

# Tokaj Wine Region as a World Heritage Site Complex Development Opportunities

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**ABSTRACT** The Tokaj wine region is a unique, over a thousand-year-old wine-growing tradition in the world, which is a survival of a living cultural landscape. The Tokaj Wine Region Development Council was established in 2014 to lead the wine region's Tokaj-Hegyalja National Program. The development concept in this priority program is aimed at promoting complex developments in the ecological balance of the Tokaj Wine Region, which are both natural, social, economic and cultural. The purpose of the paper is to present the region marketing idea in a world heritage wine region. This can be supported by primary and secondary research. The organization of the examined wine region development council and the key actors were asked. There was an inquiry at the wineries, 41 companies answered the questions. There are excellent specialists and the natural endowments are also suitable. The newly established Hungarian Tourism Office is the only hope that Community wine marketing can be really effective, and wineries can also experience its positive effect. There are 27 settlements in the wine region, there is a national park, and the tourism sector is only one that can be complementary to wine-making opportunities. Directions of development: winery, viticulture, infrared structure, tourism extension, culture, traditions, value preservation, hotel, attraction development, uniform appearance and coordination.

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**KEYWORDS:**

Wine marketing; Tourism strategy; Wine tourism marketing

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## 1. Introduction

The wine region is a unique, over a thousand-year-old wine-growing tradition in the world, which is a survival of a living cultural landscape. The entire Tokaj wine region, vineyards, historic settlements and historic cellar systems show a special way of traditional land use. The Tokaj Wine Region Development Council was established in 2014 to lead the wine region's Tokaj-Hegyalja National Program. The development concept in this priority program is aimed at promoting complex developments in the ecological balance of the Tokaj Wine Region, which are natural, social, economic and cultural.

“Wine is a noble beverage that certain nations consume and prepare proudly. Viniculture and vinification have traditions. Besides the traditional wine-growing countries, *conquering* wine nations have also appeared on the international wine market. The wines of the *New World* have acquired a market in countries such as France. Globalisation is inevitable in this sector, too. The Hungarian oenology is not in a bad position. We have excellent specialists and our natural endowments are also suitable” (Szakál, 2008). The newly established Hungarian Tourism Office is the only hope that Community wine marketing can be really effective, and wineries can also experience its positive effect. The Tokaj wine region, the Upper-Tisza region and Nyirseg became a major tourist destination. These neighboring areas are waiting for tourists - complementary destinations. The developments are coordinated and continuous. By 2020, all relevant developments will be realized.

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They are infrastructure and target-oriented innovative investments. Target other values to be emphasized.

The wine tourism sector is developing all over the world. In some countries, especially in certain wine countries it is in the introductory phase, but in other countries the phase of growth could be detected – growing guest numbers, guest nights and spending are shown by the indicators. Outstanding performances, professional and complex wine touristic services could be found in every continent of the world. The engine of the development is the changing requirements of the wine touristic consumers, the creativity of the actors of this complex system, and the variety of the products and services on the wine tourism's supply side.

**Picture 1.** Wine tourism and festivals in Hungary (2014)



The purpose of the paper is to present the region marketing idea in a world heritage wine region. This can be supported by primary and secondary research. The organization of the examined wine region development council and the major players were asked. There was an inquiry at the wineries, 41 companies answered the questions.

## 2. Literature review

According to data mining of Zisou (2013, p. 9) “the tourism literature classifies wine tourism as an industry in itself, noting though that it is inextricably linked to a number of other forms and sections of tourism”. Getz (1998 cited in Zisou, 2013, p. 9) for instance, “associates wine tourism with cultural tourism, rural tourism, festivals, events and more”.

Authors like Getz and Brown (2006) or Mitchell et al. (2000) have repeatedly researched the wine tourism domain. Wine tourism is an important sector that has a multiplier effect, thus the increasing interest in wine tourism in Europe; in this context, France has a leading role, as it takes advantage of the wine traditions and other traditions, values and links them to advanced tourism (Menival and Charters, 2013).

### *Literature of global wine tourism*

According to World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2016) “as global tourism is on the rise and competition between destinations grows, unique local and regional intangible cultural heritage has gradually become the discerning factor for the allure and enjoyment of tourists”. In this context, gastronomy tourism is particularly important, as the concept has evolved to encompass its cultural facets and link to local culture.

“Wine tourism, as a crucial component of gastronomy tourism, has evolved into a key element for both emerging and mature tourism destinations in which tourists can experience the culture and lifestyle of destinations while fostering sustainable tourism development” (UNWTO, 2016).

Thus, in 2016, during the 1<sup>st</sup> UNWTO Global Conference on Wine Tourism, organized by the UNWTO and Georgian National Tourism Administration in the Kakheti wine region, Georgia, was signed the *Declaration on Wine Tourism* (Table 1).

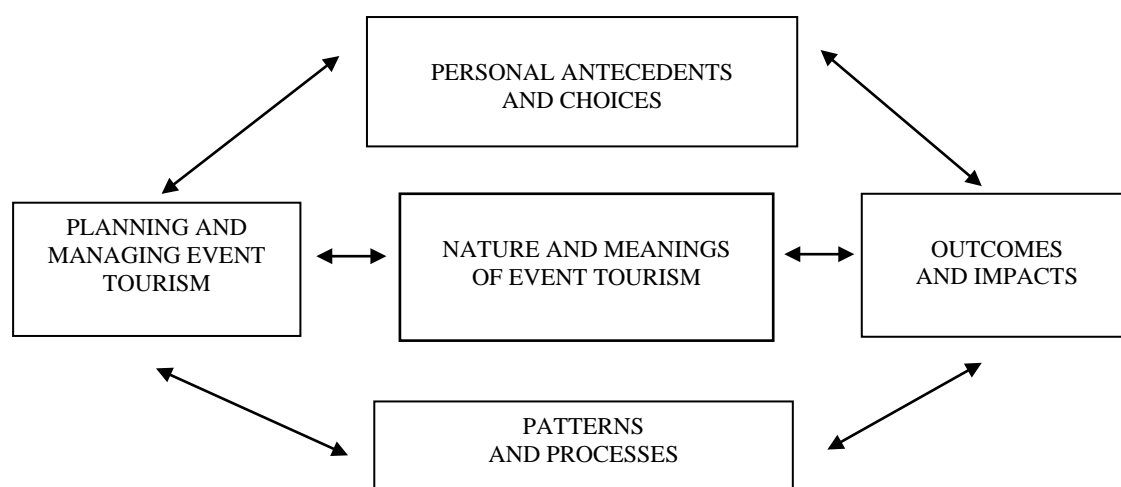
**Table 1.** Contents of UNWTO Wine tourism declarations

- Wine tourism is a fundamental part of Gastronomy Tourism;
- Wine tourism can contribute to fostering sustainable tourism by promoting both the tangible and intangible heritage of the destination;
- Wine tourism is capable of generating substantial economic and social benefits for key players of each destination, in addition to playing an important role in terms of cultural and natural resource preservation,
- Wine tourism facilitates the linking of destinations around the common goal of providing unique and innovative tourism products, whereby maximizing synergies in tourism development, surpassing traditional tourism subsectors;
- Wine tourism provides an opportunity for underdeveloped tourism destinations, in most cases rural areas, to mature alongside established destinations and enhance the economic and social impact of tourism on a local community;
- Wine tourism provides an innovative way to experience a destination’s culture and lifestyle, responding to consumers’ evolving needs and expectations;
- Wine tourism’s potential will be heightened if implemented appropriately through a public-private collaboration strategy, promoted through an effective communication across different sectors and involving the.

(Source: UNWTO, 2016)

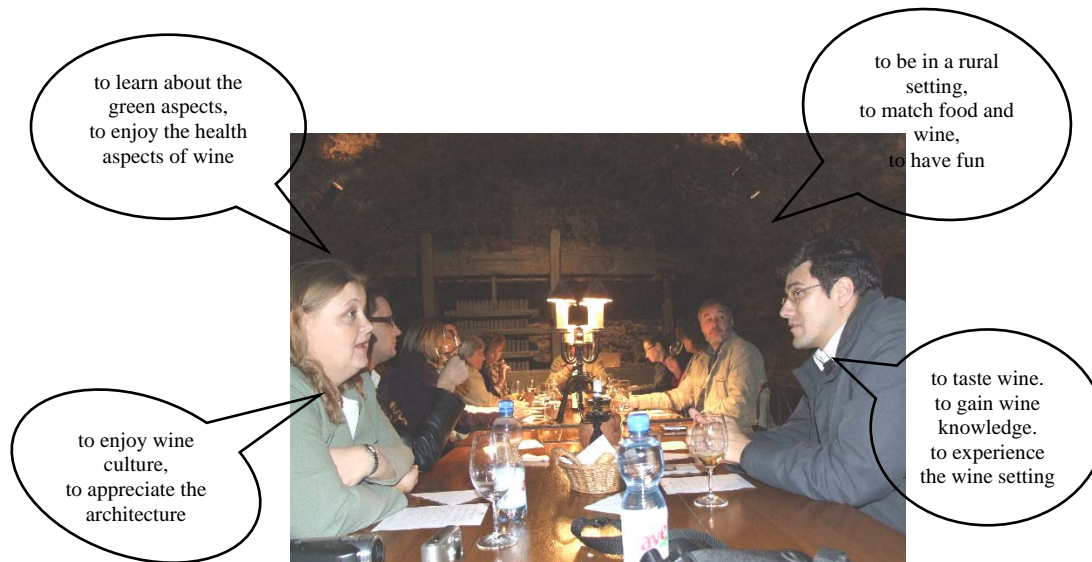
According to the „Wine Tourism” publication of Mintel Group (2017), wine tourism is the collection of vineyards, winery, festival visiting and wine tastings. The concept is usually used for the touristic activities carried out in the traditional grape-producing countries of Europe, and in the “New World”, in Chile, Argentina, Canada, Australia and the New Zealand.

The tourist is curious about all of them together. Primary motivation for moving from one place to another in the case of a wine tourist belongs to the winery. Besides, they visit and use all the services which do not belong to the wine but they might basically be interesting for all tourists. This is summarized in Figure 1. The figure focuses on nature and means of event tourism experiences.



**Figure 1.** A framework for understanding and creating knowledge about event tourism  
(Source: adapted after Getz, 2008, p. 413)

The market research targets the identification of the marketing problem. We have to understand the wine consumer, what their needs are, how much they are willing to pay and what their shopping and communication habits are. Decisions should be made on the necessary information, the research methods, and the financial and time conditions of the research.



**Figure 2.** The motivations of wine tourists  
(Source: adapted after Roudiere-Lange, 2012)

Figure 2 shows the major motivation of Roudiere-Lange's wine tourists, with the mention that they are different based on age and nationality. Also, it is possible for several motivations to appear at the same time. The complexity of consumer behaviour appears. Today, more and more complex experiences have to be provided to the tourist.

### 3. Introduction of Tokaj Wine Region

“The cultural landscape of Tokaj graphically demonstrates the long tradition of wine production in this region of low hills and river valleys. The intricate pattern of vineyards, farms, villages and small towns, with their historic networks of deep wine cellars, illustrates every facet of the production of the famous Tokaj wines, the quality and management of which have been strictly regulated for nearly three centuries” (UNESCO, 2017a). “Located at the foothills of the Zemplén Mountains (in North-East Hungary), along the Bodrog river and at the confluence of the Bodrog and the Tisza Rivers, the Tokaj Wine Region Historic Cultural Landscape was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2002” (UNESCO, 2017b).

Tokaji Aszú wine was first mentioned in written sources in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Is characterized by a process of overripening that takes place only in the long and warm autumns. Berries affected by rain are quickly found by the gray mold “*Botrytis cinerea*”. If the weather turns to dryness, the gray mold becomes noble rot and the sugar content in the berries will strong. When is time, the berries are selected separately (Visit Tokaj, 2017). “From that or from the noble berries as much puttony is taken as many number of puttony of wine is wished to make and to this a *gönci barrel* (this capacity is 136 liters) grape juice or wine is poured. It is soaked for 12-48 hours, stirring” (Visit Tokaj, 2017).

Attraction of the examined Hungarian wine region:

- An outdoor event centre for 2500 people, the Festival Place in Tokaj;
- Cultural Quarter Tokaj Cultural and Conference Centre;
- The Paulay Ede Theatre and the World Heritage Wine Museum;

- House of Wine Museums and Winery, Waldbott Castle in Tolcsva;
- World Heritage Sites, World Heritage Site, Cellars;
- Vintage and other festivals of the wine region;
- Wine Auctions;
- The landscape as a destination for excursions;
- Sátoraljaújhely adventure park (glass bridge, bobsleigh, ski resort, cable car);
- Restaurants;
- The Wine Bus (5 hours 3 wineries);
- Wine routes;
- Cultural attractions, memorials, castles, parks, churches;
- Sárospatak city: Castle of Rákóczi;
- Bodrog, Tisza Rivers and waterfront towns providers;

Tokaj region is a priority territory in Hungary where “the Regional Development Council is responsible for the elaboration and implementation of the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Action Plan, covering economic, social and environmental development” (Tbft, 2017).

Mission of Tokaj Wine Region(Tbft, 2017):

- Complex planning of economic, social and environmental factors;
- Development of the Regional Development Strategy and the Regional Action Plan;
- Supporting the tourism strategy;
- Conservation of World Heritage Values;
- Rural development, improving the quality of life of the population.

#### 4. Methodology

The main purpose of the focus group test is that the researcher gains insight into an issue of interest to him or her based upon the conversation of the members of the appropriate target market. On free, informal group discussions the respondents are more sincere and may be asked far more questions that they otherwise could not or could hardly answer (Malhotra and Simon, 2009). According to Veres (2009), audio and video recording must also be made during the focus group tests. During my own research, the members of the focus group did not approve the making of such recording, without providing reasons. Nevertheless, they consented to the presence of the psychologist. However, the refusing, uncooperative attitude could not be felt during the discussions, which were also supported by the psychologist.

I asked the representatives of the Development Council and 41 wineries in focus groups and by questionnaires. The tasks were about directions and ideas of wine tourism. The focus groups included the winery representatives. The groups of 7 people have 7 tasks, the topics are listed below. It was a task to outline a vision and to list the good practices of other world wine regions. It was a matter of common thinking on the subject and a single resolution. There were 20 wineries that could not participate in the survey, so I sent them questions and questions in the form of a questionnaire. Types of questions were open questions. The willingness to respond is good. 9% of all wineries in the wine region responded. In addition to the questionnaires, I used deep interviews and observation methods to define the concept of other organizations. Thus, relevant tourist destination management organizations and associations have been investigated. They were achieved during World Heritage work. During the course of my World Heritage management, documentation was also prepared, which was preceded by 5 meetings. During these meetings, representatives of each sector of the wine region spoke about what they would develop from a world heritage point of view.

Topics in the Focus Group Research and Questionnaires Research:

- the situation of the wine region;
- the situation of the company or organisation being investigated;
- exercises from abroad;
- evaluation of the developments;
- the directions for future development.

Focus group studies were completed at the end of summer 2017. All studies were organized and carried out in accordance with the theoretical literature. The results include the author's empirical experiences. The author has been guided by world heritage in 2015. During the work, there was a lot of information and conversation, the experiences of which were incorporated in this article.

## 5. Results

The plans of the companies surveyed in the wine region and the plans of the Development Council reposition the wine region. They have developed a strategy that develops the destination complexly. Marketing tools include social media, BTL, and ATL tools, step-by-step improvements and opportunities for funding.

Developments of expectable global Wine tourist:

- Infrastructural developments (airport, motorway, highway, railway and water transport, hygiene and parking possibilities etc.),
- Telecommunication and internet network developments,
- Organisational developments (tourist, communication, marketing agencies, destination management organisations, tourist governmental organisations, tourist non-governmental sector etc.),
- Legislation in the field of tourism, vineyards and wineries (the whitening of the sector, market regulation, market protection measures, protection of origin, brand protection regulations, cultivation, processing and mellowing descriptions etc.),
- Accommodation developments (with special regards to the needs of the target groups determined in the strategy, based on the expectable tourist number),
- Restaurant developments (with special regards to the needs of the target groups determined in the strategy, based on the expectable tourist number),
- Wine-related tourist attraction development (interactive wine museums, visitor centres suitable for the demonstration of highly important universal values etc.),
- Other tourist attraction development (cultural, sport and recreation centre developments, active and passive tourism products, spa and wellness services, landscape improving investments etc.),
- Technological development of viticulture and winery (support systems for grapevines, crop-safety improving methods, processing technologies, mellowing technique, bottling etc.),
- Wine tourism developments relating to viticulture and winery (establishing wine hotel, wine restaurant, installations for the presentation of winery, wine boutiques etc.),
- Implementation of special, target group oriented, modern tools of wine tourism marketing (community marketing, social media, online and offline marketing blended with the classic marketing mix elements, modern information sign systems etc.).

Development of Tokaj Wine Region:

- Beside wine tasting, there is more and more demand among tourists;
- to go for trips and hiking on the Kopasz Mountain;
- to get to know attraction of the cultural and historical heritage at the heritage centreplace, and at the heritage object (interactive tourist centres in the Tokaj Wine Region);
- to do sport activities more creative development in Satoraljaujhely city;
- to provide spa and wellness in hotels (Kisfaludy Program, development of accommodation);
- and or even to get to know the local gastronomy (development of restaurants);
- Winery development.

A lot of investments, marketing and coordinated region strategies are needed to assist the development of the Tokaj Wine Region. The results are related to the ones of UNWTO (2016), Getz (2008), Reudiere (2012).

The wine region follows international trends. Particularity and great advantage for the region: unique landscape, unique cultivation opportunities, and unique cellar features. Co-operative organizations are currently thinking politically and professionally and developing improvements for the common goal. Most importantly, funding and quick execution are also present.

## 6. Conclusions

The current position of Tokaj Wine Specialities in gastronomy and culture makes their frequent consumption difficult. The level of Hungarian wine culture is relatively low, but it is on a developmental path. Consequently, associations improving wine culture should be supported, and formed. The tourism developments of the given region would considerably promote the popularity of consumption on site. Conscious investments would enhance the weight of sale on site on the sales market of Tokaj Wine Specialities. Sale on site is promoted by the existence and realisation of a local tourism strategy. The market information of the Tokaj-Hegyalja wineries is sparse, so the wine district organisation of market and marketing researches is necessary.

The marketing strategy and the elements of the marketing mix can only be elaborated with relevant market information. This is true at corporate, wine district and national levels, too. At Tokaj-Hegyalja, the composition of export markets is very heterogeneous and adjusts itself to the system of relations of each winery. Presence is not always accompanied with Community marketing support. The bargaining position of wine-producers at Tokaj-Hegyalja is not too good against the trade. Sales channels with far better bargaining positions should be brought into the foreground. The reconsideration, the reform of the sales channel policy would significantly help wineries reach a higher profitability. A fairer distribution of profit in the sales process should be a basic criterion among the participants. Up to the present, no marketing information system of wine district level has been established. Market researches should be elaborated and operated along a more conscious strategy; otherwise no wine district strategy can be developed.

Concrete conclusions:

- vine and wine making innovation (product descriptions, technology innovations, efficiency enhancement);
- sales development (wine marketing strategy, joint business negotiation);
- popularization of wine culture (to re-design the Tokaj wines in gastronomy, education in wine culture, disseminations and presentations of knowledge);
- system, structure enhancements (protocol of cooperation);
- tourism development (construction of professional housing, development of regional attractions, development of existing accommodation).

New findings in the paper: a world heritage site should be the catalyst of the region. International trends need to be implemented here, and the need for innovative solutions. The complex system of literature needs to be recognized and applied. In addition to the spatial development methods and the possibilities for marketing wine tourism, alternative options should also be taken into account. Tokaj is connected with Nyiregyhaza city (32 km) and Debrecen big city (74 km), where airport, large population and increasing tourist traffic are expanding market outcomes. The involvement of Polish and Slovak tourists is in common interest in the eastern northeast of Hungary.

This research and relevant literature (UNWTO, 2016; Getz, 2008; Reudiere, 2012; Zisou, 2013; Tbft, 2017) point in one direction. The distinction between the wine region and its competitors will be determined by unique wines, unique landscapes and unique attractions.

The paper contributes to the development of current knowledge, clear guidelines and concrete conclusions. To sum it up, it can be stated that Tokaj Wine Specialities are now on a developmental path, but there are a lot of tasks to be done, and the elaboration and implementation of a conscious marketing strategy largely determines the future of this specific market. Co-operation and consensus is essential at Tokaj-Hegyalja.

At the same time, the strategy of the wine district should adapt to the basic principles and activity of the national Community wine marketing. There are 27 settlements in the wine region, there is a national park, and the tourism sector is only one that can be complementary to wine-making opportunities. Co-operation and competition appear in the field at the same time, but the ideas must go the same way.

Directions of development: winery, viticulture, infrared structure, tourism extension, culture, traditions, value preservation, hotel, attraction development, uniform appearance and coordination.

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