Abstract of thesis

Low- and No-alcohol Wine, Trend or Transition?

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BACKGROUND
The desire to drink responsibly and to be able to enjoy alcoholic and non-alcoholic wine well into the future has motivated me to write my thesis. In general, I base my choices on quality rather than quantity and thus hope my thesis will contribute to improve the quality of low- and no-alcohol wines.

OBJECTIVE
The objective of my thesis is to explore the impact of low- and no-alcohol wine on European wine business. Can this impact be defined as trend or transition?

METHODOLOGY
In order to answer this question, scientific literature and relevant articles of expert wine writers were reviewed, market data analysed and own research and interviews conducted.

CONTENT
Chapter one will give definitions of wine, dealcoholised wine, partial dealcoholised wine, low- and no-alcohol wine as well as of trend and transition to clarify these terms.

In chapter two different techniques for dealcoholisation like vacuum distillation, spinning cone coulmn and reverse osmosis are described. The most frequently used full dealcoholisation technique is used to compare with traditional winemaking.

Health awareness, responsible driving, less calory intake and religion are some of the many reasons consumers are changing their drinking behavior. Resulting in a decline in alcohol consumption and an increased consumption of alcohol-free alternatives. The possible contribution of low- and no-alcohol wines is described in chapter three.

In chapter four European sales figures as well as costs, excise duties and VAT rates are explored. Aditionally, past and future trends are reviewed in order to forecast the future market for low- and no-alcohol wines.

Finally in chapter five, threats and opportunities for low- and no-alcohol wine are reviewed. This involves possible loss of business for European winemakers as well as business opportunities. How can European (non) alcohol consumers be seduced by wine and food pairing? Own research was conducted by tasting 18 low- and no-alcohol wines. A selection of these wines graded as good was paired with own developed recipes. Outlines are given to conduct broader research in the future. Food pairings can be further improved based on future research outcomes.

The objective of the thesis will be answered in the conclusion: Low- and no-alcohol wine, trend or transition?

CONCLUSION
Producing dealcoholised still and sparkling wine requires a completely new thinking process as grapes need to be harvested when the sugar level is low, the acidity high and the taste good. Care has to be taken to prevent mould or any other off-flavours as the distillation process would double or triple their negative influence.

Changing consumer behaviour such as health awareness, responsible driving and/or religion make consumers drink less alcohol. Consequently creating opportunities for selling (more) low- and no-alcohol wines in the on- and off-trade.

As the (European) market for low- and no-alcohol wine is forecasted to grow, marketing campaigns promoting new products could be launched. For example a new 'wine'-arrangement consisting of no-alcohol wines or convenience packaging such as low- or no-alcohol canned wine.

Cost savings are the highest for no-alcohol wine in countries that levy excise duties on alcoholic wine (as these duties will not be charged on no-alcohol wine) combined with lower VAT rates for no-alcohol wine.

Based on amongst others my own tastings of low- and no-alcohol wines my view is that the biggest growth opportunities are in low- and no-alcohol white, rosé and sparkling wines as most of the tasted reds were poor in quality.

As discovered after my tastings, the majority of the wines graded as good were made by vacuum distillation. However, broader research is recommended as a limited number of wines were tasted.

European winemakers might loose business as consumers choose low- or no-alcohol beers and/or spirits in the absence of good low- and/or no-alcohol wine. High-quality low- and no-alcohol wines can seduce and inspire bartenders, sommeliers and chefs and consequently increase the selection of these wines in bars and restaurants. In turn this can inspire guests to purchase low- and no-alcohol wines to enjoy at home.

It is important to note that low- and no-alcohol wines often lack (some) body and taste slightly watery. Other issues frequently appearing are not fully integrated (sharp) acidity and too much residual sugar. Research & development needs to focus on balance, less residual sugar (apart from intended sweet wines) and body as I expect this will improve quality.

So far vacuumdistillation and to some extend spinning cone column are the most promising techniques to achieve these recommendations with possibly some alterations to existing systems to increase quality and taste.

Based on (own) research, sales figures, future prospects and (own) analyses I conclude that low- and no-alcohol wines are definitely a trend.

For a transition to take place however, the low- or no-alcohol wines should entirely replace the regular alcoholic wines. Therefore, for the (near) future my view is that regular alcoholic wine and low- or no-alcohol wine will co-exist as regular alcoholic beer and low- or no-alcohol beer already co-exist for quite some time.

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