of effectiveness are concentrated in regulatory compliance indicators associated with the Indication of Provenance, whereas voluntary indicators, such as water management, clean technologies, and environmental education, exhibit systematic weaknesses. In light of Mihalic (2016) Triple-A Model, the wineries are positioned between the Awareness and Agenda stages, without reaching the responsustable Action stage. This deficit highlights a gap in territorial governance, characterized by the absence of collective environmental monitoring involving partner grape growers, a condition that Bramwell & Lane (2011) identify as essential for second-order institutional learning. The partial contribution to Target 8.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), observed in the social and economic dimensions but limited in the environmental dimension, summarizes the scenario identified in this study.

The implications of the findings can be understood at two complementary levels. At the organizational level, Companies A and B, due to their higher sustainability performance, are better positioned to leverage wine tourism as a market for authentic experiences (Dinya, 2023). Companies C and D present opportunities for improvement through the adoption of participatory planning strategies, as proposed by Carrà et al. (2016). At the territorial level, the consolidation of sustainable wine tourism requires participatory

governance and public policies that combine geographical recognition with support for the adoption of voluntary sustainability practices. From a scientific perspective, the study integrates the theoretical frameworks proposed by Mihalic (2016), Rauta *et al.* (2014), and Bramwell & Lane (2011) within an emerging wine-producing context in southern Brazil, demonstrating that Geographical Indication has not yet been fully translated into a sustainable competitive advantage, a finding that is consistent with the results reported by Almeida *et al.* (2023).

The main limitations of this study include the small sample size, restricted to four wineries affiliated with the ProGoethe Association and located in Urussanga, as well as the exclusive use of a self-reported Likert scale without validation through direct observation. The exclusion of partner grape growers constitutes a significant empirical limitation, restricting the analysis to the winery level and preventing the inclusion of all stakeholders who influence the environmental performance of the territory.

As a future research agenda, it is recommended to expand the scope of investigation to the other municipalities within the Vales da Uva Goethe region, including partner grape growers; adopt complementary qualitative approaches; conduct longitudinal studies on progression through the stages of the Triple-A Model (Mihalic, 2016); and examine visitors' perceptions regarding winery sustainability. Furthermore, the involvement of the ProGoethe Association, municipal public authorities, and institutions such as universities and Epagri is recommended in order to broaden the reach of initiatives aimed at fostering the sustainable development of regional wine tourism.



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NOTES

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