

DOI: [10.22620/agrisci.2022.34.003](https://doi.org/10.22620/agrisci.2022.34.003)

THE LOCAL FEAST “YOUNG WINE FESTIVAL” AS A MARKETING, TOURIST AND CULTURAL EVENT

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Abstract

The current article focuses on the local feast "Young Wine Festival". An attempt has been made to position the festival in comparison to other festival events as well as to wine events and tours held in our country. Based on this, its marketing, tourist and cultural-entertainment functions and the specific mix of interrelated participants are presented. In conclusion, some summaries and recommendations to the organizers have been drawn up.

Keywords: festivals, wine tasting and presentations, wine tourism, wine tours, event tourism

PROFILE OF THE FEAST “YOUNG WINE FESTIVAL”

The object of this study is the festive, commercial and tourist aspects of the feast "Young Wine Festival" as a resource of local participants in the event.

Within the framework of such a focused research object, our research set the following aims:

a) positioning the festival in comparison to other festival events in the country and in particular to wine festivals, exhibitions and feasts, thus revealing its specificity;

b) analysis of the three functions of the feast - commercial, tourist and cultural - entertainment.

c) explanation and analysis of the specific interrelated benefits and motives of the participants in the festival.

Each year in Bulgaria there are 930 festivals and feasts with different profiles - folklore (Kukeri, folk songs and dances, traditional Bulgarian dishes and drinks - rakia, fish, cabbage, Smilyan beans, yogurt), cultural (musical, dance, film, theater, literary, painting, photography, humor and satire, various foreign cultures), culinary, wine, various ethnic (Roma,

Armenian, Turkish, etc.) and religious communities, events for specific age groups (children, adolescents, seniors, etc.), events for certain professional groups (winegrowers, sailors, sheep breeders, etc.), various folk crafts, sports, urban (city holiday), events related to religious holidays (Christmas, Easter, Sirni Zagovezni, St. Todor's Day, St. Nicholas Day, St. Lazarus Day, etc.), military-historical events, scientific, local fairs, carnivals, masquerades, car parades and tours, games, healthy life style, farming and many more.

Currently in Bulgaria there are 20 wine festivals and exhibits, namely:

a) Sofia Local Tour Zarezan, organized by the Bulgarian Association of Independent Winegrowers;

b) Open days in Melnik region, presentation of local wine varieties, organized by the local authorities;

c) Vinaria, organized by the National Vine and Wine Chamber at the Plovdiv Fair with the participation of 133 exhibitors from 11 countries and 43 000 visitors;

d) Rakia and spirit fest - tasting of more than 400 rakia types from Bulgaria and abroad, alcohol sale, food and cocktail area for visitors. The event is organized in Sofia;

e) Wine and spirit show – tasting of more than 300 types of Bulgarian wines and alcohol beverages. The event is organized in Burgas;

f) Premier Sommelier Market – exhibition of selected Bulgarian wineries, tasting and opportunity to purchase premier wines. The event is organized in Sofia;

g) Wine and Gourmet Festival – tasting of Bulgarian wines combined with appropriate culinary specialties. The event is held in Plovdiv;

h) Rosé Wine Festival - a trade fair with Bulgarian and foreign wine producers. The festival is held in Kazanlak;

i) Wine and Food Festival - an exhibition for the specialists in the branch, presenting the products of Bulgarian wine selections, wine importers, food producers. The event is organized in Varna;

j) Balkan Wine Festival which has a competitive nature and is held each year in a location, selected by the host country;

k) Varna Winekend – presentation and tasting of Bulgarian wines;

l) Burgas Wine Festival – tasting feast with 350 wines presentations and 30 wineries;

m) Wine Salon - an international exhibition of wines and alcohol beverages which presents selected high-quality products, aimed at oenologists, sommeliers, winemakers and traders as well as connoisseurs of quality alcohol. The event is held in Sofia;

n) Divino Taste – an exhibition with the participation of 64 Bulgarian wine producers combined with tasting of over 500 quality Bulgarian wines, a professional contact platform between wine producers, traders, distributors, restaurateurs and end customers. The event is held in Sofia;

o) Young Wine Festival – festival aiming to present the new yield of Bulgarian wines to the public. More than 40 wineries take part in the event which is held in Plovdiv;

p) International Mavrud Day - organized as part of “Young Wine Days” to

present Mavrud wines. The event is organized in Plovdiv;

q) Casavino selection – tasting of slightly-known wines of famous Bulgarian wineries. The event is held in Sofia;

r) Christmas Sommelier Market – exhibition - tasting of classy and boutique wines from specially selected wineries and importers. Formal elite event aimed at a limited number of connoisseurs (less than 450 people). The exhibition is held in Sofia;

s) Meet the Family Bibendum first – meeting with the heirs of wine cellars from the country and abroad. The event is held in Sofia.

As seen from the short presentation given above, some of the organized wine events in Bulgaria feature trade fairs for professionals while others are mass festivals for the ordinary wine consumers such as the Young Wine Festival. Some of the festival events in the country focus on wine as a product for sale, others - on wine tasting and still others - on Bulgarian wine traditions and tourist visits to wine events. The Young Wine Festival manages to combine successfully these three functions of a local feast.

What is the Young Wine Festival as a specialized wine festival? The festival is a local Plovdiv feast located in the unique Revival atmosphere of the restaurants and museums of the Old Plovdiv. For already 12 years it brings together visitors, winemakers, hoteliers, restaurateurs, travel agencies, and students studying tourism in the city, representatives of the media, local authorities and specialists in tourism. The organization of sales through tokens provides accessibility for everyone wanting to taste the offered wines. Visitors literally vote with their money (in this case - their tokens), thus giving preference to one or another winemaker participating in the festival. The festival is also a type of wine tour, part of the National Tourist Calendar.

Traditional participants in the tourist event are the wine cellars: Chateau Kopsa, Villa Yustina, Wine Cellar Todorov, Villa Vinifera,

Novoselska Gamza, Logodaj, Edoardo Miroglio, Yamantievi Cellar Ivaylovgrad, the Wine Cellar at the Agricultural University - Plovdiv and many others.

Thus organized, the festival allows potential visitors to form a more complex motivation to visit the event which is not limited to tasting and buying young red, white and rosé wines but it also covers aspects as perception of local food, sightseeings, cultural artifacts and traditions or in other words - to perceive the process of tasting as a holistic cultural phenomenon.

As a commercial event, the Young Wine Festival is positioned as a marketing event for the mass public with a presentation and sales nature which aims to promote the new yield of Bulgarian wines. The ranking of exhibitors is done by 7-member jury from the University of Food Technologies - Plovdiv as well as through surveys completed by visitors. Young white, red and rosé wines are ranked with gold, silver and bronze Dionis. Unlike some other wine exhibitions, this festival has an extremely wide social scope - practically every citizen of Plovdiv and guest of the city can participate as a visitor (for a token of BGN 3 one person can make 4 tastings). During the three days of the tastings, the customer and the seller can communicate "face to face" which means that the seller is in a position to personally attend the process of consuming their product with all the ensuing consequences (a chance for immediate feedback, evaluation, comparison with competitor products, justification for the choice of one or another wine producer and product, etc.). The exhibition is a classic way to stimulate wine sales for a limited period of time and it has a short-term sales effect. With this sales technique through personal communication between seller and buyer, it becomes possible to achieve goals such as: first time testing, increasing the sales, the consumer's awareness and interest, attracting new customers, presenting new products, promoting the off-season sales where the tasting allows mass

consumption of a lot of products from different manufacturers with a low unit price, etc.

The role of significant events as tourist magnets and stimulators of the search for tourist destinations is well known, especially those that are already established and well known to the public, such as the Old Plovdiv. From the point of view of the tourism industry, the festival is a specific event in the tourist calendar which has the potential to attract a certain number of tourists, motivating them to take a tourist trip to attend and participate in the event. Without being an event created specifically for tourist purposes (in this case its main purpose is the presentation and sale of wines to the mass consumer) with its expansion and consolidation, it becomes a motive for tourist travel. Visiting the festival indirectly leads to an increased interest in the destination (in this case - the city of Plovdiv). The organizers believe that the potential visitor could be attracted by a variety of events of different nature: business (wine purchase and tasting), educational (lectures, discussions, presentations, etc.), cultural and entertainment (songs, dances, processions and etc.). Although the event is extremely local, at least 10% of the visitors or 2500 people are guests of the city – traveling alone or buying travel packages. Most of the guests of the city organize their trip independently and the organized trips for the event are relatively rare, while the travel companies offer one-day packages, including only the transportation to Plovdiv and a travel program with a travel agency guide. For more information on the individual forms of tourism and their specifics, see Marinov, 2011.

During the festival, many cultural events are presented: lectures, Dionysian procession, folk dances, games with participants, drawings intertwined with marketing goals and at the same time they stimulate tourist visits. The festival has its role in the local community: it increases its positive self-perception, its authority to guests, social bounds between citizens, it strengthens identity, preserves,

develops and presents to the world local traditions and customs, it stimulates the exchange of knowledge and experiences between visitors. The event also increases the interest to other feasts held at the same time, it improves the image of the city and takes the visitors beyond the boring boundaries of the everyday life.

Unlike the classic wine tours and tastings in wine cellars, the festival is a kind of wine fair for the mass consumer. In this case, the producers themselves "come" to their customers unlike tastings in wine cellars when the customer visits the territory of the producer where they have the opportunity to get acquainted with the technology of winemaking, to participate in tasting wines, to visit the vineyards, to get acquainted with the technology of growing vines - planting, pruning, grape picking, etc. Regardless of the organizational form of the event, the aim remains the same - selling tasting packages and direct wine sales. The direct economic benefits for the wine producers for the period of the event (two and a half days) amount to a total turnover of approximately BGN 150 000, half of which comes from the sale of tokens and the rest from direct sales of wine and by-products. Subsequent sales of wines, tasting packages, food, accommodation and others as well as reputational and image benefits could hardly be valued.

Of course, when considering the benefits of the festival, we should not ignore some disadvantages: affecting the traditional way of life of the residents of the Old Plovdiv, negative environmental impacts: increased municipal waste, noise, air pollution, traffic congestion, parking problems, participants' safety and the negative impacts on local infrastructure.

Most often the festival events can be categorized by the following criteria: periodicity, thematic focus, duration, location, organizing institution, territorial scope, mono (resp. multifunctionality) of the event, organization level (resp. amateur) of the festival

activities or active (resp. passive) participation, targeting the mass audience (resp. targeting an elite or professional community), free (resp. limited access) of the participants to the festive events, commercial (non-commercial), paid (resp. free) access to participation, event oriented to the locals (resp. to the guests of the city), competitive (non-competitive) nature of the festival, transport accessibility, etc.

If we use these criteria, the business card of the Young Wine Festival would be like this: the festival is an annual event held by the Tourism Council, Plovdiv Municipality, Municipal Institute "Old Plovdiv" and the University of Food Technologies - Plovdiv, one-week event which is held on the territory of the Old Plovdiv and the territorial representation of wine producers speaks of a national scope. Its main goal is to present wines from the new yield of the native wine producers to the mass public while at the same time the festival has additional tourist and cultural functions. The forum belongs to the mass but not professionally oriented festivals. It is an event organized by the above-mentioned institutions where visitors are invited as guests. Their participation is mostly passive, the access to participation is paid but available to the public, except for people under the age of 18 and the events themselves are attended mainly by local residents. The public participates as a consumer and the festival itself has a competitive nature. As a whole, visiting the Old Plovdiv is not suitable for some people with reduced mobility.

PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR BENEFITS FROM PARTICIPATION

The festival creates a specific mix of opportunities for each of the participants: visitors, professionals, organizers, hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, winemakers, sponsors, media, local government, etc.

a) For the average visitor (regardless if he/she is a local resident or a guest of the city) the participation in the festival means an

opportunity to taste many of the products of the Bulgarian wine industry in a pleasant and casual atmosphere at an affordable price. It is a way to form and enhance their wine culture. For the pre-pandemic 2019, the organizers reported 25 000 visitors in a wide age range from 20 to 60 and more years which represents about 10% of the adult population of Plovdiv;

b) For oenologists and sommeliers, the participation in the festival means an opportunity for professional presentation, recognition of professional qualities and a forum for opinion exchange between specialists in the field of wine production;

c) For winemakers, the participation in the forum is a marketing event through which they promote and advertise their products to a wide range of consumers. They get the opportunity for direct feedback from their customers. They can directly compare their products to the competitors' and get the opportunity for direct sales;

d) For the restaurants participating in the event, this is an opportunity to present the interior of the restaurant to the public, to attract future customers. Improving the festival as a premium tasting event logically led to the creation of its sequence "Wine and Gourmet" which aims to promote not only the products of the wine industry but also the accompanying high-quality wine products of the food industry and hence to attract the restaurant industry in the city;

e) For museums and galleries, the participation in the event can be seen as a way to attract future visitors, to promote their own artistic "products" and a way to build a public image;

f) For the hotel industry in Plovdiv, the festival is an opportunity to stimulate sales for a period (we are talking about mid-November) which is characterized by low occupancy of the hotel base;

g) For travel agencies, the event provides an opportunity to create and sell travel

packages for organized tourists visits to the festival;

h) For the staff who takes cares of the stalls and who sells the tickets for the event (most often these are pupils and students studying tourism), this is an opportunity for temporary employment. This type of employment opportunity is also given to the artists who participate in the events accompanying the festival - paid tastings, processions, games, folklore parties, gala dinners, etc.;

i) For universities and high schools that educate students in the field of tourism and catering, the festival provides an opportunity to get practical training in real conditions, thus preparing them for their future professional realization;

j) Sponsors benefit from promoting and improving their own image to potential clients, business partners, local and state authorities;

k) For the media, this is an opportunity to present a local festival and hence to produce an information product intended for the mass public;

l) For the local government, the Young Wine Festival is a platform they use to build an image and an opportunity to send messages to voters, a commercialized way to preserve local traditions in the field of winemaking and to present the architectural reserve Old Plovdiv to the people.

m) For the Tourist Council, an organizer of this local wine festival, it is a way to support local tourist business: hotels, restaurants, travel agencies, transport companies. A significant event in the local tourism calendar and a way to present Plovdiv and in particular the Ancient Plovdiv Architectural Reserve as a tourist destination.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

a) The festival is a local feast organized as a marketing event that is not only self -

sustaining but it also brings serious benefits to each of its participants.

b) The Young Wine Parade Festival can be positioned mainly as an event aimed at presenting the new yield of Bulgarian wines with minimum tourist participation and which is accompanied by a rich cultural program.

c) There are significant differences between the classic wine tours and a wine show such as the Young Wine Festival. Unlike the tours, the festival does not allow the chance for realization of some of the important aspects of wine tourism, namely acquaintance with the technology of wine production, visiting vineyards, tastings in special tasting rooms, experiences in the authentic production setting, hotel accommodation and food, additional tourist services such as jeep safari, picnic in the vineyards, participation in grape harvest, culinary evening, etc. Taking into account the specific conditions of the festival, they have been replaced by: open-air tasting in front of or in Revival houses as a competition between many wine cellars, low income from one customer at numerous purchases by a lot of customers for a short time.

d) The festival is a rather presentational and image event than a sales event. In other words, it is a specific platform that wineries use mainly to present themselves and to build a positive image to their customers, rather than an event with a main purpose of making a lot of sales.

e) With good management, the Young Wine Festival has the potential to attract many more Bulgarian and foreign visitors and tourists without losing its authenticity, without overcrowding, without queues at tastings and damages done to the Revival buildings. There are also opportunities to diversify its portfolio in terms of presentation of other wine products, integration of wines with products accompanying their consumption (hard cheeses, fish, meat products), etc.

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