



Agro-MAC VET
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Case study:
Agro-Tourism in the Mosel Valley, Germany
The example of the Loewen estate in Detzem

1. The Mosel (Moselle)

The region of the Mosel valley and its tributaries is one of 13 German wine regions (*Weinbaugebiete*) for quality wines (*QbA* and *Prädikatswein*), and takes its name from the Moselle River (German: *Mosel*). The wine region is Germany's third largest in terms of production with a cultivated area of 9.034 ha (2008) and an annual production of about 1.100.000 hectolitres.

It is the leading region of Germany in terms of international prestige and export of wine. About 45% of the production goes to other countries, not including direct sales to foreign tourists and out of the total almost 50% are marketed directly by the individual wineries.

The average size of a winegrowing estate is fairly small, only 1.7 ha and only about 60 estates have more than 10 ha. In total, there are 5100 wineries (2006).

The region covers the valleys of the rivers Mosel, Saar, and Ruwer near Koblenz and Trier in the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate. The area is known for the steep slopes of the region's vineyards overlooking the river. About 40% of all vineyards fall under this category. At 65 degrees incline, the steepest recorded vineyard in the world is the *Calmont* vineyard located on the Mosel.

The Mosel is mainly famous for its wines made from the Riesling grape, but Elbling and Müller-Thurgau as well as Pinot and Dornfelder wines also contribute to the production. Because of the northerly location of Mosel, the Riesling wines are often light, low in alcohol, crisp and high in acidity, and often exhibit "flowery" rather than "fruity" aromas. The Riesling grape is grown on 59.7% of the region's cultivated vineyard surface in 2008.

The steep riverbank slopes that are scattered around the Mosel region are considered some of the most labour intensive vineyards in the world. Mechanical harvesting is impractical and nearly seven times more man hours are needed in the Mosel than in more level terrain such as the Médoc, resulting in a difficult situation for the local wineries which usually tend to be family-owned and considerably smaller in scale than in other wine-growing regions in Germany and Europe.

Fachhochschule Trier, University of Applied Sciences, Intl. Office (C. Lex)
Mosel vineyards in Trittenheim

Sources: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosel_\(wine_region\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mosel_(wine_region))
www.msr-wein.de (translated)



1.1 Tourism: Importance of Tourism in the Mosel Valley

Not only due to the beautiful landscape and the high quality wine this region is a top tourist destination:

Famous cities along the Mosel include Trier, Germany's oldest city with the biggest concentration of Roman ruins north of the Alps. Another is the idyllic town of Berncastel-Kues, one other Mosel town of note is Cochem and several smaller picturesque villages line the river.

The surrounding hilly countryside invites to a relaxed and interesting visit. With more than 6.7 million overnight stays of tourists, about one quarter of them from abroad, coming particularly from the northern neighbours of Germany, this region it can even be considered as one of the top tourist destinations of Germany.

Compared to the German average tourism in this region is more than four times higher in economic importance. About one third of these overnight stays take place in registered private lodgings, not including a large number of non-registered private lodgings.

Most of these lodgings are wineries or to a much smaller extend, farms. This number is also not including about 13 million tourists who only come for visits of one day or less.

Source (translated):

http://www.mosellandtouristik.de/downloads/de/moselland_aktuell/04_WertschoepfungsstudieMosel-Saar.pdf

2. Detzem

(www.detzem.com)

The village of Detzem (right) on the Mosel River, surrounded by vineyards Detzem is a small village of little more than 500 inhabitants, a fairly common size for villages along the river. It is picturesque, quiet, of old Roman heritage as archaeology and the town name himself prove, but it is certainly not one of the most well known places along the river. The location is tranquil and strategically well situated with regard to the surrounding attractions.

About 25 family-owned wineries, out of which at least 19 offer guest rooms for tourists as well as wine tastings and visits, dominate the economic landscape. This is also very common situation throughout the region. The number of wineries as well as the cultivated area of the vineyards has gone down over the last 25 years, a very common phenomenon throughout this region.

In general, the wine and grape juice produced is either handed on to cooperatives, or sold to large wineries for distribution to retail, or sold directly by the producers to private customers, the latter being the most profitable but also the most demanding and time-consuming way of distribution.

3. The Estate Edmund Loewen in Detzem

www.edmund-loewen.de/index.html

Visit to vineyards of the Loewen estate near Detzem

3.1 General description/Background

As it is the case for most winegrowing estates in this region, this winery is family-owned and family-operated. About 3.25 ha of vineyards are cultivated and the annual production of wine is between 30 and 40,000 litres of wine products, depending on the annual harvest.

The whole production process takes place in the winery, beginning with the cultivation of the wines, the harvest, the winemaking at the own cellar and bottling as well as finally marketing and most of the delivering is taken care of on the estate. Several of these operations, however, are taken care of by contracting specialists with special machinery that come to the winery to provide their services, as for example the bottling of the wines.

The production facilities of the winery are completely up-to-date. The owner has received a professional training as oenologist (“Weinbautechniker”) and has worked previously for several years for a retail market chain as the responsible person for their wine and liquor department. He grew up on the estate. His wife has been trained as specialist for gastronomy and Hotel services. Both speak English well. In order to keep abreast with the developments in wine production and marketing, the owner has taken part in several training activities, including sensory analysis of wine, technology improvements and the wine production process. He considers introducing annually innovative methods and technologies to an amount of 10% of his activities.

3.2 Agro-Tourism at the Loewen winery

When taking over the family business from the parents about 16 years ago, they decided to improve the economic situation of their business by offering apartments for tourists during the spring, summer and autumn season. They meanwhile operate five flats including all facilities on the site for tourists, especially for families. Each of these flats has a minimum rating of three stars, two of them four stars (“Luxury”) according to the classification of the German Tourist Board (“Deutscher Touristikverband”), and these flats have won the first prize in the German competition for the most hospitable lodging („Das gastfreundliche Haus“).
(www.edmund-loewen.de/ferienwohnungen.html)

Besides bed and breakfast, they offer the following services for the visitors, which are very typical for similar enterprises:

- wine tastings: for 2 - 60 persons in the wine tavern or vaulted cellar
- wine assortment: white wine, red wine and sparkling wine
- visit of the wine cellar
- snacks: cold and hot meals on request
- guided tours through the vineyards
- wine courses
- cooperation at the winery (e.g. during harvest season)

Languages: German, English

These services and wine products as well as the apartments are also marketed through the Internet; the winery has a web site. The Loewen family makes a big point in offering a large amount of activities for families with small children in a very children-friendly environment. For families with children, holidays at this winery are a very economical alternative to other offers.



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The owners had to make large investments in property and technology to achieve their objectives and to modernise their facilities. These investments take a long time to pay off. In addition, the above-mentioned services take a large amount of extra time without extra staff and thus a rationalisation of the processes involved in the cultivation of the vineyards was necessary. Nevertheless, as mentioned already above in point 1, working in the steep vineyards takes up most of the time of the whole family and is the foundation for economic viability of the business.

The owners also decided to increase sales of wine products to private customers rather than increasing the area of vineyards and the quantity of wine products to keep their business profitable and sustainable.

Direct sales to private customers improve profitability and minimize the dependency on the price fluctuations on the market for bulk wine quantities which are very common on the market for Mosel wines and can be very drastic. To give an example: for bulk wine quantities the prices per litre of regular quality wines have been moving between 0.60 Euro and 1.80 Euro over the last two years, whereas the prices of bottled wines for sale to private customers have not been affected.

Since most of their guests are not only interested in spending their time visiting the surrounding landscape but also in wine, the decision to offer accommodation and other services has greatly helped to improve their sales of wine to private customers. Meanwhile sales of wine to private customers make up for almost the complete sales.

In order to be able to match the demand of different wines the family had to diversify with regards to the variety of grapes cultivated, in particular they had to add red wine grapes and to introduce technology for the production of high-quality red and rosé wines. The wines have been presented at several competitions and have received several awards over the last years, which is also important for marketing them to private customers. (Awards by the Chamber of Agriculture of the state).

Furthermore, the direct marketing of the products to clients throughout the country resulted in a large amount of time involved with the delivering directly to the clients as well as with keeping contact to the clients, who are in general private persons. Often the relationship to these customers has become very close and lasting, ensuring stable sales over long periods.



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