

Wine tourism and first contact: how email management determines the success of bookings

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Wine tourism bookings begin the moment a visitor sends an email, well before the cellar door opens. Many wineries perfect their estate yet reply to inquiries with curt, incomplete or missing messages. Prompt, welcoming answers and ready-made templates come at zero cost and win customers. An undercover email test reveals gaps and guides improvements across the guest journey.

When I work alongside owners and wine managers, the same question always comes up sooner or later: “Lavinia, we have an excellent wine tourism offer, how do we bring more people to

tastings?" **My answer starts from a different point of view.**

Many businesses invest significant capital to make the estate impeccable, yet lose sight of the real beginning of the journey. Instinct leads them to focus on the physical experience, perfecting the wines served by the glass and the setup of the spaces. **However, hospitality comes to life at the exact moment a tourist types an email to you.**

Whoever writes to you is almost certainly contacting three or four other establishments in your area. To measure the responsiveness of the sector, we regularly run tests by sending "ghost mails", that is, messages in which we pretend to be tourists interested in booking an experience at a winery. The results show a clear dynamic: several Italian wineries send curt replies, provide incomplete information or skip communication altogether.

Replying within suitable timeframes and with a genuinely hospitable approach makes the difference between winning a customer and handing them over to the competition. Preparing engaging, comprehensive and friendly reply templates is an activity at zero cost, capable of ensuring an immediate return on the perception of the company brand. Even when the property has run out of availability, handling that contact professionally creates a valuable bridge to future visits.

For this very reason, the undercover test is one of the very first steps we take before starting our consulting work. Sharing the results of this check always generates deep awareness among the companies. **From that exact moment we start analyzing and optimizing every single process in which the winery interacts with the tourist, building a top-level experience well before the guest physically arrives at the estate.**

Key points

1. **Reply quickly and warmly**, because guests often contact three or four wineries at once.
2. **Prepare reply templates that are engaging**, complete and friendly, at zero cost.
3. **Write complete, courteous answers** to keep guests from choosing a competitor.
4. **Stay professional when fully booked** to build a bridge to future visits.
5. **Run an undercover email test** with ghost mails to reveal gaps before improving processes.