

Abstract Weinakademiker Thesis(D7)

Development and future of wine tourism in Transylvania

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Introduction and motivation

As a Dutch wine journalist, living in Transylvania, Romania, my special interest goes to the wines of this region of Romania. Romania is an old wine country, but, due to the communist regime, it is only at the end of the 20th century that wineries started to focus again on quality instead of quantity. Foreign investors began to see the possibility of Romania as a wine country and young winemakers emerged.

Today, some producers are using the slogan: "Transylvania is the new Tuscany". It makes me wonder if this claim is justified. When I think of Tuscany, the first that comes to my mind are its red wines. Transylvania, however, produces by far mostly white wines. Furthermore, Tuscany is a much more well known holiday destination than Transylvania. Is wine tourism what these producers want? Popularity of their region to better sell and promote the wines of Transylvania?

Object

These questions brought me to the object of this thesis: to answer the questions "How is the state of affairs of wine tourism for Transylvania? Does it have to be improved? And if... how can wine tourism be improved?"

Methodology

To research this, I visited wineries in the Transylvanian wine region where I had interviews with winery owners and winemakers. I interviewed Romanian and international tour operators, horeca experts and Romanian wine connoisseurs, read books and searched the internet. The focus of my research lies on the international market, but as wine tourism is very important for the domestic market I included that in the thesis.

Like everywhere in Romania, in Transylvania there are numerous families that produce their wine for own use. For this thesis I limited my research to the wineries in Transylvania who bottle their wine with the purpose of selling it. The sizes of the vineyards are therefore 2 hectares or more.

To understand Transylvania as a region for wine I elaborated on its unique location, history and wines that are produced. In this thesis I also show that, in addition to winery visits and wine tastings, there are many other interesting places to visit and things to do that make a visit to Transylvania worthwhile.

Finally, to arrive at conclusion of the object my thesis, I used the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis.

Structure of the thesis

Introduction

- A short introduction of myself and the reason for my choice

Location and history

- The location and history of the Transylvanian wine region and the influence of the communist era

Details about the region

- Climate, terroir and infrastructure

Vineyards, wines and wineries

- Varieties, wine styles and Transylvanian wineries

Tourism in Transylvania

- Tourist attractions, gastronomy and tourist accommodations

Transylvanian wine tourism

- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats

Conclusions

Wine tourism in Transylvania is growing slowly, but there is certainly a future for wine tourism in this dynamic region. Branding the Transylvanian wine region as 'The Heart of Transylvania' and promoting wine tourism could be the way to it, but this asks for teamwork. And for teamwork there should be a 'leader'. That could be one of the bigger wineries that have marketing knowhow and larger budgets available. *"The more wineries, restaurants, museums, hotels, tourist offices, wine shops and other shops etcetera etcetera that are involved and that cooperate, the better it will work. More visitors will come if everyone helps promoting everyone else"*, Karlsson, BKWine Tours.

Though it seems not easy to get everyone on the same page, wineries are working on it. Indeed, Transylvania has opportunities to become an important wine tourism destination.

With good teamwork, in time, Transylvania may become as popular as Tuscany.