

Is natural wine a new niche in Russian wine market or a fad?

Motivation for choosing this topic.

The topic natural wine faces a lot of skepticism among professionals in international and Russian wine market. There are some opinions that natural wines are mainly faulty ones. But my idea is that there is no wine in the international market that is immune to unskilled winemakers. The motivation behind my thesis is to explore the subject deeply and understand if there is any chance for growth of natural wine movement in Russian market by analyzing how the demand increased and how professionals react to this subject. Does new importer with orientation on small niche have opportunities to grow with natural wines in portfolio on the Russian market and which risks to expect? Which future will these wines have on wine market in Russia – is it small stable niche for authentic artisanal products?

Objective and structure of the thesis, an outline of methods used.

The objective of this thesis is to explore the prospects and weaknesses of the natural wine movement in the Russian wine market. Is it a new way to promote wines with a sense of place which is going to form a new niche in the wine market in Russia for small artisanal wine producers? The subject of this research paper is: «Is natural wine a new niche in Russian wine market or a fad?». In answering this question, the different interpretations of the concept of natural wine will be explored based on the broad review of wine literature, as well as the published opinions of experts. In the first part of the research paper I will show my motivation for choosing this topic, outline the problematics and objective. In the second part I would like to show what we know now about wines that we call natural, or wines with low intervention, history of movement and reason of its emergence.

In the third part I will analyze of demand on the Internet to estimate potential audience by digital technology. In the fourth part I will analyze presence of natural wine producers on Russian wine market to show the dynamic growth of producers' presence in the portfolio of main importers by analysis of sales figures for the 2016-2018. I will also include analysis of opportunities and risks for the new importer with orientation on small but slowly growing niche for the natural wines in Russian market and an analysis of wine lists will be conducted to identify the prospects of natural wine, together with a survey on natural wine among wine professionals and a blind tasting.

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The analysis of demand on the Internet made to find potential audience by digital technology, as a result of which I find that the biggest Russian cities are the most active and showing the interest in searching for natural wines, where Moscow showed the biggest figures and highest potential for growth.

The analysis of presence of natural wine producers on Russian wine market has shown the dynamic growth of producers presence in the portfolio of 5 importers and slow growth of volume sales figures for the 2016-2018. In my opinion, the positive effect on growth of natural wine niche made because there are two companies (Diletant wine, Real Authentic Wine) in the market with the specialization on natural wines, one of them is working since 2010.

Finally, the analysis of wine lists was conducted to identify the prospects of natural wine, together with a survey on natural wine among wine professionals and a blind tasting. It brought me to the conclusion that Russia is open market, with sommeliers searching for new experience and different approach provided they like the results. The main point is quality of wine in the bottle and pleasure which wine brings to us.

For the growth of natural wine movement on the Russian market necessary to develop five biggest cities because they already know a lot of natural wine and open to try new wines.

Snezhana Revchuk, 17 June 2018

Candidate number: 14010981

Another important moment is organizing tastings or blind tasting with sommeliers to give them opportunity to study and break the stereotype that all natural wines are faulty. Diletant Wine could introduce their wine producers personally to sommeliers because their portfolio is not big, and they need to show the sommeliers how those producers are different, why they are better than others. Private tasting with winegrower is also a good opportunity to ask a questions.