

# Event Marketing—The Driver of Wine Culture

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The main goal of this paper is to underline that wine events can support very efficiently the attraction of tourists and affect the wine culture positively. Wine tourism crucially gains more regular and loyal customers. The basic aim of the paper is to show the role of Hungary's largest and most important wine festival in the Hungarian wine. This paper will focus on the description of the consumers visiting the Festival, the information channels, and consumer satisfaction factors. The methodological background of the paper is based on a continuous primary research work between 2004-2012 analysing more than 3,700 questionnaires and secondary data between 1999 and 2003 from the Viniculture PBC and other secondary data related to the topic from professional sources (Szabó, Komáromi-Gergely, & Széles, 2014). The main results of the paper indicate that the case of the Budapest Wine Festival shows that wine events are able to influence foreign and Hungarian consumers and improve the Hungarian wine culture and products. In the last years the visitor number increased almost exponentially. It can be stated that the Festival visitors are from all over the world, representing three continents and numerous countries and cultures. The Hungarian and the foreign visitors are satisfied with the Festival, and many of them are regular guests to visit the Budapest Wine Festival.

*Keywords:* wine events, wine culture, wine tourism, wine festival

## Introduction

Event marketing including wine events and the related wine tourism is one of the most important and efficient ways to introduce wines to the international and domestic consumers. It is a very innovative and effective method to improve the respect of the wine culture. In most cases we meet quite often with the concept of wine culture in fact every day even though we are not professionals. The overall concept has been changed a lot during the last decades in Hungary and the role and elements of wine tourism as well.

The international trends are more affecting the Hungarian wine market nowadays than previously. The number of consumers preferring high quality wines is increasing and is more typical in the Hungarian wine market. To be able to influence the preference of this segment, wine festivals, wine fairs, wine events, and wine cultural issues have a growing potential and role in the tools of domestic and foreign wine tourism.

In author's opinion wine tourism is a crucial wine marketing element including the wine festivals and wine fairs that are dedicated to affecting the Hungarian wine culture positively and to influencing the next generation's wine consuming attitudes and behaviour. Beyond these aspects a great increase can be observed in

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the quality level of the Hungarian wine festivals that is critical to be seen as image building elements to the Hungarian wine sector as well. There were previous researches at the Szent István University Gödöllő that started in 1997 in the field of wine marketing (Papp, 2000).

The most important objective of this paper is to highlight the importance of innovative thinking in the continuous development of the largest and most important Hungarian wine festival, and to point out its impact on the wine tourism of Hungary and Budapest. In the paper the author will give details about the consumers of the Festival and the satisfaction of the visitors and the innovative aspects of the event.

### **Brief Overview on the International Wine Marketing Research**

Hoffman (1998) designed six groups that were characterised by attitudes, wine consumption, social profile, and packaging. Selecting the most relevant distribution channel is of high importance (Szabó & Szolnoki, 2002). From the collected information about wine several authors state that the personal connections are of high importance (Keown & Casey, 2000). Other researchers analyse the preferences of the wine consumers. Based upon the findings of Gil and Sanches (1997) the most important preference factors are the price, production site, and vintage. The most important drivers of the world wine markets can be placed in four big factor groups. Based on the Rabobank's research, the retail chains, super-, and hyper-markets became the determining players of the wine market. Retail takes between 40%-70% of the wine trade and it will grow according to the trends (Heijbroek, 2001). Gluckman (1990) categorises the consumer groups by five factors (occasion, type of wine, consumer attitudes, frequency of consumption, and demography). Taking into consideration the role of magazines among the communication elements we can point out that they have a significant impact on commerce, show direction for experienced wine consumers and it is used for brand differentiation (Chaney, 2000). Lockshin, Spawton, and Macintosh (1997) extend the research concept with brand and buying interest and define consumer segments based on them.

### **Event Marketing Innovation**

Events offer possibility to the visitors to become loyal to the company, brand, and the community of consumers. Marketing events and activities are the most powerful tools of communication (Garrison, 2006). Innovation is any kind of goods, services, and ideas that is perceived as new by someone (Kolter & Keller, 2012). The consumer adoption goes through five stages—awareness, interest, evaluation, trial, adoption (Moreau, Lehmann, & Markman, 2001). Innovation with services can be created by new concepts, design, and developed consistency (Yu, 2008). New service categories can emerge and create solutions in existing categories (Levine, 2008). The events support to increase the involvement level of the participants to make them more open to welcome the marketing messages and images related to the event then with any other communication methods (Pope & Voges, 2000).

Marketing innovation can be done through the means of differentiation like employees, channel, place, image, and services (Copacino, 1997; Kotler & Keller, 2012). Value innovation is also an outstanding way to decrease competition and high growth to reach (Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). Marketing innovation requires continuous seeking for product and marketing improvements (Kotler & Armstrong, 2016). Event marketing contains organisation and activities that focus on combining the brand message with a unique compelling and remarkable experience (Fazekas & Harsányi, 2011). The consumers require innovative, new and upgraded,

updated products and services and marketing faces serious challenges in this innovation storm (Buzás, 2007). Outstanding and successful events combine several characteristics to increase visitors' experience level (Wood & Masterman, 2007).

### **Budapest International Wine Festival—The Survey**

For the research there were the following hypotheses created:

H1: There is a positive correlation between a high-quality wine event and education level of the visitors.

H2: The younger generation is more open to a new type of wine event.

H3: Innovation, creativity, and continuous development maintains the interest of the visitors.

### **Methodology and Demography of the Research**

The paper is built on a continuous primary research work between 2004-2012 and finally there were more than 3,700 questionnaires analysed and also secondary data between 1999 and 2003 provided by the Viniculture PBC.

In the analysed period, the visitor numbers were growing to the limit of the space given by the Buda Castle. The only way to grow was to extend the days of the festival from three to five days, but it is only possible if the event is well-managed and introduced to the market. From this point of view the festival is creative enough to attract more visitors for the increased number of days for the event.

The main generation that comes to the event is between 26-35 and during the survey period they were staying around 33% of the total visitor number. On the other hand the smallest group was the oldest visitors. Based on the English questionnaires the foreign visitors were from more than 22 countries from three continents, in which shows the power of the Festival and the result of a creative-set programs and continuous development. Taking the Hungarian and the foreign visitors into account it is clear to be seen that the visitors were of higher education reaching over 70 percent. This result supports H1 and H2.

### **Visiting Frequency of the Budapest International Wine Festival**

Approximately 50% of the visitors arrive as first timers to the festival in the analysed period. The inflection point was in 2004 when this ratio grew up to 60%. The ratio of those visiting the Festival several times increased by 12% between 2004 and 2010. Among the Hungarian 43% of visitors have already been there several times and as importantly we have 7% of the foreigners being regular guests of the event. This supports H3 and a result of an innovative approach not only selecting an extraordinary place but also other services of the event.

### **Service Innovation—Satisfaction About the Budapest International Wine Festival**

Satisfaction is a crucially important factor for events. It is a base for creating long-term relationships with the consumers and the organisers of the Festival create year by year additional unexpected new issues to maintain the excitement of the visitors. Providing a wine event with different services for keeping the guests entertained each year is a great challenge, but if after taking a look on Figure 1 we can state that from this point of view the organisers were doing an extraordinary job during the analysed period.

In the analysed years the visitors were in general satisfied with the offers of the Festival including Hungarians and foreigners as well. In most years the domestic visitors were more critical of the services especially the prices, but the foreigners were constantly satisfied with most of the service factors.

To increase the involvement of the visitors in multiple happenings they introduced the mega-screens in 2011 with success. The infrastructure, staff, and services were developed year by year based upon experiences and feedbacks.

Based on Figure 1 we can also state that the Festival provided a constant high performance in the gastronomy, wine assortment, and organisation. The success was supported by the stage shows and performances and the handcraft exhibitions. These elements were creatively renewed every year to broaden the number of potential visitors including even families with children. These additional activities with the invested creativity and innovative approach also maintained the high level of service for those visitors that were regularly coming to the event and these facts also support H3.

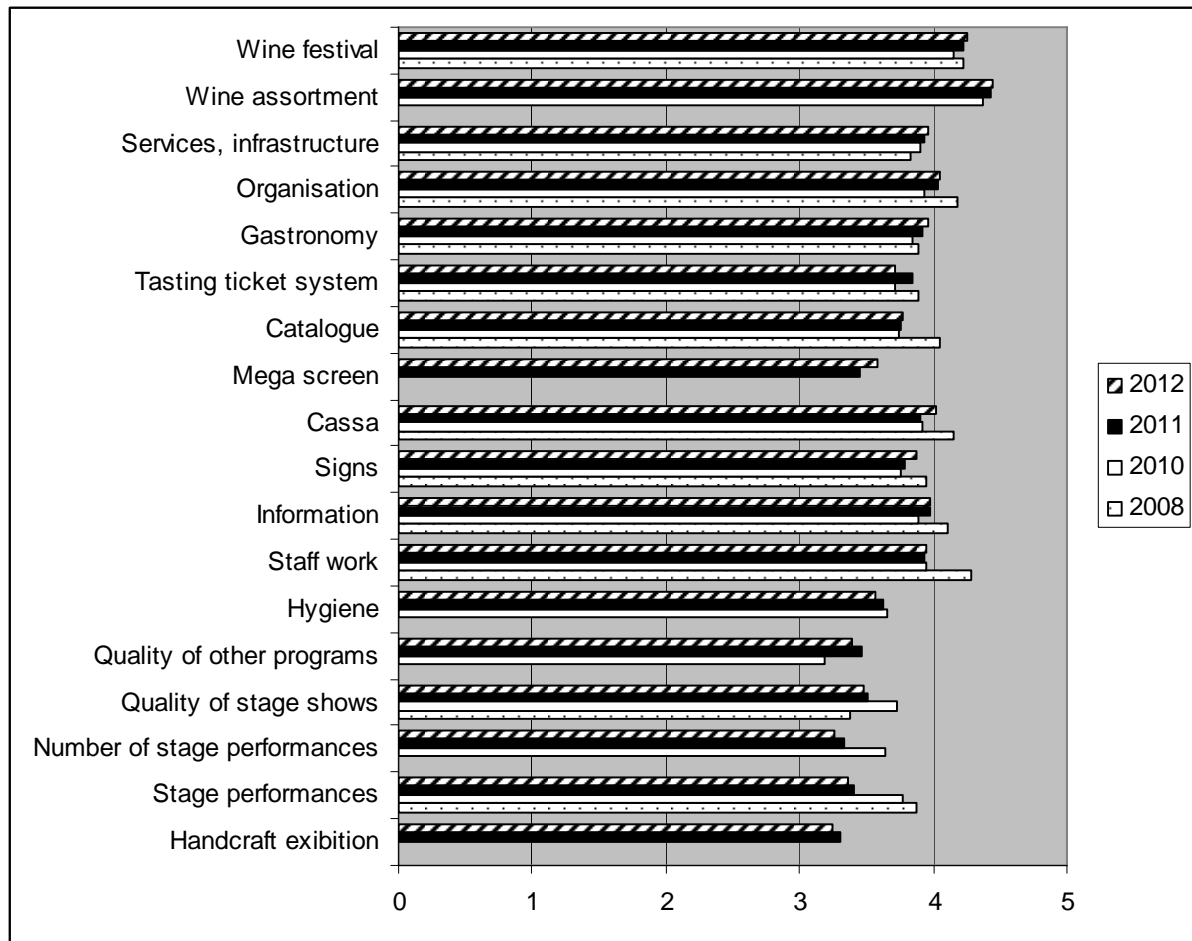


Figure 1. Satisfaction with the festival in 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012. Source: Own research, 2008, 2010, 2011, and 2012.

### Summary and Results

Organising a wine event is not a simple duty any more in Hungary. The organisers had several aims by creating the Budapest International Wine Festival that was beyond an old-fashioned wine event. They wanted to boost the Hungarian wine culture, wine tourism, and the image of the country. To reach their goals they had to search for innovative and creative ideas and they were found in the following:

- Creative selection of a place for the event;

- Creativity in the additional services;
- Innovative approach of organisation without losing the main goals but creating loyalty to the Festival;
- Continuous usage of marketing tools including marketing researches and communication to follow feedback, analyse/reshape strategy, and maintain relationship with the visitors;
- Continuous marketing research background in analysing consumer behaviour and satisfaction;
- Innovative usage of marketing strategy based on marketing researches and marketing advisory background;
- Innovative usage of the online possibilities including website, SEO, and SMM;
- Continuous co-operation with a University and its marketing scientists.

By summing up the results we can state that the organisers have reached all their goals for they have created the largest and best wine events of Hungary that have not lost its main advantages by changing according to the creative and innovative new ideas. The brand name is strongly built and did not erode during the last two decades.

To sum it up we can conclude that the Festival has fulfilled its objective to provide possibility for wine producers from all the regions of Hungary to meet the international and national consumers and generate positive image for the Hungarian wine sector just like Hungary.

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