

# INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF WINE FESTIVALS IN TOURISM

**Ágnes Brix**

**Anikó Komáromi-Gergely**

**Zoltán Szabó**

**Szent István University, Hungary**

**ABSTRACT:** Events play an important role in tourism. They help to increase the number of visitor and also help to extend the seasonal fluctuations. The subject of this paper is to analyze the wine festival held at the Terraces of the Buda Castle in Budapest to determine what kind of effect it has on the local, national and international tourism. Although there are several festivals and events, the selected attraction has many advantageous properties which make it the appropriate choice for the task. The wine festival is held every year over the last 23 years, thus there are plenty of data available to examine tendencies. It is one of Hungary's most up to par cultural events. Over the last decade the festival has evolved to a multi topic event which means that although the wine is the mayor theme there are several other exhibitors such as craftsmen, artists and delicate foods. Data show that the festival is visited not only by the local citizen but people from all over the country are coming to the festival. Quarter of the 80000 visitors is from a foreign country which proves that the festival is an important part of Hungary's tourism. **Keywords:** Wine festival, Tourism.

## INTRODUCTION

There are only a few papers dealing with the topic of event marketing. Even the definition isn't unified, Drengner et. al (2008) points out, that the studies investigating this refer to eventmarketing differently. Cornwell and Maignan (1998) considers both marketing of events and marketing with events as part of eventmarketing. Whereas others such as Sneath et al. (2006) only deals with self organized events and sponsored event. Gaur and Saggere (2001) includes exhibitions, festivals, fairs and also celebrations. Integrating these and other similar definitions any event could be considered as eventmarketing, which does not explain the need for the new concept. In order to create a useful meaning, the definition needs to be narrowed down, but the

---

**Ágnes Brix**, PhD student, in the School of Management and Business Administration at the Harsányi János College. E-mail: agnesbrix@gmail.com. **Anikó Komáromi-Gergely**, assistant lecturer at the Szent István University. E-mail: Gergely.Aniko@gtk.szie.hu. **Zoltán Szabó**, PhD, associate professor at the Szent István University. E-mail: Szabo.Zoltan@gtk.szie.hu.

previous observations also need to be considered. Harsányi (2012) also done research in the topic and suggested a definition which is well suitable for the purpose. The proposed definition states, that eventmarketing is an unique own event or an organized presence on another event, which aims are to provide brandexperience, to deliver a message, to involve the target audience interactively, to influence the attitude towards the brand positively and in some cases to generate newsworthy information.

### *Historical background*

The American authors date the formation of eventmarketing in the 1990's (Odell 2004), which try to show that the conscious usage in marketing only evolved quite late. However this observation can easily be disproven with exact examples. In 1936 the car manufacturing company General Motors organized a road show called "Parade of Progress" it was a series of events. The show presented scientific exhibitions, to explain new technology (jet engine, television, microwave, radar, diesel-electronic power) and engineering miracles which help improving lives. "GM reasoned that a well done, non-commercial, entertaining, educational, free road show would do wonders to help put General Motors's message across. It would bring GM, in person, to every small city and rural community in the nation." (Bill, 1977). The Parade was paused during the Second World War but kept going until 1956. GM always wanted to use the most up to date technology, thus decided that (due to the spread of television people liked to sit at home and events were less popular), much more people can be reached through a TV program. When analyzing GM's Parade it can be clearly seen that the definition of eventmarketing fits perfectly. It was organized by GM itself, the show was unique: twelve special "future liner" coaches were made, and the moving science show was not common either. The show brought the brand to great masses, as it was free, entertaining and did not want to talk people into buying anything, it changed the attitude towards a positive state. Most of the exhibitions were interactive. And it also carried the message that GM is the leading-edge if new technology. This example shows that eventmarketing was not developed over the last 20 years as it was present significantly earlier than the 1990's. Only the theory was recently put behind the applied practice.

In his study Harsányi (2012) dealt with event marketing in details, and proposed models that may be used. Although the study investigates many aspects, it did not analyzed the relationship between tourism and eventmarketing. The year 2010 was announced the year of festivals in Hungary, the number of registered festivals reached

a total of 155 [1.]. Certainly not all festivals can be categorized under eventmarketing, but there are plenty to choose from. The wine festival held at the Terraces of the Buda Castle in Budapest is good starting point to reveal the connections and effect of tourism and eventmarketing.

### *Method*

Analyzing an event that has been held over the last 23 years is not easy using primer information as it requires an observation lasting for several years. A more suitable option is to use secondary data to make new conclusions. Most of the data is collected by the organizer of the event, who in most cases only shares selected information to researchers. In this study most of the data is from festival databases where the organizer shared some valuable results. Earlier studies can only be used partly as in most cases they only concentrate on one certain year.

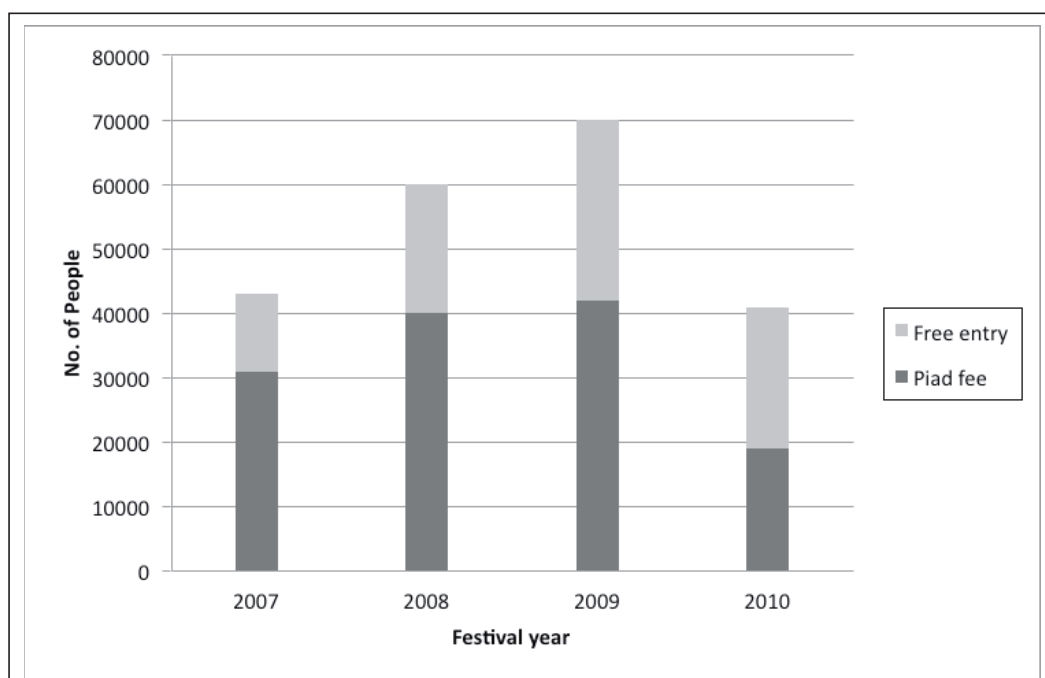
## RESULTS

The wine festival in the Buda Castle, has great tradition in Hungary, it is held every September since 1991. Over the past 22 years it has evolved into one of the most prestigious, popular vocational and cultural event in Central Europe, where annually about fifty to sixty thousand visitors learn the art of cultural wine tasting and have the ability to meet the makers, the related traditions and handcrafts. (Szabó, Komáromi-Gergely, 2011).

The number of visitors attending on the festival varies over the years. This is not only the result of the economical conditions or the interest towards the event. Weather conditions also play an important role in the success of the festival as in case of the wine festival it is held at the uncovered park areas, thus unpleasant conditions develop in case of heavy rainfall and strong wind. By looking at the statistical data presented in *Figure 1.*, it can be seen that the festival was steadily increasing popularity. In 2010 the number total number of visitors dropped below the 2007 values. Analyzing the data from a financial point of view 2010 was unsuccessful not only because of the low visitor number, but also there were more visitors present who did not pay for the entry than who did pay.

The organization was as high quality as in 2009 there were over 200 hundred vintner present from 15 country, and the special guest was the Subcarpathian region.[2.] Therefore cause of the visitor loss was neither due to a significant change in the organization nor

due to a change in the event program. As this festival has no alternative spot in case of bad weather, unpleasant climate conditions can scare away most of the potential visitors. According to the spokesman of the festival: László Ágnesztől this threat was known, but was not treated as a high risk factor "Last year there were 60 thousand people present on the events, we expect a huge crowd this year also. We fear from the weather, but according to the feedbacks the wine festival in the Buda castle is the event which is visited by the people even when it's raining. There were examples when out of the four festival days it rained on two, still a great number of visitors tasted the wines in the castle."



**Figure 1. Number of visitors attending the wine festival in the Buda Castle**

*Source: <http://www.fesztivalregisztracio.hu> edited by Brix Á.*

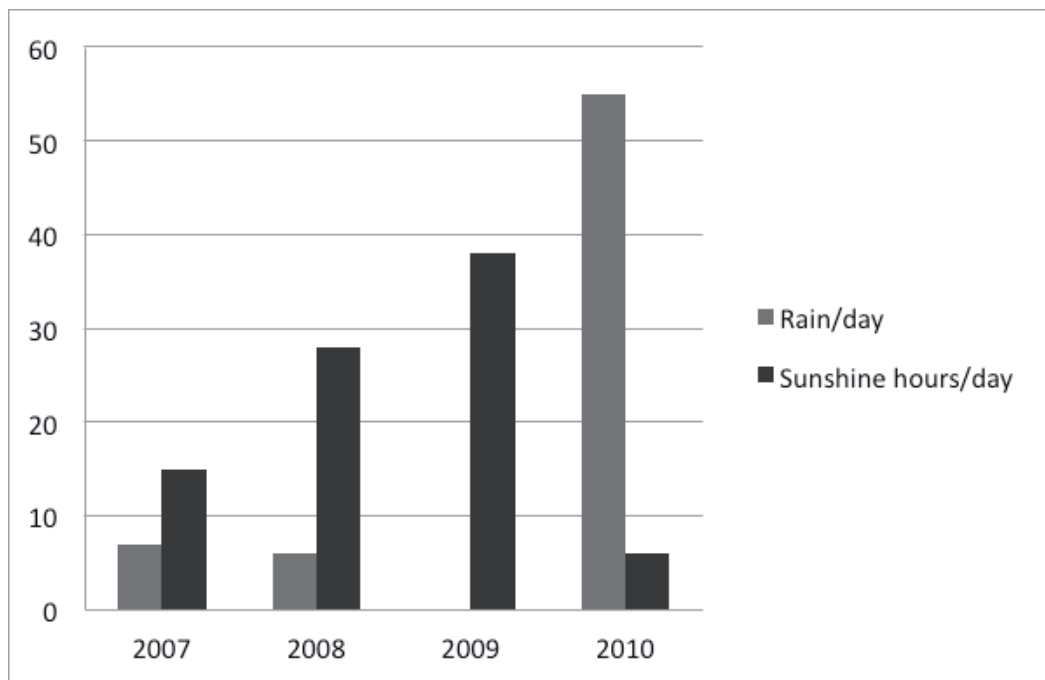
The archive weather data [3.] show that out of the five festival days only the last closing one was dry and sunny, the rest of the days suffered from rain and damp, cold conditions. *Table 1.* shows the rain and sunshine data on the festival days. The presented values are not detailed enough to determine the amounts for the opening hours, it only provides information for a whole day (24 hours), however it can still be used to compare the results with each other. The rainwater amount is given in mm per day and the sunshine is given in hours per day.

**Table 1. : Rain and Sunshine data.**

Date of wine festival	Rain (mm/day)					Sunshine (hours/day)				
	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
2007.09.5-9	5	1	0	0	1	0	2	1	5	7
2008.09.10-14	0	0	0	0	6	12	5	5	6	0
2009.09.9-13	0	0	0	0	0	11	9	1	8	9
2010.09.8-12	12	0	32	11	0	0	1	0	0	5

Source: <http://old.eumet.hu/naprol-napra.html> edited by Brix A.

Although Table 1. contains all the information needed it can still be improved by adding up the values for each festival. This way the total amount of Rain/Sunshine can be compared for all four festivals. These summed up results are shown in *Figure 2*. It is logical that the amount of rain and sunshine are in contrast, but the awaited result are visible when comparing the number of visitors with the amount of sunshine. The two tendencies seem to be corresponding to each other.



**Figure 2. : Cumulated Rain and Sunshine data for the wine festival in 2007 to 2010**

Source: <http://old.eumet.hu/naprol-napra.html> edited by Brix A.

This is only one study, therefore general conclusions with one hundred percent reliability cannot be made. Still in this case it is shown that the success of an open-air event highly depends on the weather conditions, which specially applies for sunshine hours and rain amount.

When organizing an event to boost tourism this factor cannot be neglected, as a festival or any other event that draws enough people, to influence tourism statistics requires large areas, thus indoor organization in most cases is not feasible.

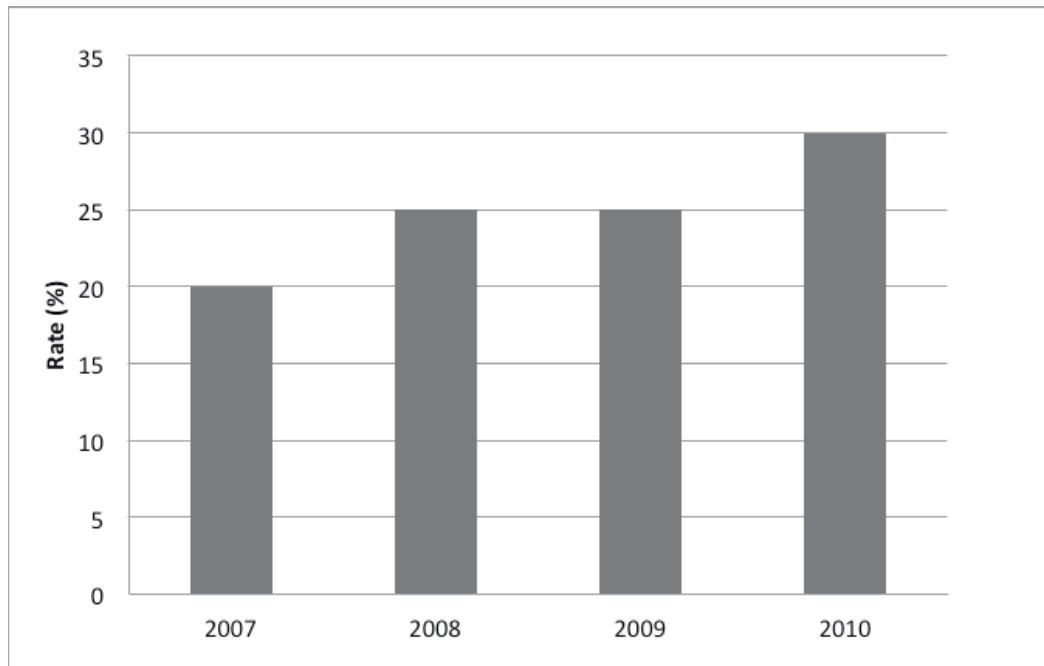
The procedure to evolve a domestic event into a popular international requires more than just good luck. The first wine festival wasn't even held in the Buda castle, instead it opened its gates at the Vörösmarty square in the city center more than 20 years ago, to allow the few hundred uncertain inquisitive people to enter [4.]. The wine festival in the Buda castle over the last years has offered much more than just the opportunity of wine drinking. By visiting, and observing the festival for the last 4 years I have made the following conclusions: It is an excellent opportunity for entertainment for the whole family. Besides the wide range of wine supply the gastronomical specialities are also present. For the kids there are several activities where they can make traditional handmade items or even have their face painted. To make sure everyone can occupy themselves, there are stages set up, where various presentations are shown including storytelling, dancing, singing and more. There are also exhibitors representing handicrafts, which make the festival a complex cultural event. Since the 20<sup>th</sup> festival held in 2011 even free WIFI with internet connection is available for the visitors with smart phones, laptops or tablets.

When classifying the wine festival in the Buda castle the question can be asked: Is it just a festival or can it also be considered as event marketing? The definition described earlier states that event marketing is an unique own event or an organized presence on another event, which aims are to provide brand experience, to deliver a message, to involve the target audience interactively, to influence the attitude towards the brand positively and in some cases to generate newsworthy information. Considering this from the wine makers point of view they have organized their presence on an event organized by the Hungarian Grape and Wine Culture Non Governmental Organization. Each wine manufacturer has the opportunity to involve the visitors into an interactive brand experience, by offering their products. Most exhibitors take the chance to show their special limited wines, which are only available in special wine stores, this way the audience may position the brand more positively. Furthermore the festival is a good occasion for new and unknown brands to represent themselves as all exhibitors must use the same uniform stand. According to the mentioned observations the wine festival at the Buda castle is definitely belongs under event marketing.

To determine the effect the festival has on tourism we need to analyze the origin of the visitors. Those living in Budapest do not really add to tourism as they only attend on the festival then go home.



Those coming from the rest of Hungary increase domestic tourism, but according to a previous study (Szabó, Komáromi-Gergely, 2011), only 13% of the visitors are from out of town. The most important group that plays an important roll in tourism is the foreign visitors. In most cases they stay for a longer time and visit other touristic attractions in Budapest, thus for the town's and Hungary's tourism the aim is to increase the number of foreign visitors by attracting them with events such as the wine festival.

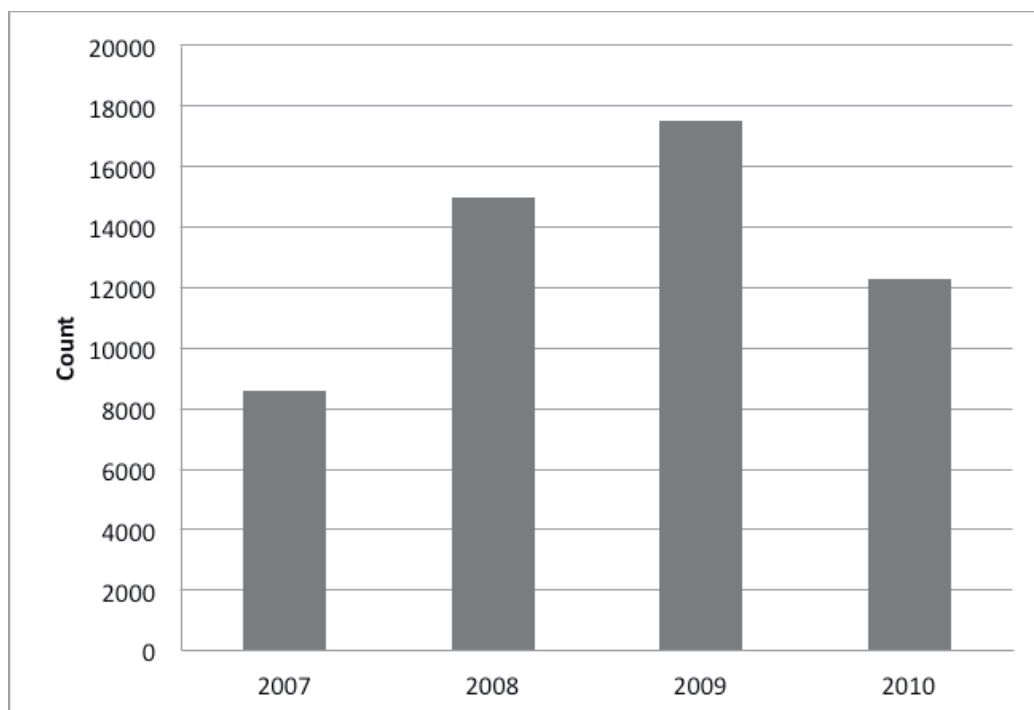


**Figure 3.: Rate of foreign visitors on the wine festival in the Buda castle.**

*Source: <http://www.fesztivalregisztracio.hu> edited by Brix A.*

The rate and amount of foreign visitors are shown in Figure 3. and in Figure 4. It can be seen that the event is becoming more and more popular among the foreign visitors. In 2007 only 20% of the total visitors were from abroad. This value has increased to 25% in 2008 and in 2009, then in 2010 with a further 5% increase it reached 30%.

Examining the number of foreign visitors in the same period, slightly different results can be observed. In 2007 the total number for visitor coming from a different country was 8600. In 2008 this value almost doubled when reaching 15000. In 2009 the rate stayed on the same values as in 2008 see *Figure 3.*, whereas the counted visitor number kept increasing to 17500 persons. In 2010 due to the bad weather conditions analyzed earlier, the number of foreign visitors dropped down to 12300 persons, which is lower than the 2008 value. It can be seen that the increasing rate doesn't definitely mean greater number of visitors but certainly shows that the event is becoming more and more international.



**Figure 4.: Number of foreign visitors on the wine festival in the Buda castle.**

*Source: <http://www.fesztivalregisztracio.hu> edited by Brix Á.*

Out of the 155 festivals [1.], only a few reach to same or higher level as the wine festival in the Buda castle. What is the key to achieve the popularity and success? The first that is quite obvious is repetition. Evolution and notoriety requires some time. An event that is held only once does not have the opportunity to benefit from loyal returning visitors who would also convince others to come. But this is not all, a recent study (Sulyok, 2010) showed that the interest towards different festival themes is not the same. The largest interest is towards gastronomy (30,8 %), which is followed by light music (18,6 %) and at third position is the theme related to traditional values (17 %). By adding up the percentages we can see that the first three theme gathers over 66 % of all themes. Analyzing the wine festival all three elements are included its main theme is gastronomy and wine, but it also included traditional element and a great variety of musical production. The festival dates earlier than the study, thus the same conclusion can be made as with event marketing: In cases of events we can find an applied practice earlier than related studies.

## SUMMARY

In this paper the history of eventmarketing was looked over and shown with an example that the origins date back to at least the 1930's



or even earlier, while researchers only started to deal with the topic in the 1990's. Furthermore the wine festival at the Buda castle was analyzed from event marketing and tourism point of view. The festival is a good example of eventmarketing and how it can also be useful for tours. The results showed the number visitors highly depend on the weather conditions especially on the sunshine hours. The rate of foreign visitors has been increasing over the last years, which is increasing tourism and show that good marketing tools are used. The festival includes the three most popular theme element which gastronomy, light music and traditional element.

## REFERENCES

- CORNWELL T B, MAIGNAN L (1998): An International Review of Sponsorship Research, *Journal of Advertising* 27 (1) 1-22
- DRENGNER J, GAUS H, JAHN S (2008): Does Flow Influence the Brand Image in Event Marketing? *Journal of Advertising Research*; 48 (1) 138-147
- GAUR S S – SAGGERE S V (2001): Event Marketing and Management, Vikas Publishing House, 243p
- HARSÁNYI D (2012): Az eseménymarketing működési mechanizmusa és szerepe a vállalati marketingkommunikációs tevékenységben, Doktori (PhD) Értekezés, Gödöllő
- SNEATH J et al (2006): Balancing Act: Proprietary and Non-Proprietary Sponsored Events, *Marketing Health Services*, 26 (1) 27-32
- SULYOK J (2010), A magyar lakosság fesztivállátogatási szokásai, *Turizmus Bulletin XIV. Évfolyam 3. issue*
- SZABÓ Z, KOMÁROMI-GERGELY A (2011): Turisztikai és vendéglátó marketing – Esettanulmány Budavári Borfesztivál, Szent István egyetemi Kiadó, Gödöllő
- WILLIAMS B (1977): Special-Interest Autos, Mar-Apr. 1977
- [1.] <http://www.fesztivalregisztracio.hu> (downloaded: 2013.08.23)
- [2.] <http://www.deluxe.hu/budavari-borfesztival-2010/20100907> (downloaded: 2013.09.01)
- [3.] <http://old.eumet.hu/naprol-napra.html> (downloaded: 2013.09.01)
- [4] <http://hetivalasz.hu/pr/20-eves-sikertortenet-a-budavari-borfesztival-41234/> (downloaded: 2013.10.30)