

## How to make wine less intimidating?

Wine can sometimes be intimidating, complicated and hard to approach for beginners. Thus making wine as beverage of ones choice less competitive compared to spirits and beer - being the only one of 3 in decline<sup>1</sup> since the 1960s. Meanwhile there is a major wine overproduction in the EU, reaching 29.4 million hl in 2009<sup>2</sup> . To approach these problems it would be important to offer friendly and fun introduction of wine in a way that is adapted to specifics of a chosen market.

Motivation of choosing this topic was a wish to improve my personal understanding on wine communication - meanwhile exploring the cultural perception differences on identical actions. Running a wine bar for 8 years I witness good and bad examples of communication every day. And I come across different myths of wine being too unaccessible, snob etc. So for me it was very important to structurize the information and to find some patterns to improve my communication skills and to train my staff better in the future.

In this research I summarized my intuitive actions and empiric evidence of 8 years in wine trade (wine bar, retail, HoReCa) backed up the experiences with sensible explanations and countering opinions by trade professionals and structured the results to create a step-by-step program how to rule out common communication mistakes to be successful in a certain market.

### Chapter 1

The core question of this research is - **How can wine be introduced in a more simple, clear and non-intimidating way?** By indicating key factors as taste preferences, economics, communication, aesthetics and cultural mentalities when introducing wine to new market. For that 5 questions were set in Chapter 1 “What intimidates the consumer?”

1. How to find the preferred taste of a chosen market?
2. How to select the price “sweet spot”?
3. How design and packaging trends can help to sell wine?
4. How to choose the most efficient communication model?
5. How to understand cultural mentalities when approaching a certain market?

These questions were approached and analyzed and backed up with different opinions by trade professionals as MW Frank Smulders, winemakers as Anselme Selosse and Franz Weninger. While the cultural difference part was based on theories of area experts as G. Hofstede, Richard D. Lewis, F. Trompenaars.

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1 Global wine markets, 1860 to 2016: a statistical compendium by Kym Anderson, Signe Nelgen and Vincente Pinilla.. In chart – liters of alcohol per capita per year.

2 MW reflections of problems of consumption and production presented by OIV in 2009 -

[www.susieandpeter.com/world-wine-lake-grows-oiv/](http://www.susieandpeter.com/world-wine-lake-grows-oiv/)

“How to make wine appear less intimidating?” by Jānis Volkinšteins

## Chapter 2

“Analysing and approaching a certain market” approaches a certain market – Riga, Latvia by analyzing history, trade statistics and tourism trends. Then an empiric study follows consisting of five parts:

1. Tasting - Blind tasting for 8 wine amateurs – to obtain taste preferences
2. Evaluation of design - To observe if the designs play a major role
3. Taste preferences - Questionnaire about preferred tastes
4. Discussion – How to talk about wine? And what intimidates you in wine?
5. Survey – 50 Latvians answering open questions discussed in Chapter 1.

In this empiric study the aim was to obtain as much information on the 5 possibly intimidating factors possible (taste, price, design, communication manner and cultural context). The other objective for this empiric part was to observe if and how Latvian cultural mentality is being transferred to statements about wine. Richard D. Lewis defines Latvian values as honesty and loyalty, arts, conservatism, individualism, respect for nature, family – neat homes etc.<sup>3</sup> These values did come across in the discussions.

### Conclusion

Answering the core question – How can wine be introduced in more simple, clear and non-intimidating way? The research summarizes that it is a complex chain of actions consisting of two blocks:

1. First of all you have to find products that are suitable for certain market. By analyzing taste preferences, price “sweet-spots”, design preferences, communication manner (often emotional over technical) and getting in touch with understanding of differences between cultural mentalities.
2. Second – you adapt the product introduction to a certain market by using knowledge of different cultures by their cultural mentalities.

Backed with professional and personal views of MW's, winemakers and other field professionals this research states that it is not possible to find static and unanimous statements about the mentioned key points since their dynamics are influenced by economics, trends and unpredictable factors as politic actions, taxation policy changes etc. but it is possible to create a grid to select products and to find the right communication manner to introduce them to a chosen market. This grid is adjustable to economical/trend dynamics and different markets.

This highlights the importance of constant communication with the chosen market to understand where and how you can react on changes and use them for good.

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<sup>3</sup> R. D. Lewis “When Cultures Collide” p. 363

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