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## THE TOURISM GEOGRAPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WINE GASTRONOMY FESTIVALS IN THE BALATON WINE REGION

The festival tourism sector in Hungary has gone through a tremendous development over the last few years. Several of the Hungarian festivals attract tens of thousands of people, and most of the festivals attract international guests as well. The festivals of selected importance are well supplemented by events of smaller size and range, as a result of which the festival offer of Hungary is diverse and complex. Wine gastronomy festivals, the central element of which is wine, are now dominant factors in the festival offer of Hungary. Coming from the particularities of the topic we relied on secondary methods in the first place, such as processing the related literature and the collection of wine gastronomy festivals from different sources. Wine gastronomy festivals are usually linked to the wine producing areas of Hungary, and also to the destinations most visited by tourists. Hungary possesses seven wine regions; the Balaton Wine Region is of special importance, mainly due to its renowned wine producing areas. The Wine Region has a total of six wine producing areas, four of which are more important than the remaining two, especially because of their direct connection to Lake Balaton. The Balaton Wine Region is one of the wine gastronomy centres of Hungary, proven by the fact that one-third of all wine gastronomy events organised in Hungary in 2016 took place here. The authors of this paper try to find out what special features the wine gastronomy supply of Balaton Wine Region has and to what extent these are compatible with the national trends.

## Introduction

Interest in festivals has grown in the recent years, and so one of the dominant segments of today's tourism sector is festival tourism. Festivals offer a chance for local communities to celebrate their unique cultures, which in turn will attract tourists to the destination (Getz, 2008). Festivals vitalise the cultural activity of the settlement serving as the location of the event, strengthen its external image by visitors from outside and also reinforce the attachment of local residents to their settlement (Leenders, 2010). Another positive impact is that increased attraction for tourists will result in an increased satisfaction of the visitors, which, as a positive feedback, will further strengthen the attraction of the settlement for guests (Grappi – Montanari, 2011). As regards their themes, festivals can have various genres, like culture, arts, music, gastronomy or even religion (Maeng et al., 2016).

According to Hall et al. (2000) wine tourism is not only about visiting vineyards and wineries but also about the participation in different wine-related events and exhibitions. In Germany, which has a lot of traditions regarding wine tourism, the wine festivals play a significant role to gain new target groups over (Rüdiger et al., 2015). Rück (2013) defined a lot of advantages of the wine festivals, for example they help the direct selling of the high prestigious products of the wineries. As a result, they increase the turnover of the destination management organization in the area, they increase the notoriety and they strengthen the good image of the destination. Local citizens are able to sense the positive effects of the festivals because of the increase of attractiveness of their settlement. Wine related festivals and events play an important role in the wine tourism of a given destination, closely related to the culture and traditions of the respective regions (Várhelyi, 2012). Hungary has extended traditions in viticulture wine production, and wine producing areas and settlement celebrate their related events in accordance with their traditions (Várhelyi, 2016). The recent years has seen a growth in the interest in wine-related events, as a result of which wine gastronomy festivals, with wine as their central attraction, have become dominant elements in the supply of festivals. These events, in addition to entertaining guests, have a considerable role in the preservation of traditions and local values, and also in tourism. The Hungarian bearing surfaces of viticulture and wine production are classified into 22 wine producing areas. The wine producing areas are classified into wine regions, in Hungary there are seven wine regions.

Around Lake Balaton, the local wine producing areas have a special wine gastronomy supply (Cey-Bert, 2001), made up from the values of the local vineyards and their historical and farming background. All these, as attractions, are also the foundations of the wine tourism of the Lake Balaton (Szabó, 2001). The geographical distribution of wine tourism around Lake Balaton shows spectacular differences, demonstrating the leading role of the wine producing areas on the north shore (Michalkó – Vizi, 2006).

### **Aims**

The primary role of the research is a themed analysis of the wine tourism supply of the Balaton Wine Region and its comparison to the supply of Hungary as a whole. In order to reach this goal, we must take a look at the theoretical foundations of wine gastronomy festivals, at the same time placing these events in the system of festivals.

### **Methods**

During the research several methods were applied, in order to get information from a circle as broad as possible. Coming from the particularities of the topic we relied on secondary methods in the first place, such as processing the related literature and the collection of wine gastronomy festivals from different sources. The collection of information about festivals was done by the analysis of the websites of the wine regions and the wine routes, their web 2.0 sites, and the sites of programme promoters of national recognition. The collected festivals were analysed by their programmes, as a result we classified them into wine gastronomy categories which were created during our previous researches (Szabó, 2012; Szabó et al., 2017). The festivals were demonstrated in maps with the use of the space informatics software QGIS 2.8.16.

## Results

### Wine gastronomy festivals

One of the decisive types of festivals is the wine gastronomy festivals (Sulyok – Sziva, 2009) which are closely related not only to wines but to gastronomy as well. Wine is in the centre of these events which is complemented with different services determining the type of the certain festival. According to Szabó (2012) these festivals can be classified into 4 groups:

- **Wine festival:** Basically the local, regional and national exhibitions for the wines of the wine regions for the public with a significant wine professional content.
- **Wine gastronomy:** A gastronomy event, festival where the foods and drinks are both presented to the audience.
- **Wine culture:** The meeting of the wine and the arts, a cultural event, festival where the wines also play a highlighted role in the programme.
- **Harvest festival:** Harvest folk feasts, festivals, balls, where the audience meets the wine culture and traditions of the wine region with particular concern.

Categorisation and typification necessarily leads to simplification, the summary of the characteristic features. In order to make the festival categories applied during the analysis understandable, below we give a few examples for each category of the wine gastronomy festivals of Balaton Wine Region.

#### Specific examples of festivals in the Balaton Wine Region

Hungary has a total of 22 wine producing areas, grouped into seven wine regions. The Balaton Wine Region has an outstanding significance in the wine tourism of Hungary, due, on the one hand, to its excellent endowments for viticulture and wine production, and to being one of the most popular tourism destinations in Hungary, on the other hand. Coming from its prominent role, every year a number of wine gastronomy festivals are organised here which are specific examples for the aforementioned four categories.

#### *Italian Riesling – as we see it (wine festival)*

The programme called “Italian Riesling – as we see it” is a dominant event in the Balatonfüred-Csopak Wine Producing Area, organised in the middle of February

every year in Csopak. This event is classified into the category of wine festival, as it is mainly for the professionals of the wine sector and also to connoisseur audience dedicated to wines. The locations of the event are two decisive wine estate, where they exhibit the “flagship wine” of the wine producing area, the Italian Riesling. On day one of the two-day event a narrow professional audience has the chance to taste wine items, and then on Saturday visitors who registered in advance can take part in a wine tasting session. Several wineries are invited every year by the organisers – in 2016 visitors to the festival had the chance to taste 60 sorts of Italian Riesling by 30 wineries (wineflow.hu).

*Tapolca Trout and Wine Festival (wine gastronomy)*

A characteristic wine gastronomy festival of Tapolca town is the fish-related “Tapolca Trout and Wine Festival”. A central element in the supply of the festival is making foods from local ingredients, and so the festival is classified to the category of wine gastronomy. The foundation of the festival is the fish and wine traditions of Lake Balaton shore, in the first place, and it has been organised every year since 2011 around a lake called Malom (Mill) Lake. The time of the festival is the first weekend of October, which indicates that it targets the more sensitive audience of the extra-season or post-season period. The festival also features a broad range of music programmes. A great emphasis is placed during the festival on the joint propaganda of fish and wine consumption, which is a proof of the fact that festivals are not only events for entertainment but also for the preservation of different traditions and values. The focal point of the festival is food, perfectly matched by the wines offered to them and the diverse music programmes.

*Balatonfüred Wine Weeks (wine culture)*

The wine gastronomy supply of Hungary contains several festivals that have been organised annually for years or even decades. The Balatonfüred wine weeks is an event with decades of traditions, the three-week festival has been organised every August since 1932. The event lasting from mid-August to early September is one of the longest wine gastronomy festivals not only at Lake Balaton but also in the whole of Hungary. In 2016, guests visiting the festival had the chance to taste almost 300 sorts of wine by 25 wineries. Quality wines are an important part of the supply, but the focal point of the festival is diverse cultural programmes and so it can be classified as a wine culture event. The number of visitors to the event is tens of thousands, due to the quality which has been constantly high for a long time (welovebalaton.hu).

*Balatonboglár Vintage Festival (harvest festival)*

A dominant wine gastronomy festival of the Balatonboglár Wine Producing Area and the south shore of Lake Balaton as a whole is the Balatonboglár Vintage Festival organised on the least weekend of peak season, in late August. The time of the event is the start of the classical vintage time where the tens of thousands of visitors can get to know grape harvest traditions, folk traditions and the traditions of viticulture and wine production. The central element of the festival is wine that is supplemented by an extremely broad range of services, due to which the event can motivate not only wine lovers but also guests with other interests (programturizmus.hu). The programme of the vintage festival includes, in addition to a broad range of music shows (mostly in popular genres), traditionalist groups, and wine culture and wine gastronomy programmes. The pleasant folk festival mood is completed by the vintage procession and street parties.

*Wine gastronomy festivals in Hungary*

The wine gastronomy festivals are primarily connected to the wine producing areas of Hungary (*Figure 1*) but we can find numerous examples for just the opposite as well. Such settlements also possess festivals connected to wine which do not belong to any wine regions and further on they do not have wine making traditions. These towns and occasionally villages primarily organise these events because of the inherent opportunities of the festivals and/or with the aim of keeping the traditions.

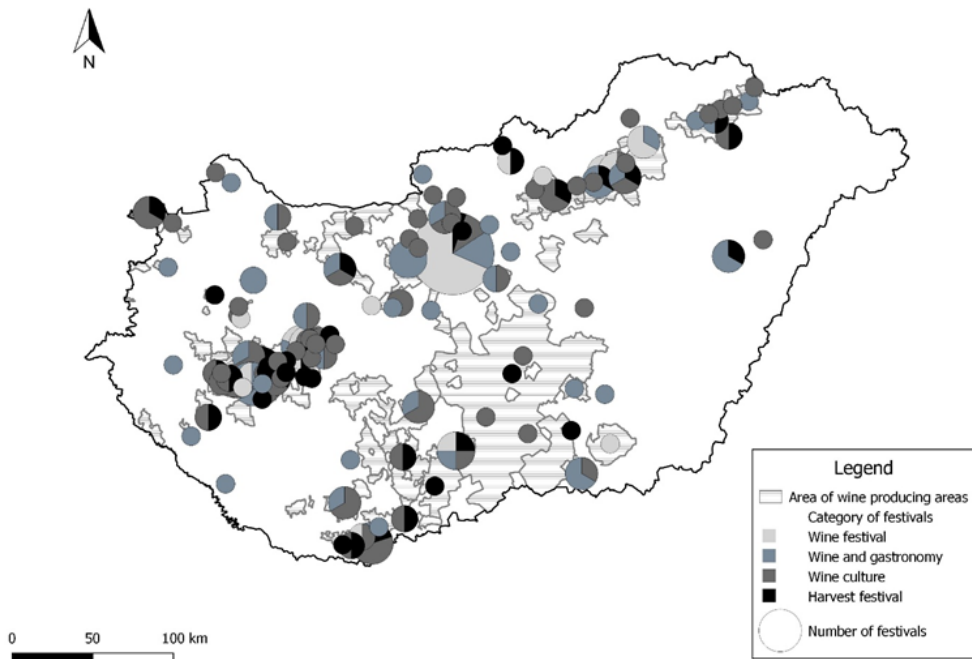


Figure 1 The wine gastronomy festivals in Hungary in 2016  
 Source: Based on internet sources edited by Závodi B. 2018.

The wine festivals are primarily connected to the famous wine producing areas of Hungary such as to the Villány or Eger Wine Producing Area. Thanks to the great consumer markets we can find numerous such festivals in Budapest and around Lake Balaton as well. The supply of the wine gastronomy festivals is varied and extensive so we can find them in numerous locations of Hungary out of which Budapest and Etyek should be highlighted. If we approach from the direction of the wine regions, then the Tokaj and the Eger Wine Region and also the Balaton Wine Region mean a decisive focus. Even the noted medical and fun spas are involved in the supply of these thematic festivals since the number and the wine gastronomy interest of their guests mean a steady demand.

Such is Bükkfűrdő and Hajdúszoboszló. The festivals with wine culture category are concentrated also in the wine producing areas but the highlighted wine towns have a focused role as well such as Sopron, Pécs, Villány and Eger. In the apropos of the harvest festivals the decisive areas are the Balaton Wine Region and the Villány, the Eger and the Tokaj Wine Producing areas. It is a point of interest that several such settlements organise harvest festivals which are not allocated in wine producing areas. We can find examples for this in Ópusztaszer and Szécsény where the explanation is because of the traditions and the popular characteristics of the harvest festivals.

### Wine gastronomy festivals in the Balaton Wine Region

In the Balaton Wine Region there are six wine producing areas. As regards the wine producing areas, the Badacsony, the Balaton Uplands and the Balatonfüred-Csopak areas can be found on the north shore, while the Balatonboglár one on the south shore. The other two wine producing areas, the Somló and the Zala one play less dominant role in the life of the Wine Region. In 2016, a total of 223 wine gastronomy festivals were organised in Hungary, almost one-third of which, not less than 66 festivals were held in the Balaton Wine Region. This figure in itself indicates the weight of the Balaton wine producing areas primarily among the Hungarian wine gastronomy festivals, and indirectly among the wine producing areas of Hungary. The breakdown of these festivals at national level (*Figure 2*) and also at the level of the Balaton Wine Region (*Figure 3*) shows a characteristic composition.

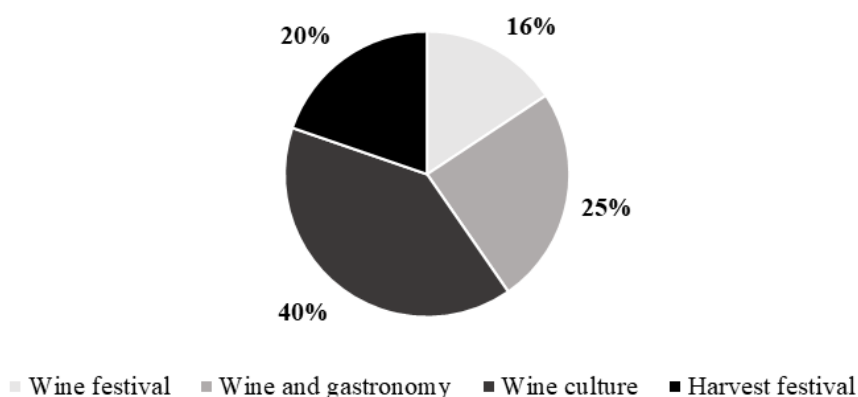


Figure 2 The types of wine gastronomy festivals in Hungary in 2016  
Source: Based on internet sources own editing



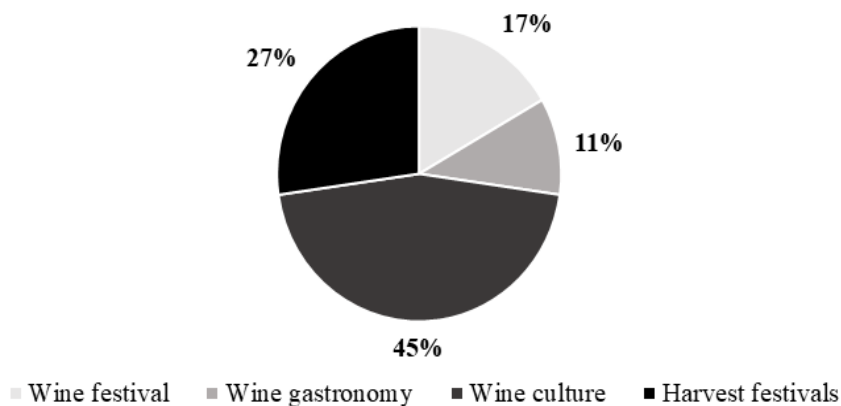


Figure 3 The types of wine gastronomy festivals in the Balaton Wine Region in 2016

Source: Based on internet sources own editing

The low proportion of wine festivals (16% and 17%, respectively) is mainly due to the fact that these events are targeted at a narrower professional audience and so their number is much lower than that of the festivals designed for the broader public. The share of wine gastronomy festivals nationally (25%) is much higher than in the Wine Region (11%). The primary reason for this is the much lower proportion of events connected to quality food around Lake Balaton. The wine producing areas of the Balaton Wine Region do not fully utilise the synergies lying in the connection of wine and foods. The proportion of wine culture is the highest (40% and 45%, respectively) both at national level and in the Wine Region, as these events are organised for the broader public. In the area of Lake Balaton, renowned for its mass tourism demand, this style perfectly matches the needs of the broad audience. These festivals play an important role in the propaganda of not only the wines but that of the Wine Region as well. A central element in the supply of wine culture festivals is concerts, as a consequence of which they are suitable for the motivation of large numbers of people and for the drawing of attention to the settlement and the Wine Region. Harvest festivals are decisive elements in the supply, they play an important role in the preservation of traditions. Their share is 20% at national level and 27% in the Balaton Wine Region. The real mass event category is the harvest festivals, as their diverse programme offer abundant in popular genre elements makes them suitable for the reception of the of the broad public.

Figure 4 demonstrates the uneven breakdown of wine gastronomy festivals at national level: the most popular period is summer and early autumn. At summer the number of visitors to large-scale open-air festivals may reach tens of thousands. It is early autumn, the start of classical grape harvest time when harvest festivals are held all over Hungary, which makes September the most popular month for such festivals: 54 events are organised in this month. The breakdown of festivals in the territory of the Balaton Wine Region was similar in 2016. The busiest time was also summer and early autumn, the large-scale summer open-air festivals related to wine are very popular at Lake Balaton. An intensive growth in the number of visitors due to the harvest festivals is less typical in the territory of the Wine Region than in Hungary as a whole. The number one reason for this is the phase shift between the summer peak season of tourism at Lake Balaton and the traditional autumn harvest time. The start of the vintage time is late August even when the earliest ripening sorts are harvested, while the end of the peak season of tourism at Lake Balaton is usually 20 August.

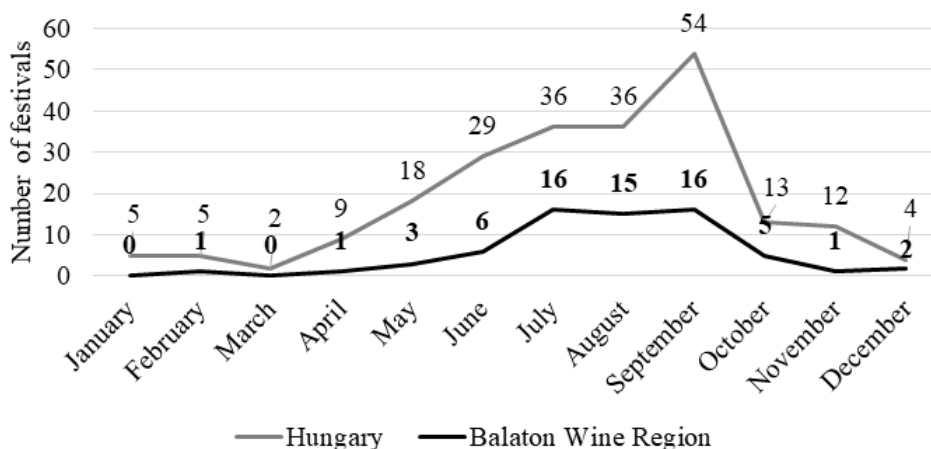


Figure 4 The distribution of wine gastronomy festivals during the year in 2016  
Source: Based on internet sources own editing

The wine producing areas of the Balaton Wine Region participating in festival tourism related to wine and gastronomy differ. *Figure 5* demonstrates the diverse numbers of wine gastronomy festivals organised in 2016 in the territories of the respective wine producing areas. Two wine producing areas are of special importance: the Balatonfüred-Csopak and the Badacsony wine producing areas in the territories of which 21 and 20 festivals were organised in 2016, respectively. Furthermore, the most popular category is the wine culture in all of the wine producing areas.

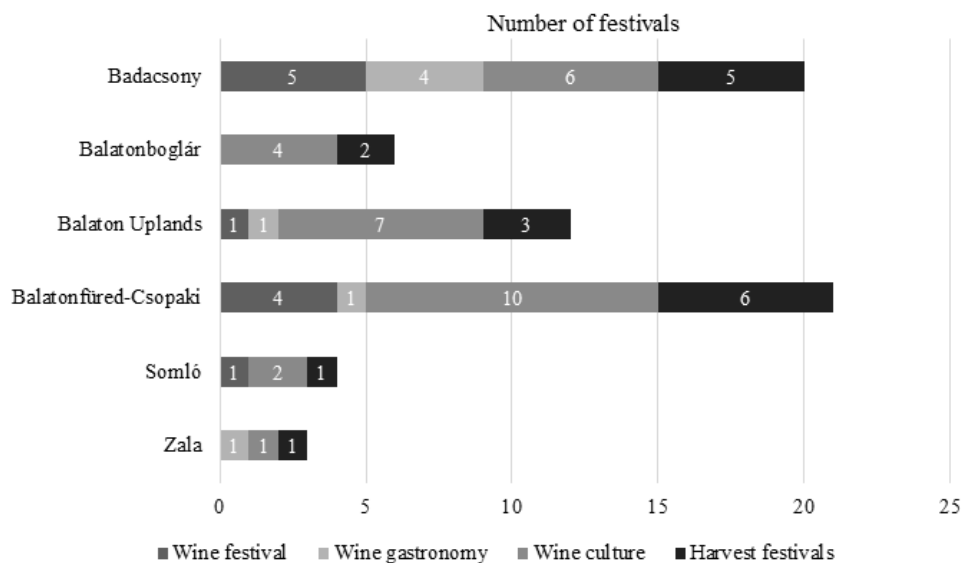


Figure 5 The distribution of wine gastronomy festivals among the wine producing areas of Balaton Wine Region in 2016

Source: Based on internet sources own editing

*Figure 6* reveals that the number of wine gastronomy festivals organised on the north shore is many times more than that of the events held on the south shore. The wine producing areas of the north shore are much better in utilising the opportunities lying in festivals, and they consider wine as an image factor as important. On the south shore of Lake Balaton, the proportion of mass tourism is much higher, and so the share of wine-related services and other higher class services connected to wine is lower. The number of festivals in the Balatonboglár Wine Producing Area

is low despite the fact that this wine producing area is the largest in size (almost 10 thousand hectares) in the whole of the Wine Region. During the summer the south shore is the traditional venue of 3S mass tourism at Lake Balaton – and mass demands prefer, in accordance with the experiences of the local wineries, the dining and drinking facilities located directly on the shore, with their lower prices, to the higher quality and consequently more expensive wines of the nearby producers. Although *Figures 5 and 6* clearly demonstrate that no more than 6 festivals were organised on the south show in the topic of wine gastronomy, these events were among the most visited events organised every year, with a stable turnover. The Balatonboglár Harvest Festival, analysed as a case study on its own in this paper, was organised for the 41<sup>st</sup> time in 2017, just on the weekend including the 20. August, and the number of visitors was measured in tens of thousands. It is one of the largest wine-related events in the whole of the Wine Region.

As regards the professional aspects of wine production, the Balatonboglár Wine Producing Area has outstanding positions, as three Wine Producers of the Year have been awarded from this wine producing area so far, as opposed to the one producer from all wine producing areas on the north shore of Lake Balaton:

- 2010 Ottó Légli, Balatonboglár Wine Producing Area
- 2008 † János Konyári, Balatonboglár Wine Producing Area
- 2006 Vencel Garamvári, Balatonboglár Wine Producing Area
- 2000 † Mihály Figula, Balatonfüred-Csopak Wine Producing Area

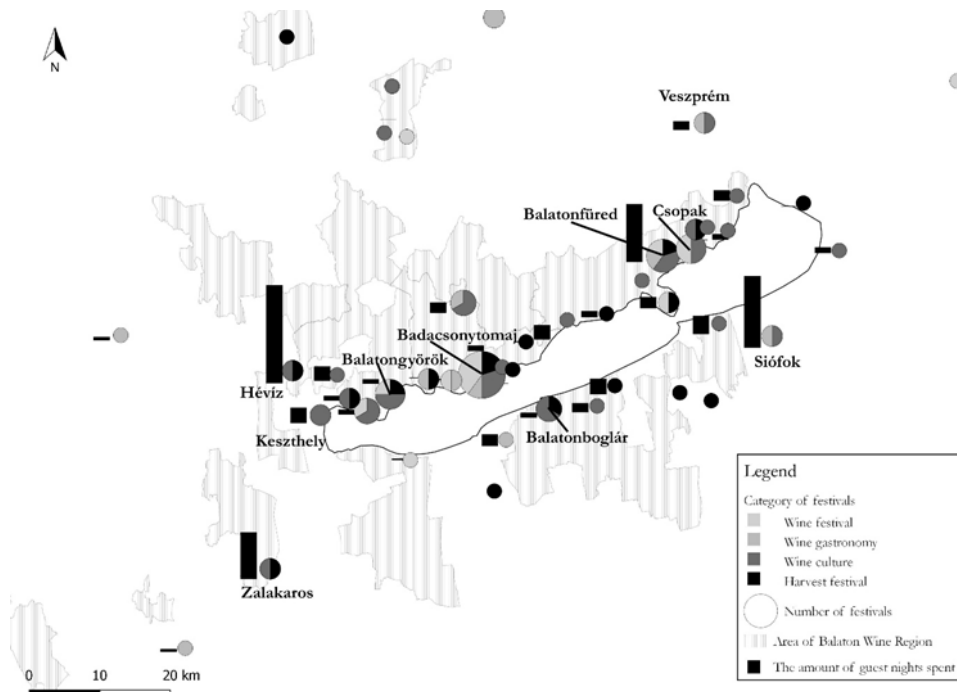


Figure 6 The wine gastronomy festivals in the Balaton Wine Region in 2016  
 Source: Based on internet sources edited by Závodi B. 2018.

Figure 6 demonstrates that the connection is not close between the amount of guest nights spent at commercial accommodations and the number of the organized wine gastronomy festivals at the settlements. In our opinion the decisive factors are the notoriety of the wine producing areas and the attractive brand name as well as the traditions of these events and not the amount of guests at commercial accommodations. There are numerous settlements around Lake Balaton which emerge because of the amount of guest nights (Hévíz, Siófok) but they do not play a significant role in the topic of wine and gastronomy festivals. There is one exception, Balatonfüred, which has several wine and gastronomy related festivals. There are settlements which do not have a big amount of guest nights but thanks to the reputation of the wine producing areas they are in the front-rank (Szolnoki – Totth, 2017). These settlements are important wine gastronomy festival locations like Badacsonytomaj and Csopak.

There are settlements which are not connected to wine producing areas but thanks to the geographical proximity and the traditions they organise wine gastronomy festivals. These settlements often play an important role in the tourism around Lake Balaton like Keszthely and Siófok.

### **Summary**

In recent years, as a part of general consumer trends, there has been a growing interest in wine and gastronomy, which is well indicated by the growth of the number of gastronomy festivals organised in Hungary: in 2012 there were 151 wine gastronomy events, and this figure increased to 223 by 2016. Wine gastronomy festivals are usually linked to the wine producing areas of Hungary, but such events are also organised by several settlements that do not belong to one of the wine producing areas.

The Balaton Wine Region is one of the wine gastronomy centres of Hungary, with 30% of all wine and gastronomy related festivals organised here. The south shore features a much smaller number of festivals, nevertheless, from professional aspect (Wine Producer of the Year in 3 years) and as regards its market position (BB brand) this area can be considered as successful. Each of the festivals introduced as case studies in the paper play important role in the tourism sector of Lake Balaton, and in addition to entertainment, they also play a significant role in the preservation of heritage and tradition.

The categorisation and classification of the wine gastronomy festivals at Lake Balaton allowed an analysis of the themed event supply of the Balaton Wine Region, with a strong demand by tourists.

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