MARKETING POSITIONING AND BRANDING OF SERBIAN WINES

ABSTRACT: The purpose of the academic study is establishing a clear vision and objective in the process of Serbian wine branding in the demanding international market. Wines produced with as few oenological interventions or manipulations as possible, combined with a significant amount of faith and quality assurance certainly make a good foundation for success. The comparative method with the viticultural and winemaking situation in Croatia has been applied. The wines made from local and indigenous sorts have the greatest chance of the global market positioning. The indigenous sorts of wine, Tamjanika and Prokupac may be a significant brand in Serbian wine and gastronomic offer, as well as an ideal opportunity for a creative performance which must be accompanied with an elegant wine label and luxurious package. A very good quality of our indigenous sorts of grapes is often hidden by excessive barricading and attempts to create a spectacular sort of wine, which contributes to loss of authenticity. It is possible to overcome the former branding deficiencies in the demanding and quite

1 ivanavl85@mts.rs
2 jevticj.vts@gmail.com
saturated markets through joint and planned activity, by grouping all the countries in the Balkans region, which is a familiar term to the consumers in the global market.

Key words: branding, wine, autochthonous sorts, Serbia, global market, positioning, authenticity, comparative analysis

INTRODUCTION

Serbia has excellent gastronomic and wine offer, but it still lacks in quality communication. The only way to success of the domestic products in the saturated and demanding international market is a well-designed investment in communication with potential markets.

After the World War II, winemaking passed into the hands of big state-owned companies and combines, so that the winemakers were forced to produce grapes which they would then deliver. Literally, they would deliver, not sell them to big public combines, which would pay for them whenever they wanted and at the price they set themselves. It was a highly unprofitable business, since the vine growers were nothing but mere producers of cheap raw materials, i.e. grapes, while the privilege of wine production was in the hands of the state. Quantity, not quality was the indicator of success in winery business. Table wines, without geographical origin and grape assortment prevailed in the offered selection of wines. Serbian wine was on its knees until 1990s.

The 1990 Privatization Law allowed the private person to have their label. Wine production was cut down from former 100,000 hectares of the planted vines to one quarter of the number. Numerous vineyards were grubbed up because big wineries had suffered bad privatization process. It takes around 10 to 15,000 euros per hectare to plant new vines. It takes 3 years to wait for the harvest, and if the yield is good, the profit is up to €40,000 per hectare. There is a state stimulus for newly planted vineyards, but what would be of considerable significance to the winemakers is opening up new major markets.

There has been a noticeable growth of viticulture in the past 20 years. Dozens of new wineries have arisen and about 2–3,000 hectares of new vineyards have been planted, but this is not enough to put Serbia into the deserved place. Serbia has only 6,500 hectares in the viticultural land register. The fact that Slovenia, a country several times smaller than Serbia, has more than 30,000 hectares illustrates how small a number it is. Therefore, it can be said that Serbian viticulture and winemaking are in the springtime of their life. That being said, the quality of Serbian wines has
certainly grown since we often receive the news of the medals won for our wines at European competitions. However, in future we need a lot more viticultural land and it can be expected that in this period the state will make more investments in vineyard growing, opening and equipping, as well as viticultural area and wine tourism development.

Firstly, there should be a designed strategy of wine region development and a plan to plant at least 20-25,000 hectares of vineyards in the next 10 years. Next necessary step is to provide the winery construction and equipment subsidy, as well as education of winemakers. It takes from 7 to 10 years for a winery to function independently.

The help of the state is necessary for investing into hotels, restaurants, specialized wine shops and fairs, building infrastructure to the winery in those wine regions, marking winery signals, wine roads, marketing, work on joint presentations at international fairs under the common name Serbia. In Europe, we are still not recognized as a wine region, they don’t know yet that we have vineyards and wines, and lot of people around the world don’t even know where we are located. So all the activities in that field must be within one national strategy for winery region development, which will be the place where Made in Serbia labelled wine will originate.

In Serbia, wine culture arrived as late as after the year 2000, when the youth of our country, having worked in prestigious restaurants in the West, began returning to their homeland. At the same time, Serbian winemaking developed, so that there began to appear all the accompanying activities, starting with viticulture magazines, blogs, fairs etc. almost on daily basis.

Talking about Serbian brands, they are mostly connected with the winemaker’s surname (Radovanovic, Kovacevic, Aleksandrovic) or the region of its origin (Fruska Gora Vineyards, The Negotin Wine Cellars). Following up, wine consumers always want to know where the wine comes from – which viticultural region, who the winemaker is, what grape sort the wine was produced from, how much alcohol and sugar it contains.

### BALKAN WINE BRANDING IN THE DEMANDING WESTERN MARKET

Having a clear vision of what our wine branding should look like is required. It is necessary to build a platform similar to the one already in use for the existing brands and brand our wines from the Balkan Wine Project in a similar way. Basically, the idea is quite simple: instead of confusing people with the names of small Balkan countries and explaining the breakup of
Yugoslavia, it is necessary to gather all the countries geographically into the Balkan region, which may ring a bell to foreigners.

Regarding the wines themselves, there should be chosen the ones made from the indigenous sorts, suitable for different markets’ needs. The labels should be highly specific and give all the information about the wine, including the instruction for the regional vine selection. (Sladic, N., Wine Style, No.08, The Label – Wine’s Visiting Card).

Branding process is particularly complex in the Western world. Everything is regulated: the export, labels, alcohol percentage, taxes, import, distribution, etc., which is the reason why someone not working in the global industry finds it difficult to understand how complicated it is. The law is strict and has to be respected to the least detail, since the fines are substantial. This makes the industry into excessive transparency in doing business. The USA, for example, have some of the most severe alcohol distribution and sales law. Likewise, the competition is fierce, so that doing business in the Western market is not easy at all.

The greatest difference has been noticed in restaurant wine consumption. Due to the commonly known situation, the consumption has significantly decreased, payment is delayed, and the result is decreased alcohol (including wine) consumption in restaurants. People have suddenly realised that nothing lasts forever, including their successful career. As a result, they take more care of their health, they save more, do more sports and travel, spending less money on food and drink. Habits are changed, so has the entire lifestyle. At the same time, costly wine sales have disappeared over night and they are just slowly picking up now. This segment suffered the greatest change.

Objectively speaking, the chances for our indigenous wine placement are good if they are branded properly, constantly and energetically, but to achieve that goal one has to undergo a long way full of hardship. The standards must be constant and at the highest level. There must be no slackening of effort, each bottle of wine branded with the Serbian flag or any other country from the Balkan region must be the same as the previous one. Not one bottle of wine may be released into market if its quality is insufficient. Branding and market penetration is a kind of work which is done in the long run and there is no other way to reach the goal. Being rigorous in wine selection for the Western market is a must, because they represent much more than a bottle of wine, they represent our part of the world presented at the international scene, certainly not within a context of political conflict.

Wines made from indigenous grape varieties, with minimum manipulation, have the greatest chances for success in a demanding market. There is a prevailing opinion that wines ought to be made and branded in a
simple way, with maximum transparency, without any additional complications, with a dose of optimism and the inevitable fanatic faith in their success. Lack of faith in the wine identity is one of the basic problems of contemporary wineries. Our indigenous varieties have a very good grape quality, but there is a tendency to camouflage it through excessive usage of barrels (barrique), all for the purpose of creating a superb wine.

This is the point where we reach the category of natural wines, i.e. wines made using the minimum technological interference. Sometimes it takes courage not to do something, is the famous maxim of winemakers’ father, Dominique Lafond. This includes certain caution and great focus on what you want to do. A great problem with a number of these wines is that a smaller amount of interference does not mean absence of any technology in winemaking. Small amount of interference means close observation of the winemaking process and making a rational decision to avoid doing something. You must be fully aware of all the processes in the winery in each moment. Lots of winemakers who practise the so-called natural winemaking are so far away from the vinification process that one can taste only a method, and not the taste of wine. If only a method can be tasted in your wine, and not the grapes and vineyard it grew in, you have lost the game.

The moment when Serbian and Balkan wines would become successful is the one when sommeliers and consumers recognized that the wines originate in Serbia or Balkans. This eventually influences the way our region is perceived internationally. It would be a great success if they were able to identify the region, if not the variety, instead of comparing our wines with the one they already tasted. It will be done easily using the indigenous varieties. Geographical indication of our wines may enable easier branding and distinction, internationally above all.

Mainly, it is the quality that sells. If the quality is real and the price is reasonable, then there are good conditions for cooperation. One more factor is very important for the success of wine in such a demanding market as Western one, that is a good relationship between a distributor’s sales representatives and sommeliers in the restaurants, as well the customers in shops. The small, i.e. ethnic importers, who import the wines from certain less famous countries, can hardly get their chance to present the wines to a somelier, and this is often the end of the story. If wines are placed in the market through an eminent, large distributor, the chances for success are much bigger. Moreover, if we present another chardonnay, the customers will not be too excited and enthusiastic about Balkan wines, since it will be just another chardonnay in the long line. In an average customer’s shopping bag there is room for six bottles of wine, and the companies we are talking about have between three and six thousand wines in their portfolio. Sales
representatives can not present all the wines in the market even if they work every day.

Wine selection in offer is becoming more and more diverse and it is getting more and more difficult to make the right choice. Choosing a wine greatly depends on the label, especially its visual effect, since it draws the attention before seeing the wine’s name, origin or price. All this is of a great importance, especially if we don’t know what the bottle contains, which happens very often. The label (in Latin, ”Es it quaestio”) is the key factor in recognizing wines. It is, actually, what catches the eye to the bottle itself, gives us the guarantee and confirmation of our choice. Without this special costume, the bottle is insignificant and anonymous. Let’s assume, we are ready to pay € 500 for a bottle of Chateau Latour, but we wouldn’t even lay an eye on the same bottle if there weren’t for its noticeable label. The significance of this paper decorating every bottle is such that we can freely call it the wine’s identity card. (Sladic, N. Wine Style, No.08, The Label – Wine’s Visiting Card).

**COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF VITICULTURE IN SERBIA AND CROATIA**

Fairly small vineyards and small wineries are some common characteristics of the viticulture and winemaking in Serbia and Croatia, whose winemakers have the opportunity to upgrade their cooperation and admit the possibility of joint appearance in other markets.

Grape and wine production in Serbia and Croatia are characterized by a number of similarities, the key ones being a small piece of land with a fairly small vineyard on each farm, as well as small winery. The possibilities of cooperation improvement in the area of viticulture and winemaking of the two countries are discussed at traditional annual wine and viticulture fairs, while tasting Croatian and Serbian wines.

In Serbia, there are approximately 22,000 hectares of vineyards, in Croatia around 20,000 hectares. An average vineyard in Croatia is about one half hectare surface area, considering that there are approximately 40,000 registered wine grape producers. In Serbia, approximately 80,000 agricultural holdings deal with grape production and 217 wineries are doing business, of which a great majority does not employ more than 10 employees. A research shows that wine, after beer, is the alcoholic beverage mostly consumed in Serbia. Likewise, wine consumption has grown in the year 2020 compared to 2017 (Figure 1).
On average, 45 million litres of wine are produced in Serbia. In 2014, approximately 17 million litres were exported, and almost 40 million litres were imported. According to the Stabilisation and Association Protocol, Serbia has a quota of 67,300 hectolitres for a duty-free import into the European Union (EU), whereas the duty-free import quota is 25,000 hectolitres, with a 30 per cent duty if the quota is exceeded. At the last explanatory screening in Brussels, Serbian wine production legislation was highly rated, with prospects that the full agreement with the EU legislation will be completed relatively soon.

In a demanding market, a good balance between quality and price is always a winning combination. When we analyse what brought Croatian winemakers to the EU, we can declare that, after entering, Croatia faced a bigger pressure of imported agricultural and food products, including wine, mostly cheaper ones. According to the Croatian Chamber of Commerce’s records relating the foreign trade exchange, the wine import from the developing countries has significantly grown, which is explained by abolishment of administrative barriers.

In 2014, Croatia imported 22.5 million hectolitres worth $32 million, while the export results were considerably weaker – 3.5 million hectolitres of wine were put on the market, resulting in $15.5 million foreign exchange inflow. Croats do not give up on investing into viticulture and growing vineyards, which is proved in the fact that wine production makes 7.3 per cent of the total agricultural production, with as much as 75 per cent of the wine on the market has the geographical origin label.

Currently, the project of wine made in developing countries promotion is ongoing. 19 wineries are included in that project, and they are...
divided into four wine region – from Slavonia to Istria and Dalmatia, and they were visited by some journalists from Serbia. The overall impression is that all the winemakers agree that small series of high-quality wine production is the only way to deal with the competition of cheap exported wine. They also believe that insisting on the brand authenticity is the winning combination which can facilitate the access to the regional markets in the first place. Here we can mention the Kozlovic winery, which is famous among Serbian customers for its Malvasia wine. This manufacturer, who has planted approximately 25 hectares of fertile Istrian land (with the subcontractors cultivating around ten more hectares), annually produces about 200,000 bottles of wine and has no intention to expand production or aim for the world markets he is not ready for. At the moment it is not possible to make a good profit in big markets, since the customers are not familiar with Croatian wines, so the desired price could not be achieved, whereas entering the race with cheap wine manufacturers is not the right way to go. Comparison with wines from Serbia imposes itself.

Small producers can hardly compete with big players in the global market, so they should go for production of high quality wine. Kutjevo winery produces 6 million litres of wine and exports 2 million litres, which makes 40% of the total Croatian export. It is a fact that this winery cannot compete with the big chardonnay producers. The right strategy is promotion of the most popular Croatian wine – Grasevina. This is not an easy job because the public are unfamiliar with this sort of wine, but this is the right choice.

Ilok Cellars, where between 4.5 and 5.5 million litres of wine are produced annually (the cellar capacity is 10 million litres) are the nearest to Serbian border. Approximately 3 million litres is sold to domestic customers, while 2 million litres ends in the foreign, mostly European market. At 290 metres altitude, the best growing sorts are Chardonnay, Grasevina and Traminac, which arrived from South Tyrol. German saying, *wine is a plant of the Sun, but likes its master’s shadow* gets its full meaning.

The biggest area of land is owned by Agrolaguna, a joint stock company with Agrokor as the majority shareholder. Out of 1,2000 hectares of land, 600 hectares are planted with the vine, 200 hectares are reserved for olive groves, and the rest is for the vegetable production. €32 million were invested in this agricultural property, where, besides wine, cheese and olive oil are produced, and the annual wine production exceeds 4.5 million litres – with Malvasia prevailing (as much as 50 per cent of the total Malvasia production comes from this cellar). However, the first ecological winery in Croatia is a real attraction. It is the Skaulj winery, which is, together with the Jokic and De Georgis wineries (Zadar county), included in the project of Croatian wine promotion. Approximately 80% of all the work in the
vineyards which occupy around 7 hectares is done manually, which significantly raises the production price. Manure briquettes are used for land cultivation. It takes almost 10 years to prepare the land for ecological production, and the licenced institutions can control it twice a year. Also, Croatian Organic Production Law was made based on the Swiss Law, which is one of the most restrictive legal documents in this subject. If it is affirmed that the principles of ecological production have been compromised, the fines are up to €50,000. Speaking of state incentives, Croatian winemakers can count on subsidy of €800 per hectare.

The main remark made by the importers of Croatian wines is about a long process of obtaining the import license, which lasts up to 20 days from the moment of the wine’s arrival in the quality control laboratory, whereas waiting for the control number can last up to 40 days.

According to the records from the Republic Bureau of Statistics, the agricultural and food product foreign trade exchange among Serbia and Croatia is not at high level. For illustrative purposes, 204,307 litres of wine has been imported from Croatia, while 224,930 litres have been exported from Serbia to Croatia. The fact that the total of more than $1.1 million was imported from Croatia does not speak in favour of Serbian winemakers, which significantly surpasses the total of $540,000 worth of wine placed in Croatian market by Serbian exporters.

Wines with the geographical origin mostly reach Serbian market from Croatia. With the intention to encourage production, turnover and consumation of domestic wine with geographical origin, the Ministry of Agriculture has, apart from the incentive measures for raising vine and viticulture equipment acquisition, introduced the incentive measures for the wine quality improvement and establishment of Serbian geographical origin labels according to the European model. This includes the association of geographical origin winemakers from a certain region and their joint promotion. So far, there have been registered 10 associations of winemakers with geographical origin label, which would enable better competitivenes for Serbian winemakers in both domestic and international market.

The main aim is branding Croatia as the land of wine. In that context we should mention the project, or better said the branding strategy of Vina Croatia – Vina Mosaica, financed by the EU funds, the state budget, and partly the association members’ financial support. The first document accepted by the European Commision is the Wine Envelope 2014–2018. This means promotion of Croatian wines in the developing countries’ markets. Istrian wines are mostly present in the Serbian market, the best results being with the producers who balanced quality and price, which is between €7 and 10.
At present, there are no administrative obstacles for promotion of Serbian wines into Croatian market. However, Croatia exports into Serbia three times more wine than they import from Serbia. They argue that Serbia is in the third place of the Croatian wine export list, and at the same time it is not even among the first 10 countries Croatia imports wine from. The main problem in the top-class Serbian wine placement in Croatia is, allegedly, high prices and weak competitiveness of the brand.

**INDIGENOUS VARIETIES – OUR CHANCE**

In our market, there is a number of undiscovered wine sorts which can have an outstanding international potential. One of them is muscadine (tamjanika), an indigenous variety which started growing in our region in the 15th century. Along with prokupac, also an old, indigenous variety, this may be a very important brand in our wine and gastronomical offer and a perfect opportunity for a creative presentation which, among other things, is manifested in the form of a wine label and luxurious box.

The renaissance of creating top-class wine from the forgotten indigenous varieties is very exciting. The market is flooded with international varieties planted everywhere – in some regions with great success, and in others with a disastrous failure. There are indigenous varieties which can help us overcome both consequences of the climate change and monotony sometimes created by international varieties. It is commonly known that many varieties grown in certain regions can make exceptional wines with depth and grandeur. (Andrew Jefford, Vino&Fino, 2019, Search for your chance in autochthonous varieties)

Indigenous varieties are often mentioned, among which there are some that are not indigenous. Although it is not always easy to trace the origin of some varieties, in Serbia there is a small number of varieties which can be called indigenous. Due to lack of funds for scientific research, a lot of indigenous sorts in Serbia have been insufficiently examined. Still, the only indigenous varieties we can comment on are prokupac and muscadine (tamjanika), whose wines are available to the majority. Smederevka can be added to the group, it is still in the research process. Therefore, the number is very small.

However, besides the indigenous varieties, several dozens of new grape vine varieties have been created in Serbia, and they are being grown successfully as well as made into excellent wines. Some of them are *Probus, Sila, Morava, Petra, Neoplanta, etc.* These are not indigenous, but they are ours, the reflexion of Serbia and Serbian winemaking.
**Prokupac:** In Župa it is also famous as rskavac, it gives dark wine full of red fruit. The former viewpoint that those are wines with high alcohol level and have to be consummated fast because they are not suitable for aging, is being forgotten thanks to the growing number of excellent Serbian wines. Župa is the centre of the prokupac story – the Ivanovic Winery has opened a new chapter of this most exciting authentically Serbian wine story, the Ćokot (Trunk) Winery continued to develop it through the Experiment wine, and the Budimir winery has recently elevated it to new heights with the wine Prokupac Colour Purple. The Temet winery is quickly joining the story, and there are more and more prokupac vineyards toward Smederevo.

**Tamjanika (muscadine):** Although it rarely smells of incense, although it does not originate in this region, but comes from the international sort Muscat Blanc á Petits Grains, tamjanika is absolutely ours – indigenous. We have been growing this variety ever since the Turkish Empire came to this region. Appealing to most wine lovers due to its noticeable muscadine smell and aromatic sweetness, harmonic, traditionally associated with Župa and local growers like Minić, Spasić, Ivanović, Budimir, Đorđević, Rajković Brothers... the Aleksić Winery and Tri Morave by the Temet Winery, speak of the spread of this variety from the farthest south to the high north.

**Black Tamjanika:** Specific muscadine variety of which there are records to have been grown as long ago as the Middle Ages. Rare in the world and difficult to grow, it survived in Serbia primarily thanks to the Bukovo Monastery near Negotin, and their agricultural school. The black tamjanika wine has emphasized aroma, the taste of merging flowery, fruity and spicy tones and, as a rule, high alcohol percentage with residual sugar. All in all, the black tamjanika potential has not at all been checked in practice, although there is a story that this was one of the most favourite wines of Josip Broz Tito.

**Slankamenka:** An ancient sort poor in acid, aroma and with low sugar percentage, therefore unsuitable for varietal wines or aging. This is the reason why it most commonly stays in the brandy cauldrons or as a basic raw material for white coupage. Its varieties are red and black slankamenka (plovdina), and the grapes are delicious. Interestingly, the Slankamenka wine devotees cooperative, a group of 33 winemakers, was founded almost a decade ago.

**Bagrina:** Currently, bagrina is being experimented with along the Romanian border and along the Timok river. Made from pink berries, these wines have nice acid and can age. The Matalj winery deals with this sort most seriously.

**Začinak (spice):** As its name implies, it is used for adding colour to red wines. Although, there are smaller manufacturers trying to introduce
začinak to a higher rank, like the Panić winery from Negotin which, together with black tamjanika, šipon and četereška, produces začinak as well.

Kreaca: Or, if you prefer – Banat Riesling. The wine of self-governing socialism, still is a dear guest in every glass of spritzer. The sort misses quality acids and aging ability in order to become a proper Riesling. It is claimed that the kreacer wine heals the soul and that the Germans of Banat made it in the Vrsac vicinity by crossbreeding almost three centuries ago. (Babsek, M., Wine Style, No.42. The chance is in the autochthonous varieties)

THE ASCENT OF SERBIAN WINEMAKING AND VITICULTURE – THE ALEKSANDROVIC WINERY

Vinča, a village near Topola, situated among countless vineyards, is currently known mostly to the local people around Topola and Russian buyers of Serbian fruit. It seems that the fruit capital of Serbia and the pearl of Šumadija will stay away from the world fame not for long, because here exactly, in the tame hills of Topola, there is a vision being born, the vision to present our best to the world. There is a vision to put Serbia on every wine map, as a strategic chance of development and opportunity for our country to step into the world scene, through one of the best Serbian wineries, the Aleksandrovic Winery.

In the heart of Šumadija, a strategic initiative has been created for the Serbian winemaking development, as well as acknowledging the wine tourism significance in Serbia and the appeal for the whole country to join the patriotic invitation to brand Šumadija as Serbian Tuscany. If the Hungarians can brand Tokaj, The Croats Istria, The French Burgundy, why would Serbia not brand its Šumadija? So far, only the visitors to the Wine Museum in Bordeaux had a chance to get familiar with the quality of Aleksandrovic wine.

At the very beginning of production in 1992, the winery had only two hectares of the family land. Approximately 7 to 8,000 bottles of wine were produced in their own cellar. It was a period of stagnation, craft learning and survival. It was only after the political reforms in 2000, when the banking system started functioning, that they started to enter the professional wine production, step-by-step. They started with building their own vineyard and winery, whose construction lasted for 16 years in total. In the meantime, there have been planted 73 more hectares of vineyards.

The Aleksandrovic Winery owns 75 hectares of vineyards in total, as well as rich assortment. They also produce sparkling wines or, as the French call them, champagne. Three labels of champagne have been branded. They
are *Trijumf Sparkling* chardonnay, pinot noir and a rose. Then, there are white wines in the assortment: ‘‘Triumph’’ (where white sauvignon prevails), ‘‘Harizma’’, ‘‘Oplen Riesling’’, ‘‘Tema’’, ‘‘Trijumf Barik’’, as well as ‘‘Trijumf Gold’’. Apart from the white wines there are rose wines, too. They are ‘‘Trijumf Rose’’, ‘‘Euphoria’’ and ‘‘Varijanta (Variant)’’. The red wine pallete includes: ‘‘Trijumf Noir’’, ‘‘Vision’’ (the blend of cabernet fran and cabernet sauvignon), ‘‘Regent’’ (cabernet sauvignon and merlot, 50:50 ratio) and the most famous wine ‘‘Rodoslov (Pedigree)’’. We should mention the dessert wine ‘‘Trijumf Kasna Berba (Triumph Late Harvest)’’. The total assortment includes 18 labels.

Quality is dominant in the whole concept of production. When the team was gathered and the decisions were made to produce wine, the idea was to produce only the top quality wines. The region of Šumadija is ideal for production of white and red wines which are in the wine list of the best hotels and restaurants. 25% of the total production is exported and these wines are on offer of more than 15 restaurants with Michelin stars.

Regarding medals, the Aleksandrovic winery was the winner of the 2015 competition in Slovenia and the Croatian national competition in the white wine category – Sabatina 2016. Also, this winery’s wines have won some great and significant medals at *Decanter* in London, *Mundus Vini* in Germani, AWC in Vienna, competitions in Italy and Switzerland, whereas our wine *Rodoslov* has been included in the top 20 red wines in the Japanese market.

Arriving back in Serbia after visiting the wine regions in Europe and around the world, we can notice that the region of Šumadija is at least equal with the most prestigious world wine regions, if not more beautiful. The reason is that in Tuscany, besides the vine, there are only olives and olive oil. Here in Šumadija, apart from the vineyards there are orchards with apples, pears, plums, peaches, cherries and apricots. Nature has been extremely generous here, but, as it is widely known, what is missing is the spirit of entrepreneurship and knowledge. The ones who had the spirit of entrepreneurship, knowledge and ideas were put to sleep by the socialist system which ruined their development. (Aleksandrovic, B., The International Public Policy Centre, 2019: Let’s make Šumadija Serbian Tuscany)

When, some 15 years ago, an idea arose that Šumadija to become Serbian Tuscany, there existed only one winery in the region, the Aleksandrovic winery. Afterwards, Kraljevska winery was established, and then, one after another, Tarpos in Arandjelovac, DeLena in Lipovac, etc. Today, there are fifteen active wineries and some in the making. In Šumadija there are around 20 and in five years there will certainly be around 30 wineries. So many things have changed in only 15 years. We should continue
in that direction and encourage people who like wine, winemaking, the ones who have their own land to plant vineyards, to create wineries, because time will come when it will be very profitable. For, wines are a country’s ambassadors and one of the reasons for international tourists to visit.

When the Aleksandrovic winery was the only winery in this part of the Oplenac region, it had only a few hundred visitors per year. Now that there are 7 – 10 wineries, about 10,000 people pass through the Aleksandrovic winery. Nobody would set off from Belgrade to visit the region to see one winery, let alone from another country. But, when everybody talks about a wine region and the word is spread that one can see and taste different wines from different wineries, that there are restaurants and places to spend the night, visitors will certainly arrive from abroad to see what is happening there.

The mixture of tradition and modern technology is absolutely necessary and crucial. It is an essential symbiosis. Tradition is the base of a successful project, and modern technology is necessary for following trends. The experience should be the source of technology and some classical knowledge that should not be changed. On the other hand, one should not stick to them too much because they may be a good foundation, but also an obstacle. If we rely on that foundation and build on it, that is a precondition for a successful project nowadays.

**CONCLUSION**

Chances for the placement of our indigenous wines into the demanding and oversaturated global wine market can be significantly improved if our wines are branded with a clear vision and goal. Quality and well-designed investment in communication with potential markets, especially branding, is the only way to success of our domestic products in the demanding international market. The principle already being used in the existing brands may also be used in branding our wines. Basically, the idea is very simple: it is wrong to cause confusion with the small country names in the Balkans, especially mentioning the breakup of Yugoslavia, border changes or names of the small countries which were formed then. What should be done is to gather all these countries into the Balkan region, that being famous internationally to some extent. Otherwise, someone might ask for the wine from Siberia instead of Serbia, but in the first stage of branding, even this kind of publicity may be significant.

Regarding the wines, what should be singled out are the ones made from the indigenous varieties, and in accordance with the different markets’ demands. The labels should be noticeable and, if possible, to give all the
relevant information on the wine, including the instruction about the choice of grape vine variety and the region. The quality must be high and there must not be any oscillations. Any slackening in standard or quality may result in very bad consequences regarding market placement of new wine brands. Each wine bottle branded by Serbia or any Balkan country must be identical to the previous one. Nothing may be placed into the market if it does not belong there by its quality. Market branding and developing is a job done gradually and in the long run, and there is no other way to reach the goal. It is necessary to be rigorous in the choice of wine for the global market, because the national and regional wines represent much more than a bottle of quality drink. The authentic wines are the means to present this part of the world on the global scene, especially outside of context of national and political conflicts.

Wines made of the indigenous varieties with minimum manipulation have the greatest chance for success in the demanding market. Wines should be made in a fairly simple way (catch the moment of sun in the bottle), in a maximum transparent way, without large manipulations and complications, with a great deal of optimism and passionate faith in success of the whole project. Lack of strong faith in the identity and distinction of domestic wines is one of the main problems of the local winaries. Our indigenous grape varieties have very good quality, but there is a tendency of camouflaging it by excessive barrel usage, all with the aim of creating a grand wine which often reminds of another famous wine.

There is still a number of our unheard-of wine varieties in the global market, the ones probably with international potential. The indigenous wine variety tamjanika (muscadine), which was fully established in our region in the XV century, surely has this potential. Together with the old, indigenous variety prokupac, it can be a significant brand in our wine and gastronomical offer and a perfect opportunity for a creative appearance which, among other things, is manifested in the wine label and luxurious package.

A huge drawback in the development of our winery and viticulture is the cease of all planned activity from 1945 until 1990. The situation is changing easily. The wine culture arrived in Serbia after 2000, when the young people who worked in prestigious restaurants in the Western countries started returning to Serbia. At the same time with that trend, Serbian winemaking started developing, so the ancillary activities appeared, such as: magazines about wine, blogs, fairs, etc.

The state began helping with the investments into hotels, restaurants, specialized wine shops, wine fairs. A lot of things are missing: the infrastructure towards the winaries in wine regions, wine signage, wine routes, action towards branding Serbia as a wine destination, joint appearances at international fairs under the name of Serbia. The problem is
that we are still not recognized in Europe as a wine region, because it is not known that we have vineyards and wine, people don’t often know where we are situated. The state should take action and work on this persistently, all within the national development strategy for the wine regions which will give wines with the label Made in Serbia.

REZIME
MARKETINŠKO POZICIONIRANJE I BRENDIRANJE SRPSKIH VINA

Svrha rada je postavljanje jasne vizije i cilja u procesu brendiranja srpskih vina na probirljivom međunarodnom tržištu. Vina proizvedena sa što manje enoloških intervjencija i manipulacija, uz značajnu dozu vere i ubedjenja u kvalitet, su svakako dobra osnova za uspeh. Primjenjen je metod komparacije sa vinogradarskom i vinarskom situacijom u Hrvatskoj. Najveće šanse za pozicioniranje na globalnom tržištu imaju vina od lokalnih i autohtonih sorti. Domaće vinske sorte tamjanika i prokupac mogu biti značajan brend u vinsko-gastronomskoj ponudi Srbije i idealna prilika za kreativni nastup koji se mora propratiti elegantnom vinskom etiketom i luksuznom kutijom. Veoma dobar kvalitet naših autohtonih sorti grožđa često biva prikriven prekomernim barikiranjem i pokušajima stvaranja spektakularnog vina, čime se gubi na autentičnosti. Dosadašnji nedostaci pri brendiranju na zahtevnim i prilično zasićenim tržištima se mogu prevazići zajedničkom i planiranim akcijom, gde bi bilo poželjno grupisati sve zemlje u region Balkana, što je globalnim potrošačima već poznatiji pojam.

Ključne reči: brendiranje, vino, autohtone sorte, Srbija, globalno tržište, pozicioniranje, autentičnost, komparativna analiza

REFERENCES

3. Babšek, M. *The chance is in indigenous varieties.* Wine Style (42), Available at: https://winestyle.rs/2013/marko-babsek/ (25 December, 2021)


17. The Research and Publishing Center Demostat, Available at: http://www.demostat.rs (15 June, 2021)
