

Online and Offline Networks: Social Media Usage within the Hungarian Wine SMEs

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Received: 15 Oct.2018, Revised: 22 Oct.. 2018, Accepted: 12 Nov. 2018.

Published online:1 Jan 2019.

Abstract: Social media technologies become mainstream, modify personal relationships and generate new opportunities for knowledge sharing and facilitating collaboration. Most of the people use these tools to develop personal networks, gather information or manage business processes, communication and marketing. As a result organizations are finding the way to integrate social media into the essential infrastructure of their business strategy. The region of Balaton is the second most popular tourist destination in Hungary, so the sustainable development and the collaboration of its enterprises are essential. The purpose of the research is to explore the networks of the wineries, gastronomy units and start-ups of the Balaton Uplands, and to explore the characteristics of knowledge-based networking (social media) tools. The selection criteria includes the age of the organizations, the size (number of employees) and generational differences. Qualitative research methodologies are applied as it seeks to acquire deeper and more subtle knowledge for some selected businesses. The qualitative research uses the case study methodology. This paper explains the whole research process by exhibiting research questions, hypothesis and the research model and shows the summary of the first 2 case studies.

Keywords: Knowledge sharing, Networking, Social Media, SME, Winery.

1 Introduction

The recent remarkable growth in Internet-based business activities has proved that many different advantages can be derived from communication technology platforms. Internet has changed the way people communicate, collaborate, learn and conduct business. It has delivered to organizations a global market presence, and online marketing has become an essential part of business. Different knowledge-based (social) networking tools have experienced significant growth in recent years. This research study is set in the context of the wine industry. Faced with new challenges in a rapidly evolving world market, small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) in the wine sector in the region of Balaton need to plan their future opportunities in order to force the sustainable development and the collaboration with other businesses and increase their profit and competitiveness. The following section introduce the Hungarian wine industry and regions.

2 Hungarian Wine Industries

There are several opportunities for the Hungarian wineries to renew and increase vineyards. Since 2010, 20,000

hectares of vineyards have been renovated and 80,000 hectares have actually been planted. In addition, there are tenders for the development of technology for wineries. There is also an opportunity to collaborate with hypermarkets and supermarkets, which makes it easier for producers to place their own products on the shelves of various shops, as well as the ability of the supermarket chains to appear in foreign stores (elelmiszer.hu, 2018; FM, 2017; Lidl, 2018). Between 2014 and 2016, the area of vineyards in the country has decreased significantly to 93,200 hectares in 2004, and in 2016 to 63,600 hectares. Of course, the area of some wine regions has increased, however, it has decreased much more (NAK, 2017).

In 2016 agricultural output at current prices exceeded 2500 billion HUF, of which grapes and wine accounted for HUF 153 billion, representing 5.9% of agriculture (KSH, 2017). Compared to the performance of 2015, this is a downturn compared to HUF 165 billion at the time, which was 6.9% (KSH, 2016). In contrast, according to preliminary data, in 2017 the proportion of grapes and wine in agriculture was again above 6%, namely 6.5%, which means nearly 170 billion (KSH, 2017).

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More than 2.5 million hectolitres of this year were produced in the country, but less than a third (770,000 hl) was sold abroad (kormany.hu, 2015). Hungary's wine trade according to György Czerván, State Secretary for Agricultural Economy starts to be export oriented. The reason for the growing export is that Hungarian wines are increasingly consumed by foreigners, which is also supported by various activities aimed at promoting Hungarian wines. Meanwhile the European wine-growing areas and, consequently, wine production have been growing since 2000 (Köpöncei, 2017; OIV, 2016).

2.1 The Balaton Tourist Region

Many believe that Lake Balaton is not only for the summer season, but is waiting for people every day of the year. This is mainly the case for those who live on the shore and operate some kind of catering unit (borérszpiac, 2018). The region's tourist attraction is undeniable and outstanding and as a result local winemakers have been able to sell a significant amount of wine. The main grape variety in the region is not surprisingly the Riesling, which accounts for 35% of the grapes cultivated here, followed by the Szürkebarat by 7% and the Kékfrankos by 6%. In terms of the area under vines planted here, white wine (grapes) cover almost half of the plantations (42%) (KSH, 2016).

2.1.1 Balatonfüred-Csopak Wine Region

This wine region is located in the northeast part of Lake Balaton from Balatonalmádi to Zánka. There are settlements in the area such as Balatonvilágos, Tihany, Szentjakabfa or Balatonszőlős (Balatonfüred-Szőlősi Hegyközség, 2014). The region's abundance of tourism belongs to Balatonfüred, but the most prominent vine-growing areas of the region can be found in Csopak, which is also the name of this wine region. Here, the Csopaki Codex regulates the system for encouraging the quality of the wine of the region (Náray, et al., 2015). In Balatonfüred, not only wine but also other cultural programs, active and health tourism give the economic base (Földi, 2017). Due to the wine, there are many events organised from the Balaton Fish and Wine Festival at the beginning of summer to the Balatonfüred Wine Week at the end of summer. In addition, in the middle of the summer, the Roze, Rizling and Jazz Days in Veszprém provide a great opportunity for winemakers and wine enthusiasts to connect with each other. The wine region boasts wineries such as St Donat Estate, Bujdosó Vineyards and Winery (Náray, et al., 2015). The abundance of tourism mentioned above is also evident in terms of guest traffic. The number of guests visiting commercial accommodations was 376.505 in 2014, and the number of nights they spent exceeded one million (KSH, 2016).

2.1.2 Badacsony Wine Region

The Badacsony wine region is considered a volcanic wine region, so we can taste the so-called "volcanic wines" from

the Badacsony wineries (Geri, 2018). The wine region lies on the southern slopes of Badacsony, so the air flows from Lake Balaton affecting the temperature of the area and greatly determines its climate. Due to its location, the area is protected from the cold winds of the north (Várhelyi, 2012). In its soil composition, we can find pannonic grass, pannonic sand, and basalt with mountain peaks. Nearly half of the vineyards grown in the wine region in 2011 were Italian by 45%, followed by Szürkebarat by 14%, followed by pinot noir by 5%. It also shows how dominant the white wine grape is in the Badacsony wine region (KSH, 2016). Wineries such as Laposa Estate, Sandahl or the Quiet Vineyard (Náray, et al., 2015) are well-known ones. In the Badacsony wine region more than 88.000 guests spent 270.474 guest nights, mainly in hotels and campsites (KSH, 2016).

2.1.3 Balaton Uplands Wine Region

Its territory is located between Balatonederics beside Lesenceistvánd, Sümeg is part of the wine region (Balatonfelvidéki Borvidék Hegyközsége, 2014). Like the two wine regions mentioned above, the climate of the wine region is largely determined by Lake Balaton (KSH, 2016). Similarly to Badacsony the Balaton Uplands wine region is located on volcanic soil (Geri, 2018). The vine variety grown in the largest area of the wine region here is Riesling with 46%, followed by Szürkebarat with 11% and the third is Chardonnay with 10%. It is worth mentioning that in terms of grape varieties, according to the data of 2014, the area of blue grapes is not found among the vine varieties with the first 5 largest areas (KSH, 2016).

3 Theoretical Backgrounds

3.1 Knowledge Sharing

Knowledge, knowledge management and knowledge sharing have become very popular and well-known topics nowadays. In knowledge economy knowledge is a strategically important resource and the performance driver for organizations. Knowledge sharing represents a key knowledge management process in organizations and can be considered fundamental for generating new ideas and developing new business opportunities. Li (2010:40) defines knowledge sharing as an activity "in which participants are involved in the joint process of contributing, negotiating and utilizing knowledge". According to Gaál et al. (2013) knowledge sharing as a two-way process (imparting and receiving knowledge) between the knowledge giver(s) and the knowledge receiver(s), who as participants of knowledge sharing, exchange the knowledge found in their minds or the knowledge found in electronic or paper documents (so tacit and explicit knowledge).

3.2 Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs)

The majority of wineries and gastro start-ups are SMEs, which forces them to be cautious in spending on marketing

and related technology. These businesses are not ready to pay specialized technical staff to manage websites and social media strategies. Thus, websites of SMEs tend to evolve over time, adding increased functionality in phases as funds permit.

Wineries are a high-value tourism sector, tend to be family run or small in size, as well as geographically isolated. They are highly dependent on the Internet to increase visibility and drive sales and reputation (Canziani and Byrd, 2014).

However leading wineries try to allocate funding to website design, and also social media is increasingly being incorporated into site design (Alonso et al., 2013). Websites are particularly important in attracting specific audiences such as wine club members, younger consumers and non-local tourists, who tend to generate word-of-mouth reputational intelligence and contribute authentic website content through blogging. Websites further enable wineries to use interactive social media technologies to promote their image and brand, e.g. virtual winery tours, storytelling and educational videos as well as virtual wine tasting and social media networking (Thach, 2009).

3.3 Social Media Tools

The term “social media” has a variety of definitions, like collaborative online applications which enable and encourage participation, conversation, openness, creation and socialization amongst a community of users (Bowley, 2009), web-based tools enabling participation and collaboration based on individuals’ activities (Storey et al., 2010). It can also be considered as a tool that facilitates intra- and inter-organizational activities including collaborative product development, learning and creativity (Pepler and Solomou, 2011), corporate dialog implementation (Bonson and Flores, 2011), and knowledge sharing community creation (Yates and Paquette, 2011). Vuori (2011) characterized social media by considering the extent to which they support communication, collaboration, connecting, completing, combining (5C):

3.3.1 Communication

Blogs (Blogger), Microblogs (Twitter): managed by specified author, who publishes posts, that are dated and shown in reverse chronological order.

Video sharing (YouTube): upload, view, share videos and display a variety of individual/corporate video.

Presentation sharing (SlideShare): web-based slide hosting service, where users can upload presentations privately or publicly.

Instant messaging service (Skype, Viber, Messenger): online conference tool, which can promote communication and knowledge sharing between community members.

3.3.1 Communication

Wikis (Wikipedia): website on which users collaboratively modify content and structure directly from the web browser

Groupware/shared workspaces (GoogleDocs): supports collaborative creation of knowledge, used for sharing documents without sending them via e-mails.

Communities of practices (MeetUp): online portals that facilitate group meetings in various localities.

3.3.2 Connecting

Social networking services (Facebook, LinkedIn): enables for a community to create a profile (group) with the aim to share information to the followers (partners, customers).

3.3.3 Completing

Visual bookmarking tool (Pinterest): process of adding keywords (tags) to pieces of different types of media (photos, videos, documents, links).

News aggregator (Digg): website that collects, collates and organizes syndicated web content, creating a customized site, where all desired content is centralized.

3.3.4 Combining

Mash-Ups (Google Maps): application that uses and combines data from one or more sources.

Organizations have urgent need to pay specific attention to effective knowledge/information sharing which is vital importance for their success and contributes to their ability to achieve competitive advantage. One of the ways this may be achieved is through the use of social media and networking sites.

Social networking sites and blogs have experienced significant growth which encourages organizations to communicate with their existing and potential customers in new and innovative ways. They are increasingly making use of knowledge-based social networking and new forms of marketing communication utilizing social media tools and, in particular its different online channels.

Social media have in the past often been primarily associated with marketing activities. The reason for this is considered to be that initially social applications were focused on advertising and marketing issues but later social media becomes a “complimentary extension of all of marketing efforts” (Evans and McKee, 2012:37).

3.4 Marketing Communication

The key purposes of communication are to provide and share information. Communication benefits business in different ways; it supports stronger decision making, enables problems to be solved more rapidly, increases productivity and other positive outcomes for the organization. Solomon et al. (2008) stated that the role of marketing communication is to support, create and strengthen professional image, inform customers about new offers, remind them about past transactions and convince them to use one product instead of another. Strauss and Frost (2009) emphasized that online marketing is the effective way to build brand image and long-term customer relationship. The concept of integration of different communication channels in order to deliver more coherent

and effective messages about the organization may be referred to as “integrated marketing communication” (Chaffey et al., 2009).

4 Research Frameworks

The “Knowledge-based networking technologies among wine and gastro SMEs in Balaton region” research project was conducted from September 2018 till December 2019. During the research qualitative, interpretative and exploratory approach is used through the collection of primary and secondary data.

4.1 Research Objectives

The aim of the research is to explore the cooperation networks of the wineries, gastronomy units and start-ups of the Balaton Uplands and to explore the characteristics of knowledge-based networking tools. Further objectives are: identifying the business communication model/strategy; mapping the competencies of businesses related to social media and networking; and identifying the competencies considered indispensable to enterprises.

4.2 Research Questions

- Do wineries apply social media consciously?
- Do wineries have formal social media communication strategies?
- How does social media initiate the cooperation network of the wineries and gastro unites and other start-ups in Balaton Uplands?
- What individual and organizational characteristics influence the application of social media?
- What individual and organizational characteristics influence networking and cooperation?

4.3 Research Model and Hypotheses

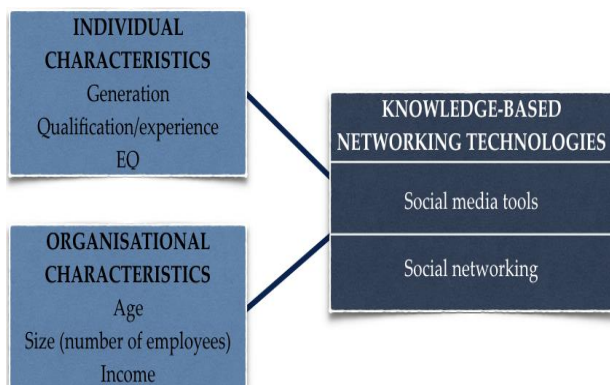


Fig. 1: Research model.

H1: Wineries with conscious and active social media communication attract niche consumers who become loyal.

H2: On individual level winery owners' and oenologists' certain EQ competences (such as empathy, social awareness, assertiveness, optimism, self-esteem and managing relationship) influence positively cooperation

and networking with related business partners and the effective application of social media.

H3: Small size, new start-up wineries apply more social media profile consciously.

Table 1: Conceptualization and measurement.

Social media	
Application of social media	Number of registered profile and software installation
Organizational characteristics	
Old or New winery, Size of the business, Income	Data, dates and figures
Individual characteristics	
Generation, qualification/ experience, EQ	Categorizing generation, documents and dates, TEIQue
Organizational characteristics	
Winery, gastro and related start-ups	Number of cooperation and networking partners, membership, documents, etc.

4.4 Data Collection

During the research, primary and secondary data will be collected and analyzed. In order to have in-depth investigation, the authors use multiple data gathering techniques, such as personal interviews and secondary sources. As primary data collection, using the semi-structured interview the researchers compiled an interview questionnaire guide. In the short introduction it is stressed that the responses are included in the final report and used for the purpose of the study. The authors asked a confirmation from the organizations for using their names in the research report.

The interview questionnaire was divided into four sections: personal background; organizational background; social media tools; social networking. As secondary sources, observations are an important approach to gather and analyze activities of different social media. Due to the specific target group the researchers choose a small sample and invite the owners of 8 -10 wineries and gastro SMEs via social relations to participate in this research. The data collection has started in January 2019. The author sent an e-mail with the questionnaire guide requesting app. 40-60 minutes of their time to fill in it. In order to get a more nuanced perspective, semi-structured interviews were conducted on Skype/Mobile or face to face with the participants. The authors were executed 2 interviews, which lasted almost 60 minutes.

4.5 Participants

This paper provides an evaluation of data relating to 2 wineries (Table 2). These small businesses operate in the

same industry sectors (agriculture). One of them has been in business for more than 25 years, but the other is a young start-up. Concerning the respondents' birth "generation" both of them belong to the "Y" generation (born between 1980-2000) and both are owners of the winery.

Table 2: Description of Case Studies.

	Founded	Respondent	Generation
Winery 1 (W1)	1978	Owner (wine maker)	Y
Winery 2 (W2)	2014	Owner (marketing manager and winer)	Y

4.5.1 Winery 1 (W1)

The first winery is a family business in Badacsony (Laposa Wine Estate). It all started in 1978, on a train crossing the Balaton Uplands, when the 2 founding families' met and married in the same year. As a wedding gift, the newly-wed couple was given a small press house in the Balaton Uplands. Now the three children decided to take over the wine estate, and since the 1990s the winery started to grow and have been developed to a middle-size family business which has by now expanded to 17 hectares. The winery produces mostly white wines, using traditional, local grape varieties typical of the Badacsony wine region: a total of app. 300.000 bottles of wine are produced annually, comprising Welschriesling, Rhine Riesling, Pinot gris, Kéknyelű, Furmint and Juhfark. In recent years, the family business have extended the range of hospitality by opening a new places: Gábli, a brunch spot inside Liliomkert market of Káptalantóti; Hableány, wine and gastronomy centre re-opens soon; and frissTerasz located on the Badacsony mountain (based on <http://www.bazaltbor.hu/en> website).

4.5.2 Winery 2 (W2)

The next winery was the youngest of the respondents. The company started in 2014 by two younger generations of Y. The vineyard has 15 hectares of vineyards, which currently produce only 8 hectares of wine, but in the near future all 15 hectares will be suitable for production. The plantation includes grape varieties such as Olaszrizling and Rosalia from the white wines, and the reds from Zweigelt, Pinot Gris, Merlot and Cabernet Sauvignon.

5 Research Results

Case studies were considered useful as they enable the examination of data at the micro level. The case studies present data of real-life situations of the wineries and they provide better insights into the detailed behaviour of the subjects of interest. This research sought to examine the social media tools to understand why W1 and W2 have incorporated it into their marketing activities. The researcher did not intend to generalize the survey findings

but obtain detailed information; also the data of the research are not set out to test hypotheses. There are clearly limitations with respect to the extent to which the data collected in this research can be generalized.

5.1 Case Study W1

The interview was carried out with one of the owners who is the qualified wine maker stated in France and did her practice is various European and Hungarian wineries. She belongs to the generation Y, joined the winery first in 2004 and re-joined the winery in 2013 after her studies. Since then she also does the marketing part of the business, which means she has an insight of the social media tools they use since 2010. Recently the winery has taken on board a person responsible for marketing, but as it is a learning stage the owner still has the responsibility for this area.

The winery has a social media strategy integrated into their marketing strategy. They spend more than 5 hours weekly dealing with social media tools. The winery applies 40 full time employees, in summer time there are app. 30 more part-time seasonal workers. In the management there are 10 people out of which 3 are the sibling owners.

The winery applies the following social media tools temporarily and confidently: to communication video sharing such as Youtube; to collaborate groupware/shared Workspaces (e.g. GoogleDocs); and social networking services (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn) to connect to network with other people and to be in the vain of the community. Furthermore the winery uses e-mails, press release, events application (Kóstolom, which is the most popular wine and gastro application in Hungary).

She applies Instagram tool the most effectively and would like to learn more of twitter, video, vlog usage. According to the owner social media tools application grew with the winery. Although she admits if it had not been social media tools the winery could not have been able to grow this way. Still they only use the ordinary way to measure the effect of social media tools on business: Google adverts, analytics, number of website visitors. They claim that today there is now relationship between social media tools application and tendency growth in sale as there are firm sales contacts and loyal customers.

The main reasons the winery applies social media tools are the following: building and maintaining brand image; it helps improving effectiveness in their work; the majority of the customers are comfortable with using social media tools; competitive pressure from other wineries. Furthermore the owner admitted that increasing brand image and traffic to the websites, improving relationship with present and reaching potential customers and to reduce expenses are the most important purpose of using social media tools.

Though social media tools application has several advantages they experience some challenges and negative side effects. Even though most of the cases there are good comments, one bad and unfair comment can start an avalanche of discussion which may influence attitude of people. The main problem is that even though they try, the winery cannot serve everyone's purpose (e.g. family with small business, gourmand etc) as its main product and purpose is the maintenance of serving quality wine.

The winery is a member of some formal network system and organisations such as Unibor, Women of the Vine & Spirits. One of the owners actually set up the Balatoni Kör who said that "the aim is to found a circle with local resources and built on the basis of local services that will make the region attractive and liveable in every season. We want to create demanding things in a demanding environment, on Lake Balaton, which, as I believe, means the foundation of our entire existence (<https://balatoni-kor.hu/en-GB/Home>)." Beside the main intention of the organisation is that Balatoni Kör "members are such representatives of the quality winery and gastronomy who are open and expect their guests all year round." The key reasons for being a member of such network systems and organisation is that they can share knowledge and information, it brings competitive advantage to the business and it feels good to be a member of a highly qualified and devoted expert community.

The winery also works together with gastro start-ups and initiations, restaurants, museum (such as the National Gallery) with whom they have already organised successful events together such as Taste Round Lake Balaton, BalatonWine (the first regional wine-growing brand in Hungary), HegyBor (Mountain Wine), Vineyard Run.

At the end of the interview we asked a question to name and rank the most important competences that help cooperation with other businesses. The result was the following: 1. motivation, 2. optimism, 3. team-player attitude, 4. knowledge sharing with network members and 5. empathy.

5.2 Case Study W2

The winery has two owners, we conducted an interview with the one who is responsible for marketing / communication at the winery and. In addition to the two owners there are 4 full-time employees.

In terms of social media tools, they use a platform such as Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr. In addition to this, occasionally special publications are also used for press releases. They also appear on professional portals and events and wine tastings. Among the social media tools they use Facebook and Instagram the most confidentially. There is currently no use of a social media tools that they might want to learn about. The reason for this is that what they presently apply seem to be sufficient and has no time capacity to learn other. Managing and updating social

media tools is done by the interviewee and one employee, depending on who has the time and the importance of managing the interface. In addition, the management of the different platforms takes 1-2 hours a week. Since social media tools are used from the start of the business they have no benchmark. However, due to social media activities there were intensive interaction among customers and followers. Therefore they advertise events on Facebook to move a bigger crowd that are interested. The use of these social media tools was justified by factors such as the ability to reach customers, the efficiency of the winery, and advertising opportunities. Application goals include increasing brand awareness, reaching new customers, and improving contact with customers. Although there are more social media platforms the winery does not have a social media strategy.

Over the past few years they have experienced the kind of posts their customers and followers on social media sites are interested in, or which images produce the most like. So they claim there is an unconscious social media strategy. They have signs of social media management and are not really measuring the effectiveness of the tools. Regarding social media tools the winery faces challenge. In some cases the winery gains more attention from customers when applying paid advertisements. However this is only temporary. After the advertising period expires, they have to rebuild the social media advertising scheme. In addition to these challenges, the winery did not experience any negative effects from the use of social media platforms. The winery gains benefit from social media tools: such as increased brand awareness and faster information and news dissemination.

The enterprise is a member of the organization called Rizling Generation. The interviewed winery has also become a member of the organization because they consider that sharing of information and knowledge as well as the cooperation and organization of programs within the businesses are important. Since the Rizling Generation was created by young wine makers, the winery can work with other wineries within, however they do not cooperate with other wineries. The Rizling Generation has been organizing a large-scale event every year since 2016 where the wineries in the area have the opportunity to get to know each other and connect. In addition, the association organizes 2-3 days of study trips for its members to visit other wine regions where members of the association have the opportunity to bond with other Hungarian wine makers to exchange knowledge and experience, establish relationships and get to know each other's products. As the last question in the interviewee named and ranked the 5 most important competences for cooperation: 1. team player, 2. knowledge sharing with network members, 3. adaptation, 4. proactivity and 5. managing relationships. In addition to the previously ranked competencies the interviewee pointed out that the personality of people is also vital in cooperation.

6 Conclusions

The data obtained in this research supports the conclusion that social media play an important role in wineries' life. They apply these tools to integrate them into their business and marketing activities. According to the Eurostat (2017), the statistical office of the European Union, almost half of all EU businesses (46 %) in 2016 used at least one social media channel: most common were social networks (such as Facebook, LinkedIn), for Hungary this rate is only 37%, less than the average of EU. But on the other hand, from the survey of MediaQ (2017) the total number of active social media users in Hungary are 5.5 million people (the total population of Hungary is 9,8 million), so more than half of the population use social media. According to this survey, the most popular social media platforms and sites are Facebook, Messenger, YouTube and Instagram (Figure 2).



Fig. 2: Social media usage in Hungary (numbers of users)

The case studies demonstrate that Facebook is the most popular social media tool for both Hungarian wineries. Wineries use Facebook to increase their online presence and Instagram application to create customer awareness and enhance relationships with them.

It is essential that the appropriate social media platform are selected for a particular types of communication and audience. The social media landscape is dynamic as social media technologies are constantly evolving. The users' tastes and attitudes mean that their social media use also change. Businesses must fully recognize that through social media they target specific audience, deliver exclusive offers, and important constant messages for their existing and potential customers (Obermayer, 2018).

The ongoing research focus on exploring the cooperation networks of the wineries, gastronomy units and start-ups of the Balaton Uplands, and to explore the composition and characteristics of knowledge-based networking tools. As the interviews has just started in January 2019, thus the authors cannot draw any conclusions from these two case studies. The final research results are expected to be publishes in 2019 December.

Acknowledgement

This publication/research has been supported by the European Union and Hungary and co-financed by the European Social Fund through the project EFOP-3.6.2-16-2017-00017, titled "Sustainable, intelligent and inclusive regional and city models".

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