

Using Social Media in the Wine Business – An Exploratory Study from Germany

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Purpose: Today, a vast number of books and studies are being published about social media in general, but less is known about their usage and effectiveness in the wine industry. Therefore, we conducted two studies in which we investigated the use of social media tools by wineries in Germany and assessed the impact of Facebook membership on customers by comparing them with customers who were not members.

Design: The first study was conducted among 321 German wineries. It focused on the attitudes and preferences of the winemakers regarding social media, and it analysed the daily use of this new communication tool. The second study took place in August 2012, and it set out to define the value that accrued to a winery from having Facebook fans. This analysis was based on an online survey with customers of the winery as well as on a comparative analysis of the buying patterns of customers who were Facebook fans and those who were not. The analysis compared the turnover from the purchases of both groups over a period of three years.

Findings: It was determined that 60% of German wineries did communicate with their customers using social media. Facebook was the most important social media channel, followed by Twitter and YouTube. Of the winemakers interviewed, 40% planned, in the near future, to implement additional activities involving social media. The consumer study proved that Facebook fans had a higher turnover compared to the non-Facebook fans of the winery studied. This finding emphasises the loyalty of Facebook fans. In addition, the study revealed that Facebook fans are open to receiving sales offers from the company which they support.

Practical implications: Winery owners should be aware of the effectiveness of this modern communication tool. This is not only because Facebook fans generate a much higher turnover but also because of the possibility that they are interested in additional special offers on Facebook, which could mean an expansion of the available sales channels.

Key words: Social Media, Facebook, Germany, Consumer Behaviour, Wine Purchase

1. INTRODUCTION

The Internet has contributed massively to globalisation and the geographic decoupling of producers and consumers. One of the driving forces behind both globalisation and anonymisation, this medium, ironically, creates communication channels that can bridge this distance to a certain extent. In recent years, the Internet has developed from a mere source of information into a force that communication experts now call the ‘Social Web’ (Schindler and Liller, 2012). First of all, the latest developments in the field of social media should be identified here. Facebook, Twitter and other services allow people to remain participants in never-ending conversations. These conversations are already taking place through different platforms, accelerated by the intuitive functionality and epidemic spread of social media. Germany's Facebook for example recorded more than 25 million users in December 2012 (Roth, 2012). The society thus experienced a massive change in terms of gathering and disseminating information. Producers are suddenly forced to listen to consumers' voices, spread through several social media channels. But they can also obtain valuable feedback, which is helpful to better understand the needs of customers.

Wine seems predestined to benefit from this in a special way. It is a very emotionally loaded product. Anyone who consumes it usually has an opinion and is often willing to share it with others. In contrast to complex and difficult to handle products, wine is approachable intuitively and can be appreciated by engaging only our instinctive senses. The transformation of communication media and the level of interaction this is producing could thus open new opportunities for the wine business.

On the other hand, the actual business benefits of this relatively new form of communication have hardly been investigated, particularly within the wine industry. Furthermore, the penetration of social media usage by German winemakers has not been subject to research until now. Therefore this study had two objectives – to determine the use of social media by German wineries and to compare wine customers of a winery who are Facebook fans to customers who are not connected with the winery via Facebook (defined as non-Facebook fans).

2. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This presentation is not an exhaustive review of the vast literature that has been published on social media generally. Rather, the goal is to give a brief overview of selected studies dealing with social media and wine. Thach (2009) reported that there is very little evidence about the use and effects of social media in the wine business. With the help of qualitative methods (content analysis), she analysed over 200 wine blogs in the USA, and she defined nine major categories of wine blogs, the most common being reviews and ratings of wines by consumer bloggers. In addition, 813 wine brands and 450 advertisements were found in the analysis. According to Yarrow, in 2008 there were approximately 560 blogs in English and 160 in other languages (Yarrow, 2008). Four years later, this same researcher recorded over 1,200 wine blogs (Yarrow, 2012), which shows the dramatic change in the use of this new online medium.

Reyneke et al. (2010) undertook an analysis with five premier cru wines from Bordeaux with the help of the website ‘www.howsociable.com/’, which tracks the visibility of brands through more than 30 different social media platforms, providing an overall score for the visibility. This can be used as a benchmark tool when comparing different brands. It turned out that Lafite was associated more with business brand networking, Mouton Rothschild with individuals who were actually discussing the brand, while Haut Brion was associated with enthusiast groups. Margaux and Latour were relatively undifferentiated in terms of social media, and it dominated in level of visibility.

A quantitative study conducted by Synapse (2010) with 4,000 panellists in North America investigated and finally quantified the value of Facebook fans of different brands. This study

revealed that consumers spent \$71 more on products of which they were fans and that fans were 41% more likely to recommend the admired brand to their friends. Regarding brand loyalty, fans were 28% more likely to continue using their chosen brand. The questionnaire, however, required panellists to self-identify those companies with which they could be identified as fans. Because of the self-identification, the calculation of the value of Facebook fans is based on a hypothetical approach.

The study of Brzozowski et al. (2011) showed that many users were encouraged to take part in online communities if they felt their contributions would be unique. Different factors can stimulate the online community to use social media. Visible feedback encouraged users to continue their contributions, and visible activity involving managers/co-workers motivated employers to make their own contributions to social media (Brzozowski et al., 2011). The brand communities were influenced by feedback from other users (Brzozowski et al., 2011). The winery with control of the relationship factors and winery brand (Lavarie et al., 2011) may have had an influence on feedback and on the economic drivers (Brzozowski et al., 2011).

The online community is used by the winegrowers in Burgundy to try to increase brand communication and consumer contact. Pelet and Lecat (2011) demonstrated, with a qualitative study focusing on the winegrowers in Burgundy, that the online community may experience negative aspects relative to consumer behaviour, owing to the inability of members to see the product. The online community represents one of the six confidence factors that can increase online selling of wine (Init, 2010). Habel and Goodman (2010) as well as Szolnoki and Tait (2011) gave advice and suggestions concerning how to use Facebook for better branding of wineries.

Lehnart et al. (2011) hypothesised that another obstacle to participating in communication through social media could have been related with academic qualification. A key challenge for those who wish to take advantage of social media is to understand and define the type of community that exists through such media and to develop the ability to cultivate such communities. Lavarie et al. (2011) asserted that social media such as Facebook and Twitter offer this opportunity. People mainly use social media as alternatives to Web searches; through them, they can find any kind of information and they can also link this information to the other users' experiences. Users feel more comfortable and trust the previous experience of other users, so enterprises should be able to manage and choose the information about the brand characteristics that they will make visible to the community. The brand characteristics have a stronger influence on brand communities, which are also influenced by relationship factors such as brand identification, brand experience, brand update, customer service, and interaction (Lavarie et al., 2011). The winery operator must try to understand the needs of the different brand communities and try to connect them to the real image of the brand characteristics. Members of these brand communities are strongly motivated to share knowledge when they can find specific benefits, such as saving time. On the contrary, the study of Bian et al. (2008) demonstrated that feedback may be so powerful that some users try to use it to enhance their image with the aim of making a profit based on that. This kind of activity is considered as spam and can also modify the behaviour of the old members of the community that has been cultivated.

Lee (2012) showed in his study that many consumers related the price of wine with the perceived quality. The judgement of quality is subjective and based on many factors, but positive brand perception and higher price can increase purchase intention and play a mediating role in the purchase intention. All these findings confirm that the interaction between social media, the activity of winery owners, and consumer behaviour constitutes a complex and intricate field, and each set of quality factors has the power to change the equilibrium.

With the help of content analysis, Vrana et al. (2012) conducted a study investigating wine blogs. They defined two clusters of online communication: Cluster one contained very few but very popular blogs with a high number of incoming links, while Cluster two consisted of peripheral blogs which did not have many incoming links. Bouquet (2012) investigated over 200 wineries in the USA and France and came to the conclusion that American wineries were much more active in regard to their use of Web 2.0 than the French ones were. According to the results, 94% of the interviewed winery representatives from the USA were active on Facebook, while only 53% of the French ones used this communication channel. Nearly all of the American representatives reported that they derived benefits from using Facebook, and half of them stated that they generated sales with the help of this medium. Of those involved, 72% of the American and 69% of French wineries wanted to increase their activity on Facebook in 2012.

From the international literature two studies – one which analysed the use of social media from the producer's point of view and one which investigated the importance of Facebook fans of a brand – were selected for our study. Bouquet's (2012) study served as a basis for the survey conducted with wineries to get a real picture about the use of social media in the wine industry in Germany. The Synapse (2010) study provided orientation to the subject when we prepared a survey comparing Facebook fans and non-Facebook fans of a German winery.

3. CURRENT RESEARCH

Within the framework of this research, two studies were conducted. The first one focused on the use of social media by German wineries in general, while the second one investigated the importance of using Facebook in the wine business and compared the volume of sales involving non-Facebook fans and Facebook fans; In addition, the second study also contains the opinions of the latter group about social media and .

3.1 Study 1: Social media usage by German wineries

3.1.1 Design and procedure

For the recent survey, we used a database of 1,500 German wineries compiled during 2007–2010 by the Geisenheim Research Institute for a previous study. It should be noted that this database contains only wineries that already have some sort of online presence. It means that wineries not having access to the Internet were not included in our research. The link to the online questionnaire was sent via e-mail to all of the 1,500 wineries. The survey ran from August 31 to September 31, 2012. After two weeks, the wineries again received the e-mail with the link in order to improve the number of respondents. The questionnaire included questions about the social media platforms used by the wineries, the fields in which they applied them and expectations associated with their use, the kinds of problems presented by using these social media channels, and in cases where they (e.g., Facebook and blogs) were not used, the reasons for this. In 2011, a similar study was conducted with the same database of wineries. The questionnaire in 2012 was based on the survey administered one year before and supplemented with questions from the Bouquet study (2012). Altogether, 321 wineries participated in the survey, which equates to an above-average response rate of 21%.

3.1.2 Results and discussions

Approximately half of the respondents had already participated in our study in the previous year, while almost 55% were answering the questionnaire for the first time. As for the topic *social media*, comparing the results of 2011 and 2012, one can observe a growing interest.

Of the respondents, 96% maintain a website for their wineries, and 50% run even an online shop. Both numbers appear high, which might indicate a positive predisposition to online-

related topics and a certain connection between interest in social media and overall online affinity. These numbers are comparable to the results in 2011.

More than half of the respondents rated the importance of social media in the medium range and just above (mean: 3.48; standard deviation: 1.29 on a scale from 0–6) (see Figure 1). Apart from that, the histogram displays a nearly perfect Gaussian distribution. This result is similar to that obtained in 2011. The arithmetical mean is slightly above the scale's average in 2012. Thus the importance of social media is still evaluated positively, though it cannot be described as euphoric.

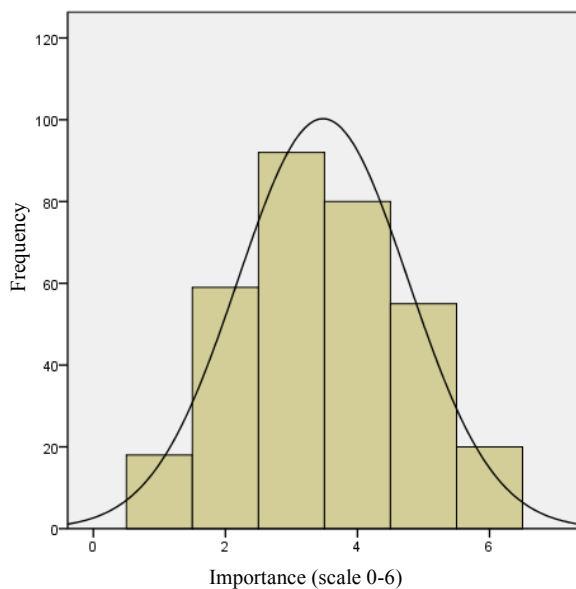


Figure 1 The importance of social media (N=324)

The results in 2011 showed a strong polarisation regarding the use of social media in different areas of life: 45% of wine producers did not use any kind of social media in the preceding year. This fraction was much smaller in 2012, being only 32%. Instead, the share of blended usage (for private and business purposes alike) had increased significantly to 47% from 32% in 2011. Sixty-seven % stated that they participate in social media in some way, private or businesswise; 56% already did special for their wineries. The sample was not representative, hence the high ratio of social media users is not to be generalised. It indicates, however, the existence of a group of winemakers who based their communication strategy upon social media or used it at least for supplementation. This group has grown considerably from 2011 to 2012.

With a penetration of 70% of those who use social media tools, Facebook took first place, when it came to application of social media for business purposes. (This is clear evidence of publicity and popularity.) Approximately half of the Facebook pages associated with the wineries were established in 2011. Reading and commenting on blogs for business matters placed second with 30%. The German social network Xing seemed to have lost users and appeared at third place in 2012 (it was second in 2011). YouTube and Twitter obtained 14% each. Twitter accounts for most wineries have existed since 2010. Writing blogs seemed to be of little interest to winemakers (6%); this is perhaps because it is supposed to be very time intensive. Google Plus improved to 10%, rising from 2% in 2011. Thus, reading and commenting on business-oriented blogs and using Google Plus can be named as relative winners for the year 2012. On the other hand, Twitter and Xing were the losers, during this period. Over 45% of respondents utilised two or more social media channels for their business purposes. For the majority of wine producers, the commercial goals of using social media were: to distribute information about their estates' events (84%), and to promote their wines

(63%). Furthermore, winemakers tried to gain new customers and to serve existing customers through these channels. This analysis of goals shows that social media is used as a multidimensional tool for different kind of purpose, which hardly deviates from the 2011 results.

Being the most important new communication channel, Facebook was extensively surveyed in this study. Twenty per cent of its users did not point out any problems concerning this channel. Thirty-six per cent described it as very time-consuming, while 34% found it difficult to come up with new ideas and interesting topics for postings. Twenty-five per cent of respondents had difficulties gaining new fans, while 20% were frustrated by the limited response from their communities (see Table 1).

The majority of wine producers (64.4%) who operated a Facebook page took care of it by themselves. For 21.9% and 9.6% respectively, a family member or employee was involved. Only 1.4% of Facebook pages were maintained by external persons or companies. A mere 2.1% were managed by friends or acquaintances free of charge, and 0.7% were maintained for payment.

Table 1 Difficulties with managing Facebook pages (N=178)

	Frequency*	Per cent
I find FB very time-consuming.	46	36.0
I find it difficult to always post new and interesting topics.	61	34.3
I find it difficult to gain new fans.	64	25.8
I get only little response when I post something.	36	20.2
I find it difficult to manage FB.	10	5.6
I have got no problems with FB.	35	19.7

*multiple responses allowed

Twitter seemed to be an even more personal medium. A total of 78.4% of the respondents who had Twitter accounts tweeted personally, while for 13.5%, a family member was involved. Only three wineries had their Twitter accounts managed by a friend, an employee or an external company. Those who refrained from using Facebook did so primarily because of the lack of time to do so (61%). Other important reasons stated for not using Facebook included doubts about the effectiveness of this network (33%) and lack of technical know-how (23%). Other aspects such as level of trustworthiness or data security seemed not to play an important role (2%). The situation was similar when it came to Twitter. Lack of time was identified by 53% of winery operators as the reason for abstaining from this micro-blogging service. The effectiveness of Twitter was doubted even more than in the case of Facebook – 41% compared to 33%.

Social media communication requires a serious investment of time. More than 16% of users invested four or more hours weekly in using these channels, although the majority of users (83.3%) were content with 1–3 hours a week. Sixty per cent of participants did not plan any new social media activities in the near future; 38% of these represented wineries which already utilised social media but did not want to broaden these activities. The other 22% did not practice any kind of social media communication and did not intend to do so in future. The latter number had shrunken considerably, from 36% in 2011. Thirty-two per cent of the wineries expressed the view that they would deal with social media in future. Here, Facebook

took the first place again, followed by YouTube, an owner's blog and Twitter. Google Plus and Xing were mentioned rarely (see Table 2).

Table 2 Increasing the social media activities in 2013 (N=321)

	Frequency*	Per cent
Using Facebook	76	23.7
Using Twitter	24	7.5
Using YouTube	37	11.5
Using Google Plus	13	4.0
Using Xing	16	5.0
New Blog	24	7.5
No activity planned for 2013	191	59.5

*multiple responses allowed

3.2 Study 2: Analysis of the effect of social media use in the wine industry

3.2.1 Design and procedure

This study entailed a survey which was carried out on Facebook among the fans of a world famous German winery in August 2012 and included an analysis of the purchasing behaviour of customers of this winery who were Facebook and non-Facebook fans. The survey was conducted using the database of registered customers. The survey was launched on the Facebook page of the winery to receive unique information about the fans. In this survey, demographic questions and questions about buying behaviour and the use of social media were asked. Altogether, 70 participants completed the survey, which shows a 14% response rate. A central component of the 17-question survey was the issue of how the fans reacted to specific sales offers posted on Facebook by the winery.

The survey took place on an online platform for scientific surveys and it was only accessible for the Facebook fans of the winery. In addition to this survey, an analysis of the customers' records was conducted. First of all, we identified 30 of the 500 Facebook fans in the company's database. These were private consumers who had purchased from the company in 2010, 2011 and 2012, and who had a turnover of maximum 4,000 € per year. Using the same criteria, we found 3,000 additional non-Facebook fans in the database, from which we randomly selected 30 customers, in order to compare them with the 30 who were Facebook fans. For this comparison the following data about the selected customers were analysed: overall turnover; turnover in 2010, 2011, and 2012; place of residence and postal code; number of wines they purchased in the following price categories: 6.90 €, 14.60 € and 23.80 €; frequency of the purchases; and turnover per purchase. All these variables based on the study by Synapse (2010).

3.2.2 Results and discussion

The results of the survey showed a distribution in respondents of 56% men and 44% women. The age segments of the participants reflected 87% in the range 25 to 49 years old and only 13% who were 50 to 60 years old. These results were similar to those obtained by Blasius and Brandt (2010), who noticed in their study a higher proportion of younger and more educated Internet users. The evaluation of the respondents' educational standard showed a sharp separation between participants with higher education, such as university degrees or technical training (87%), and participants who had not completed professional training (13%). This very high educational standard was probably also responsible for the high income structure of the participants. According to these statistics, we can see that the buying power of the

potential customers among the fans of the winery on Facebook is very high. Of all the participants of the survey, 87% stated that they were already customers of the winery, and 15% of them said that they bought wine from the winery on a regular basis. This again showed that these customers should be considered for future activities on Facebook aimed at generating sales.

In general, the customers interviewed reported paying significant attention to where they bought wine. More than half of the participants stated that they bought wine directly from wineries; 20% bought wine from specialised traders, and another 20% bought wine in food retail stores. Only 8% bought wine over the Internet; however this was an above-average proportion when these results were compared with representative studies (Szolnoki and Hoffmann, 2012). From these results, it can be deduced that the participants pay a lot of attention to personal contact when it comes to buying wine. When asked how they liked to gain more knowledge and information about wine, 20% of the participants responded that they consulted with the winegrowers and merchants directly; 17% answered that the exchange of information with family and friends was important to them, and 12% reported that they visited wine education events. When it came to getting information about wine, 50% of the participants preferred personal contact. Although this does not allow a direct conclusion on the prospects for using social media channels, the opportunity for direct communication with the customers through these channels should not be disregarded in the future.

To find out whether the strategy being used by the winery with the Facebook page was the right one, the participants of the survey were asked to indicate the social media platforms associated with wine that they used. In this case, the results were positive in regard to the social media strategy of the winery. Almost 90% of the participants reportedly used Facebook every day, and 9% used Facebook several times a week; only 1% used it once a week. With this intensive usage of Facebook by the participants, it can certainly be assumed that the content which was posted on Facebook by the winery was also seen by the participants in the Facebook newsfeeds of these customers. After Facebook, YouTube was mentioned by the participants as the second most frequently used social media platform concerning wine. In this regard, 88% said they used the platform actively. Therefore it is advisable for the winery to upload more videos to their YouTube channels to enhance the social media mix.

An essential aspect of the survey was the analysis of the decision-making patterns for the purchase of wine as far as the promotion and advertising activities of wineries on Facebook were concerned. Of all participants, 75% suggested that a wine recommendation on Facebook could influence their buying behaviour in a positive way towards sales; only 15% did not support this statement, and the rest did not know whether it would. This very important issue was further analysed in another two questions posed at different points in the survey to get a precise result. The two questions were intended to help to find out how much the participants trusted wine offers posted by wineries on Facebook. The answer to these questions emerged almost equally, which supported the participants' opinion mentioned above in regard to wine advertisements on Facebook. The results showed an average value of 4.7, evaluated on a 1–6 scale. From these results, a clear opportunity for wine offers from wineries on Facebook can be identified and therefore wineries should use this trust on the part of the Facebook fans to promote their sale activities and special offers.

The aim of the analysis regarding the 30 randomly selected customers and the 30 clearly identified Facebook fans was to find out which of the two groups performed better in regard to their wine purchasing behaviour. Every one of these Facebook fans mentioned was also a registered customer of the winery.

In the first step, the turnover during the years 2010, 2011 and 2012 (up to August) of the two customer groups mentioned above were compared. The results clearly showed that the group consisting of Facebook fans spent more money on wine in the winery than the other group did. Expressed in numbers, the Facebook fans had a 46.6% higher turnover during the years

2010 to 2012. The details of the levels by which the turnover rates of the Facebook fans exceeded the rates of the non-Facebook group are as follows: in 2010, 37.1%); in 2011, 39.9%, and up to June 2012, 60.5%. For more detailed information, the overall turnover of the two customer groups was also calculated by checking every invoice of the customers in the database since the date the customer was first registered. The results showed the group with the Facebook fans had a 17% higher turnover compared to the non-Facebook fan group. Looking at the year 2012, the Facebook fans also had a higher turnover (+60.5%) until June, which led to the expectation that this customer group could respond very positively to further offers and sales promotions on the Facebook page of the winery. To support this assumption, specific activities involving sales promotion should be arranged soon for this specific customer group. Whether or not the higher turnover of the Facebook fans resulted from past wine sales promotions through that medium cannot be detected at the moment, but this should be investigated through more advanced analysis.

Besides the analysis of pure customer turnover, it was also essential in this research to find out the different price segments in which the wine purchases of the two customer groups fell and which quality they preferred. To do this, the quality categories associated with the price ranges were reviewed. The first category consisted of a light and dry Riesling wine in the entry level quality range of the winery, sold for 6.90 €, the second category was a late harvest high quality Riesling premium wine for 14.60 €, and the third category was an ultra-premium dry Riesling wine for 23.80 €. In all of the previous results, the Facebook fans were clearly ahead regarding the turnover, but regarding the price/quality category the results showed that the non-Facebook group dominated the ultra-premium wine category (23.80 €) and the entry quality category (6.90 €). Only in the category of the late harvest premium wine (14.60 €), did the Facebook fans buy more wine. As mentioned in regard to the premium quality category for 14.60 €, the sales showed dominance by the Facebook fans with +32% more than the non-Facebook group. The questions which could be derived from these numbers concern the reason for such big differences between the different price/quality categories and the strategies that have to be developed for the future. One strategy could be better promotion and advertisement of the two price/quality categories on Facebook, where the sales are lower than those for the non-Facebook fans group.

In closing, the average turnover per purchase and the frequency of purchases by the two customer groups were examined as part of the analysis. Here, the results were again in favour of the non-Facebook fans; regarding the average amount of money spent per wine purchase, the non-Facebook fans group spent 60% more money per purchase. After close consideration of the frequency of purchases, the results showed that the group comprising Facebook fans bought wine from the winery 70% more often than the other group. With this information combined, it became clear that the two groups were roughly equal overall because the non-Facebook fans bought 60% more wine per purchase, but the Facebook fan group bought wine 70% more frequently.

The examples discussed only reflect the analysis for the two selected customer groups and not the total number of the winery's customers. The results can also not be generalised to other customer groups; however, it has been proven that the turnover rates of winery customers identified as Facebook fans were very high and with the right promotion and advertisement on Facebook they could be even higher in the future.

4. SUMMARY AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

A producer survey involving German wineries and a consumer survey among the Facebook fans of a selected winery were conducted to investigate the use of social media, firstly, by the producers and, secondly, by the consumers. The aim was also to evaluate the effectiveness of these media. These two studies demonstrated that social media as a new communications channel have a place in communicating with customers and prospective customers as well as

in promoting products and brands. In addition, they are able to generate extra turnover for companies/brands.

The study of producers showed a high level of acceptance of social media by German winery operators. Comparing these results with those of Bouquet's (2012) study, one can conclude that Germany is located between France and the USA in terms of wineries using social media. However, one third of the winemakers do not use social media for either private purposes or for the winery. Some of them plan a social media activity in the near future; some of them (20%) do not even want to hear about it. Nevertheless, 40% of all the interviewed winery operators aim at extending their social media activities.

A study conducted by Booth and Beyond (2012) came to the conclusion that, in the USA, a huge number of consumers use social media to search for restaurants. According to a recent study by the digital marketing agency ODM, 74% of consumers rely on social networks to guide purchase decisions, and Facebook is the most effective platform to get consumers talking about products (ODM, 2012). According to Watson (2011), more than 50% of Facebook members use this platform when they seek information relevant to wine tasting. These results indicate the potential of social media in promoting different products and services. Considering the results of this study and Bouquet's (2012) study, we anticipate that the social media platforms will be of much greater importance in the future, including in the wine business.

As for the consumer survey, a very positive outlook is expected for the future use of the social media platform Facebook. On the one hand, Facebook fans of the winery spend a lot of time with social media; on the other hand, they do trust the offers made by wineries on Facebook, and they are willing to pursue these offers. The survey has produced a lot of information about the potential customers of the winery on Facebook in regard to social media. However, in order to gather more information about the actual buying behaviour of the fans, a second analysis was carried out. Threatt (2009) reported three years ago that the 'difficult part about entering the social media world is that, for many users, it serves as a personal environment where messages from third parties – especially marketers – may not be welcomed.' However, as we already saw, these results show that Facebook fans of a winery are willing to receive special offers from the company. Also Marketforce (2012) found that 79% of consumers *liked* a company's page on Facebook because it offered discounts and incentives.

In developing the social media strategy of wineries in the future, it is advisable to do more promotion and advertisement on Facebook owing to the high income and turnover rates of the existing customers and in order to be present on several social media platforms. Based on the evaluation in the customer survey, when considering 'next steps' in the use of social media winery operators should consider posting profiles on Google Plus and creating official YouTube channels. Furthermore, the respondents of the survey also showed interest in the presence of the winery in web blogs and on Twitter. Hence, there are prospects for using these platforms as well, in the future.

The current study provides only a snapshot of the whole German wine market. Only a limited number of wineries with Internet access were involved, and the study did not take into account wineries without this facility. Although Moore (2011) reported approximately 90% web presence among US wineries, in Germany the proportion is lower. In addition, only one winery and its Facebook fans were investigated in the framework of the consumer study. In the future, the producer survey should be continued in order to examine, in detail, the development of the use of social media in Germany. Furthermore, a consumer study based on analyses of various wineries and their experiences with their Facebook pages, and possibly their Twitter accounts, should be conducted, as well.

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