

# ***The wine cooperatives in Alto Adige: a story of success.***

***A journey through the historical background, tradition, language, and location, to find out the reasons that led their wines to be among the most well respected in Italy and around the world, and its structure to be perceived as a model.***

## ***Abstract Weinakademiker Thesis (D7)***

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### ***Objective***

Wine cooperatives usually have a bad image on the market, especially with regards to quality. On the contrary, wine cooperatives in Alto Adige are very well regarded and respected also for their top-quality wine production. Is there a reason behind it? My work has explored different aspects, analyzing first the history, tradition, language, of Alto Adige, as a crucial key; secondly, going deeper into details about the cooperatives management system, their social responsibility, and their communication towards the consumers, to find a possible answer.

### ***Motivation***

I have been working for a wine cooperative in Alto Adige for over 14 years now, and, as it always happens, after being in the same field for a while, everything seems to be obvious. However, stimulated by the great recognition of my region around the world, and the appreciation of Alto Adige wines by many consumers both at home and in other countries, I thought it would be interesting to research more why Alto Adige cooperatives have the privilege of being highly evaluated, exploring better the historic background and all the possible elements that have influenced this over the years and even centuries, to make finally some hypothesis.

### ***Methodology***

A lot of the information I used for this paper, was already known, but from a generic point of view. So, I tried to dig more into the specific details by talking directly to the wineries analyzed, to crucial people and with the institutions behind the wine scene. Furthermore, a great help and reference for my study was the newly released book on Alto Adige wines (*Wein in Südtirol*): a comprehensive reference about history, mind setting, traditions of viticulture in the region.

### ***Content***

#### ***An Historical Overview***

In this chapter I have touched all the significant turning point in history, for making viticulture the way it is today: from the times of the Romans to the Renaissances, and to the modern times, trying to depict the journey of the currently established grape-varieties, and the know-how it is commonly shared today among wine producers. The focus has been on the wine cooperatives, how and why they have started in Alto Adige, in what scenario, and trying to explore their important social responsibility beside their pioneering the quality grape-growing to set the path for the today's principles.

### ***Quality as a model: case history***

By introducing four important wine cooperatives of Alto Adige (Colterenzio, Tramin, Terlan, and St. Michael - Eppan) I have explored their approach to quality and their achievements over the last four decades, by analyzing their total revenues over the decades, and the quota paid to their members, as a significant approach to this philosophy.

### ***Quality perception by consumers and by the market***

This chapter is based on a survey made on four different markets – Italy, USA, UK, and Japan – to establish the perception of Alto Adige wine production in general, and specifically its perception towards wine cooperatives versus estate wineries. The results have been quite interesting and in line with my thesis, as the majority of the interviewed has a very high recognition of wine production of Alto Adige in general, without much significant distinction between wine coops or estate wineries. I tried to target different groups of persons: from wine connoisseurs to wine lovers but including also general wine consumers.

In addition to the survey, I have researched about the national and international recognitions of Alto Adige wine cooperative producers, to report about an increasing success on both markets since the late 1990s.

### ***What are the reasons for success?***

This section explores the various approaches the Autonomous Province of Bolzano has towards quality, including the major actors (Chamber of Commerce, Südtirolwein consortium, Agricultural Ministry), and various fields (Tourism, Agriculture, Restaurant & Hotel businesses), trying to make a connection between them and the vintners/members of the wine cooperatives, including a deep analysis of the territory & history linked to it.

### ***Conclusion***

There is not a univocal answer to my objective, but the key to success, for Alto Adige wine cooperatives is linked to a multiple array of factors: in a small mountainous territory, with a community of small farmers, linked together by the love of their territory (*Heimat*) and the preservation of their unique traditions (including a different language), the wine cooperatives have been their opportunity to enhance their land quality and be proud of. Through the support of various actors (politicians, Chamber of Commerce, Südtirolwein), and the strong ideas of some leading characters, this has been taking shape and will continue to be a reference following the motto: “working together makes us stronger.”