

Social Media & Wine

How to seduce, please and bind the Dutch wine consumer through social media

A case study for Vindict Wine

ABSTRACT

Today we live a rollercoaster ride. Never before, with the exception of catastrophic events like when a meteorite wiped out the age of the dinosaurs, did the face of the world change on a pace as fast as today. Ground breaking technologies are introduced with ever shorter intervals and the opportunities of sharing our newly gained knowledge through one of the many communication platforms make sure only to accelerate the pace. One of the most recent trends is the rocketing and mind blowing rise of social media. Ten years ago nobody had heard of companies like Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Wikipedia or YouTube. Today, they are a multi-billion dollar industry, but more important, social media is highly influential in the daily life of many people throughout the world. Through social media people influence each other in ways unthinkable in the past. Dave Kerpen in his book *Likeable Social Media* makes the following comparison; "Social media is like the world's largest cocktail party, where anyone can listen to others talking and join the conversation with anyone else about any topic of their choice. But.... whereas at an actual, in person cocktail party, you can only have a few conversations with a handful of people in one night, online, and through social networks, you have numerous conversations with potentially thousands or millions of people."

For all companies, big and small, this development poses a threat. Like Dr Kotler, the grand old man of marketing, states in a master class to professionals in 2011: "Within five years if you continue to run the business the way you do now, then you will go out of business."

In this thesis I investigate the potential threats and opportunities that social media impose on Vindict, the Dutch wine web shop founded in 2007. Two obvious questions arise: Can Vindict leverage and capitalise on the changes described above? If yes, how can the company most effectively do so?

In order to provide answers and to be able to formulate and implement an efficient and sustainable social media strategy, I researched literature, the needs of the target group and the company DNA. Subsequently, I interviewed a Dutch social media expert in order to mirror my findings, views and thoughts to prevent making amateur mistakes.

The outcomes of the desk research and this interview I converged towards a social media strategy for Vindict. This strategy has been implemented through several selected social media. The next step was to test these social media activities on the target group. This was done in a qualitative research of two sessions of each 6 to 8 people. The outcomes of these focus groups were used to test if the chosen strategies were correct and where necessary to alter the strategy towards a more precise one, fitting the needs of Vindict's target group.

The outcomes of the two focus groups broadly support the chosen strategy but also provide many interesting new insights. Specifically for Vindict the outcomes for example point out to be a guide, be a specialist, give tips and trends. Wine is complex, make it easier. The tone of voice is of the utmost importance. Take the followers serious and involve them in a mix of subjects but always related to wine. The target group only wants to be related to a company that they consider trustworthy, authentic and is there for them.

By June 2012 Vindict has an up to date Facebook and Twitter account. The seed has been planted but is still very vulnerable. To make it grow we will have to continue to learn what our target group and customers like to see, hear and read, without deceiving our own DNA. This will be an iterative process that we have to monitor very accurately in order to learn from what we do right and wrong. We need to make the audience a part of the action and create our content around them. We have to think about what resonates, how to ignite dialogue, which content is 'clickworthy' and compelling enough to raise awareness and get attention.

It will be a major challenge to keep the 'social activity' up and to get all the Vindict employees involved to help tell the story. Being active on social media really requires a culture shift of all involved. In other words, this thesis serves as the starting point of Vindict's fully integrated social media activity.

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Amsterdam, June 2012