

A cross-cultural comparison of social media usage in the wine business

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◦*Purpose: A vast number of studies are being published about social media in the wine business, but less is known about their usage comparing different wine producing countries. Therefore, a cross-cultural study was conducted, in which we investigated the use of social media tools by wineries in European and in overseas countries like Germany, Austria, Italy, France, Hungary, UK, as well as USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa.*

◦*Design/methodology/approach: The questionnaire was developed and tested first in Germany. In order to use the question catalogue for this cross-cultural study, it was translated into the official language of the certain country. Using different online survey software, the link of the questionnaire was sent via email and was distributed on social media pages. The response rate varies between 25 up to 427 wineries that participated in the study.*

◦*Findings: This study demonstrates that social media has been accepted and is already widely used as a communication tool in the wine business. A high level of acceptance of social media tools could be observed in each participating country. Facebook is seen as the most important among the available social media tools; however video- and photo-sharing systems are developing rapidly. There is a significant difference between European and overseas countries. Wineries of the latter utilize more frequently social media than those from Europe.*

◦*Practical implications: Social media has been developing very rapidly. Facebook is still the number one tool used, even in the wine industry, but new and innovative platforms occur day by day. Winery owners should be aware of the effectiveness of this modern communication tool, however at the same time they have to define a communication strategy, in which social media is integrated too.*

Keywords: social media, wine, Facebook, Twitter, cross-cultural comparison

1. INTRODUCTION

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). There have been some major recent developments in the field of social media: Facebook, Twitter and other services allow people to remain participants in never-ending conversations. Wine seems predestined to benefit from social media usage in a special way. Wine is a very emotionally loaded product. Anyone who consumes it usually has an opinion, and is often willing to share it with others (Szolnoki et al. 2014).

A vast number of studies are being published about social media in the wine business, but less is known about their usage comparing different wine producing countries. Although there is some wine orientated social media research (Table 1), a cross-cultural comparison between European and overseas countries is still missing. That is the focus of the current paper.

Table 1 Overview of wine related social media studies

Author(s)	Topic	Specification
Yarrow (2008)	Blogs	English language blogs
Thach (2009)	Blogs	USA
Reyneke et al. (2010)	Social Media generally	Bordeaux brands
Init study (2010)	Online community	France
Laverie et al. (2011)	Online community	Theoretical model
Pelet and Lecat (2011)	Online community	Burgundy
Habel and Goodman (2011)	Facebook	Branding, generally
Yarrow (2012)	Blogs	List of wine blogs - international
Lee (2012)	Blogs	International
Vrana et al. (2012)	Blogs	International
Bouquet study (2012)	Social Media generally	USA and France
Wilson and Quinton (2012)	Twitter	English language tweets
Szolnoki et al. (2014)	Facebook	Germany

Furthermore, the penetration of social media usage by winemakers in different countries has not been subject to research until now. Therefore this study had the objective to determine the use of social media by wine producers in different countries and to compare the usage.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study focused on the use of social media by wineries in eleven different countries: Germany, Austria, Italy, France, Hungary and UK from Europe and USA, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and South Africa. The questionnaire is based on previous research on social media in the wine sector. Several questions have been already tested in Germany (Szolnoki et al. 2014) and the questionnaire was supplemented with statements from the Bouquet (2012) study. In order to use the question catalogue for this cross-cultural study, it was translated into the official language of the certain country.

For the recent survey, the link to the online questionnaire was sent via email. Each co-author from the respective countries used their own databases to reach wineries within their country. Table 2 summarizes the response rate in each country. 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.

Table 2 Overview of responses in each country

Country	Database
Austria	427
Germany	377
USA	375
Australia	346
Italy	254
France	106
New Zealand	102
South Africa	76
Canada	75
Hungary	61
UK	25
Sum	2,224

The survey ran from November 2013 to February 2014. The wineries received one or two reminder e-mails 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 the expectations associated with their use, the kinds of problems presented by using these social media channels and in cases where these tools (e.g., Facebook and blogs) were not used, and finally, there were questions about the reasons for non-use. Although the questionnaire contained several different fields, in this paper we only focus on four main questions from the survey: 1) How do you communicate with your customers? 2) Which social media platforms do you utilize for your business? 3) What do you want to achieve for your winery by using social media? and 4) Does your winery plan future activities on any Social Media platforms?

3. RESULTS

In this sub-chapter the results from the countries participating in this survey are separately displayed.

3.1 Germany

Face-to-face is still the preferred way of communication with customers among German wine makers. 97.9% state to use this type of communication, followed by email (85.9%), regular mail (84.4%) and phone (82.5%). Social Media as a communication tool was mentioned only by 33.7% of the interviewed wine makers. The same applies to newsletters.

When asked for the utilized social media platforms, Facebook seems to be the clear “number one” – far ahead of other social media platforms. A commercial Facebook fan page is held by 83.9% of the respondents. 42.5% state to be reading wine connected blogs published by others, although a mere 6.7% operate and own a winery blog. Producing and publishing video content with services as YouTube, Vimeo and MyVideo is of a certain significance with 14% of wineries state they use these outlets. Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+ are being used by approximately 12% of the interviewed wineries. Therefore these channels might be characterized as not very important for the time being. Instagram and Pinterest are barely used at all (1%).

If one looks at the postulated aims of using social media, a clear multidimensional structure of the answers becomes obvious. Social media is being used in a very diverse way. The respondents’ main goals are to inform about winery events (85%) along with general public relations (71.5%) and advertisement (59.6%). Further important application areas are customer

service (33.2%) and direct customer communication (43.0%). Beyond the mere information, these platforms are used to acquire new customers by 39.9% of the questioned wine makers. A majority of the interviewed wine makers (67.6%) do not plan any further social media activities in the future. 19.1% would like to introduce a Facebook page, compared to only 5.8% planning to use twitter. The idea of using video services in the near future enjoys certain popularity with 9.5%. Other choices are less popular - Google Plus with 6.4%, setting up a blog (5.3%) and LinkedIn (2.7%). Instagram and Pinterest have only a marginal role (1.6%).

3.2 Austria

An online survey was conducted in Austria from November 6th to December 31st 2013. Emails were sent to more than 1400 wine-growing estates in all of the traditional wine regions, such as the Wachau, Styria, and Carinthia. After two weeks, the wineries got a reminder email and at the end, 427 Austrian wineries participated in the survey.

Austrian wineries use several methods to communicate with their customers: personal communication (97%), via email (92%) and communication via telephone/fax (85%). Only 44% of the wineries use social media to reach their customers and inform them of news. The winemakers prefer communicating via post (52%) and via newsletter (45%) in Austria more than social media.

One of the outcomes is that 90% of the 249 Austrian wineries view Facebook as the most important social media channel to communicate with their customers. After Facebook they use YouTube (19%), Twitter (14%) and Google Plus (14%). While only 7% of the 249 wineries have a blog of their own, approximately 34% like to read blogs from other wineries to get current information and even 8.5% write comments on blogs of their competitors. Instagram or Pinterest do not play a role for wineries in Austria to communicate with their customers.

The main reason that vintners use social media is to inform their customers about events in their wineries (88%). A second purpose is to advertise their wines (76%). Public relations also play an important reason for using social media. Customer service and acquiring new customers is the goal for half of the 249 wineries using social media. A reason for using social media, for 117 wineries, is to provide information about the wines or wine tasting notes to their consumers. Staying in contact and exchanging information with other firms is only important for approximately 20% of the vintners. Finally, around 22% of the wineries do not have an exact defined reason for their social media activities.

50% of the wineries do not want to expand their social media activities in the future. 23% wineries plan to use Facebook to better reach their customers and also video platforms are attractive for 13% of the wineries to use them as marketing tool. Making a blog, using Google Plus, Instagram or Pinterest is not really relevant for the future.

In conclusion, social media is already an important marketing tool in Austria but nevertheless some wineries are also planning to expand their activities in the future.

3.3 Italy

The Italian Research Team sent the questionnaire via e-mail to 2,666 wineries using the SurveyMonkey platform. 254 viable questionnaires were returned .

A first look at the tools that wineries use to communicate with customers highlights the still indispensable face-to-face contact in the business; other than that, the most important means to communicate are e-mail, fairs and exhibitions, and telephone/fax. The use of Social Media(SM) seems to be quite relevant in the sector (67% of the wineries use them), even though the number might be biased by the nature of the survey itself, as the propensity to reply to on-line questionnaires could be higher for those who habitually use the internet and the many tools it supplies.

In detail, Facebook proves to be the most used social medium (93% of the wineries that use SM have at least one account), followed by the use (active or passive) of blogs, various video

services like YouTube and Twitter. LinkedIn, at the moment, seems to be scarcely seen in the wine sector, probably due to the fact that its use traditionally serves different purposes than the other platforms.

Most of the wineries state that the use of SM has one or more specific aims. The most important of which are advertisement and spreading information about the activities of the wineries (wine tastings and events). Wineries give a lot of relevance to all of the suggested purposes of the use of SM, including the promotion of responsible drinking among customers. The high emphasis on most of the possible answers, as a matter of fact, poses some perplexities about the extent of the specific targets of the use of SM, as the situation that emerges indicates that all the aims constitute a “package” of possible achievements.

In a future perspective, more than half of the wineries do not have plans to start or increase activities related to the use of SM. Among the planned activities, the preferences are directed towards “traditional” SM like Facebook, Twitter and Blogs, with a slightly higher emphasis on the use of video platforms.

This first part of the results show how the use of internet tools is already quite spread in the Italian wine sector and that the most important channels are the more established SM like Facebook and Twitter. New and less known SM like Pinterest and Instagram do not seem to bear the same kind of relevance and the potential of the use of Blogs is still not exploited to the maximum extent. A particular attention seems to be given to video platforms like YouTube, indicating a preference for messages that go beyond the simple written word or still images, in a context where dynamism and emotions can be better channelled.

It can be postulated that the full potential of internet tools is still far from being achieved. A deeper look at specific case studies might highlight how SM are used more as “gadgets” than as reasoned and conscious part of overall marketing strategies, with a few, important exceptions represented by larger wineries. In particular, this indication might emerge from the fact that it is not possible to identify a ranking in the importance given to the various aims of the use of SM.

3.4 France

For the question ‘How do you communicate with your customers?’ the most popular method for French wine producers to communicate with their customers was via email with 76% of producers indicating this as their main communication method. Personal communication was also heavily used amongst the brands to communicate with their customers (73%). Communication via Social Media was ranked as the third most common way in which French wine producers communicate with their customers (68%). Wine brands indicated that they communicate via Telephone/Fax (56%), via post (36%) and newsletters (31%) to a lesser extent.

For the question ‘Which Social Media platforms do you utilize for your business?’ a number of French wine producers have a Facebook page for their winery (78%) however only just over half of responding wineries use Twitter for their brand (50%). The use of video sharing platforms such as Youtube, Vimeo and MyVideo were less popular as a communications tool in the French wine industry with only 32% of wine brands using them. Just over one fifth (22%) of French wine producers surveyed run a blog for or about their winery, and only a fifth of wineries engage with other wine related blogs by reading and commenting (20%). Instagram and Pinterest are already at least as popular social media tools utilised with 27% (Instagram) and 20% (Pinterest) of wine producers indicating use of such platforms. Google+ was a slightly more popular tool with 31% of wineries utilising the platform for their business.

For the question ‘What do you want to achieve for your winery by using social media?’ French wine producers indicated that utilising social media to develop a relationship with clients (67%) was of most importance. Advertising the winery (60%), attracting new (59%), communicating with (59%), and to provide information about events (58%) for all customers

was also of importance. In addition, French wine producers indicated that they are using social media to a lesser extent for public relations (47%), and for promoting tasting events for their own wines (40%). Communication with other wineries and distributors was of lesser importance for using social media (30%), whilst 8% of the wine brands indicated that their objectives regarding social media use were not clearly defined. Other objectives of social media use listed included brand awareness, brand personality, increased sales and development of an online profile.

For the question 'How has your workload been affected by Social Media platforms?' just under half of the French wine producers surveyed (44%) indicated that their use of social media has increased in the past year, although just over a third (39%) had not modified their use across social media platforms over this period. A third (33%) of respondents indicated that attracting e-'friends', 'followers' and on-line discussions is the most challenging element in adapting to communications through social media. Future Social Media activities were not discussed by the French researcher.

3.5 Hungary

In Hungary, we received feedback from 61 wineries in 2014. The main findings of the SM survey in Hungary, according to the communication channels towards the customers, we can state that wine producing companies mainly use the personal method to keep in touch (27%) and almost as important is the e-mail (21%) for them. They rarely use newsletters (7%) and the post (4%). The communication tool they also use quite frequently is the telephone and fax (25%). We can conclude that they are personal relationship-driven but at the same time try to keep up with the trends with a bit of a delay by using e-mail and not focusing on newsletters.

In case of social media platforms the Hungarian wineries most of them use Facebook profiles (39%) and they read others' blogs (20%) but rarely create their own ones (4%) and sometimes also add comments to them (10%). Some of them also uploads videos (6%). From the other possibilities they rarely use Google+ (3%) and Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram together take 18%. The most important objectives with social media for the Hungarian wine producing companies were the advertising of the own firm (18%) and getting new customers (17%) which was as important as communicating with the customers (17%). They also wanted to inform customers about events (12%), information about wine tastings (12%), and PR (12%) were equally as important. Communication with the other wineries (7%) and customer service were less important. We can conclude that there is room for improvement in the use of social networks for the direct and frequent communication and information exchange with the customers and to use it as an important tool for the customer service which received only 4% in the survey.

About the future plans regarding the usage of social media the Hungarian wineries set the improvement of their Facebook usage (13%). Blogging and video platforms had the same importance (10%). Google+ (4%) and Twitter (2%) were mentioned as possible ways to improve the SM activities but only with marginal importance. Despite the general willingness to improve, 58% of them stated that they are not planning any further social media activities than what they have at the moment.

3.6 UK

There are 432 commercial vineyards in the UK (United Kingdom Vineyard Association 2014 (UKVA)). 25 usable responses were received giving almost a 6% response rate, therefore a comparative stance has been taken with the German figures.

For the question 'How do you communicate with your customers?' both groups indicate personal communication is the most important, at over 90%. However the use of social media is 40% higher in the UK, in comparison to Germany, and the use of post 72% higher in Germany. This may be accounted for by the different natures of the industry in both countries; UK vineyards are extremely dependent upon gate sales. Very few UK vineyards have a

national presence in supermarkets although they may have a regional presence in some chains such as Waitrose, or more recently, a link with local restaurants, such as Rick Stein's Seafood Restaurant in Padstow and the Camel Valley vineyard.

For the question 'Which social media platforms do you utilize for your business?' UK vineyards use a wider range of social media, and more frequently, than in Germany. Facebook and Twitter are the most important forms of social media in the UK. While Facebook is also the most important medium in Germany, twitter is far less significant (only 12.4% as opposed to an 80% usage in the UK). In both countries, reading blogs is important but running their own blog and commenting on others is much more important in the UK. There is also a higher engagement with videos in the UK. It may also reflect the fact that the UK wine industry is much newer than the German one and so the use of the internet to market may have been an obvious tool when the businesses were set up.

For the question 'What do you want to achieve for your winery by using social media?' both countries see the use of social media as being an important form of public relations (70%+) and to disseminate information about events they are running (80%+). However in UK, 85% of respondents also used Social Media specifically to gain new customers (as opposed to 40% in Germany) and to communicate with customers (80%). Again this may reflect a different customer base and different reason for visiting a winery in the two countries.

For the question 'Does your winery plan future activities on any Social Media platforms?' 44% of UK vineyards are content with their current social media usage, while the other 56% are interested in expanding their use of Social Media. An analysis of our figures, in comparison to Germany, reveals that 20% of German vineyards chose to not answer this question; whereas UK contained a 100% response rate. This may suggest that our sample of vineyards were fully adept with social media.

This could again reflect the new, small, very customer orientated focus of the UK wine industry as opposed to the much larger and more traditional wine business focus of many German respondents. The UK is very crowded in comparison to most other countries. Therefore vineyards and wineries are often close to centres of population making customer leisure trips easy to undertake so they compete with other leisurely activities. This may explain why so many were interested in visual imagery, i.e. use of video and Pinterest.

3.7 USA

In terms of communication with their customers, where multiple selections were possible, a majority (98%) use email, followed by face-to-face with 88% and Social Media with 87%. Regular mail is only used by 37%, which might have also been replaced by Newsletters with 61%. Telephone and fax was mentioned by 81% but is not clear if this means in terms of marketing or just receiving orders due to an inefficient eCommerce (n=375).

Nearly all of the wineries, 92%, are using Facebook. Twitter is used by 64% of the wineries, whereas 6% of wineries do not use any Social Media platform at all. 5% used the category "other" where free text was allowed, but most of the entries did not qualify as Social Media platforms. Only two wineries mentioned LinkedIn as their platform for business. Internet pages like Trip Advisor or Yelp are being used by 46%. These platforms are more important to the wineries than blogs or video uploads via YouTube, Vimeo or MyVideo (37%). Blogs in general seem to be of interest, as 41% stated that they read blogs from others, but only 23% do have an own blog for their winery. Instagram/Pinterest was used by 33% (n=375).

Being asked what they want to achieve for their winery by using social media only 8% had not yet defined their goals. Both consumer service (51%) and information about wine tasting (56%) were selected by around half of the wineries. Approximately one third of wineries wants to communicate with other wineries (34%). The most important aspects were acquisition of new customers (78%), advertisement (73%), and providing information about events (77%), public relation (70%) and communication with consumers (81%) (n=375).

Nearly half of the wineries (45%) do not plan any further activity of social media. 28% want to add online videos via YouTube, Vimeo or MyVideo and 22% plan to use Instagram or Pinterest within the next six months. 20% plan to use Facebook, compared with 14% planning to use Twitter. Blog and Google+ were only mentioned by 14% and 12% respectively. One winery added that they were planning to hire a full time social media manager. Of those 6% who have neither Facebook nor Twitter, a vast majority (71%) are not planning any further social media activities in the next 6 months. Only 17% want to set up Facebook and 13% a Twitter account, Blog and online videos following with 8% each (n=24).

3.8 Australia

The most popular method for Australian wine brands to communicate with their customers was via email with 87% of brands indicating this as their main communication method. Personal communication was also heavily used amongst the brands to communicate with their customers (86%). Communication via Social Media was ranked as the third most common way in which Australian wine brands communicate with their customers (65%). Wine brands indicated that they communicate via Telephone/Fax (51%), newsletters (44%) and via post (30%) to a lesser extent.

For the question ‘Which Social Media platforms do you utilize for your business?’ a majority of Australian wine brands have a Facebook page for their winery (87%), whereas just over half of responding wineries use Twitter for their brand (55%). The use of video sharing platforms such as Youtube, Vimeo and MyVideo were less popular as a communications tool in the Australian wine industry with only 31% of wine brands using them. Only one fifth (21%) of Australian wine brands surveyed currently run a blog for or about their winery, however over a third of wineries engage with other wine related blogs by reading and commenting (35%). Instagram and Pinterest were the most unpopular social media tools utilised by wine brands with only 17% (Instagram) and 7% (Pinterest) of wine brands indicating use of such platforms. Google+ was a slightly more popular tool with 22% of wineries utilising the platform for their business.

For the question ‘What do you want to achieve for your winery by using social media?’ Australian wine brands indicated that utilising social media to attract new customers (78%) and communicate with customers (76%) was of significant importance. In addition, Australian wine brands indicated that they are using social media in an attempt to achieve advertising of their winery (66%), public relations (66%) and to provide information about events (63%). Communication with other wineries and companies was the least important reason for using social media (29%), whilst 16% of the wine brands indicated that their objectives regarding social media use were not clearly defined. Other objectives of social media use listed included brand awareness, brand personality, increased sales, and development of an online profile.

For the question ‘Does your winery plan future activities on any Social Media platforms?’ over half of the Australian wine brands surveyed (56%) indicated that they were not planning any further activities on any social media platforms. The use of Facebook was the most common future activity planned, with one quarter of respondents indicating future intention to use the platform. Wine brands indicated that they also planned to use Twitter (19%), set up of a blog (13%) and use video sharing platforms (13%) in the future. In contrast, only 4% of Australian wine brands intend to use Pinterest in the future, and only 8% plan to use Instagram.

3.9 New Zealand

The survey was sent to 575 wineries in New Zealand and responses were received from 102, giving a response rate of 18%. Almost all of the wineries (95%) have a homepage about their business and 67% have an online shop, indicating that most wineries are active in the online environment.

Concerning how New Zealand wineries communicate with their customers, it is clear that

social media (65%) is a well-utilised method for communicating with customers, although personal (89%) and email (90%) communications are still the most widely used. Another result indicates that 63% of New Zealand wineries rate the importance of social media as at least somewhat important to them. As for the social media platforms being used by New Zealand wineries, the most commonly used social media platforms are clearly Facebook (67%) and Twitter (55%).

Analysing the aims wineries want to achieve through using social media, the participants indicated that they predominantly use social media to gain new customers (61%), communicate to customers (57%) and for public relations purposes (52%).

Looking at the future plans of New Zealand wineries regarding activities on social media platforms, many of the wineries have no further plans for social media activities (44%). The most frequent plans for the future are the use of video platforms (17%) and using Facebook (12%). It should be noted that, compared to last year, 40% of wineries reported that they had increased their social media activity so this suggests that there has been considerable growth recently.

3.10 Canada

In Canada, we have 2 provinces that are the main wine-producing provinces in the country: Ontario and British Columbia. We first did an investigation into contacts (marketing managers, etc.) for each winery, and created a database with the winery location, name, contact email, and Twitter handle. We also adapted the Social Media survey previously used in Germany to a Canadian audience, using Qualtrics (online) software. Through email, as well as Tweets, and re-Tweets that occurred from people in the industry, we attempted to distribute the URL for the survey, to be completed by wineries. The email invitation contained basic information regarding the survey motive. Across Canadian wineries, there were 282 wineries contacted to fill out the survey, in total 75 wineries completed the questionnaire. Once respondents began the survey, they were informed in more detail the survey's purpose. Respondents were also given brief instructions on how to respond. Reminder emails were sent to any winery that had not fully completed the survey: 3 reminder emails were sent to Ontario wineries, and 2 reminder emails were sent to British Columbia wineries.

In terms of Social Media use, 93% reported using Facebook, and 93% reported using Twitter, whereas only 4% reported using video platforms, such as YouTube.

For what they wanted to achieve by using Social Media, communication with customers came out on top (87%), followed by getting new customers (86%), advertising (85%), and events (83%).

For the question, 'How do you communicate with your customers?' the response 'Via Email' came out on top (89%), followed by personally (84%), 'Via Social Media' (80%), 'Via Newsletter' (68%), 'Telephone/Fax' (52%), and 'Via Post' (24%).

In conclusion, it appears as though many Canadian wineries are embracing Social Media as part of their marketing efforts. Facebook and Twitter are the top platforms being used, and these are used primarily as a means to communicate and connect with customers.

3.10 South Africa

The South African study was sent at the beginning of December 2013 to WOSA (Wine of South Africa, a non-profit industry organization) producer in form of a newsletter. After one reminder, we received 76 completed questionnaires in total.

Analysing the way of communication of the wineries, one can see that modern communication tools, as in email (96%) and social media (92%), play an important role in South Africa. Even personal contact reached a high usage (82%), which may be based on the fact that South Africa has a well-developed wine tourism. The old fashion communication tool "sending letters" is not very often used in South Africa (11%), while telephone/fax achieved a level of 61%.

Among the social media channels, Facebook (100%) and Twitter (88%) are very popular. South African wineries utilize even video sharing (49%) and Instagram/Pinterest (41%) more often than wine makers in other countries. However, having a blog for the winery and using Google + is not as common.

The most important aim of using social media tools in South Africa is to reach consumers and to communicate with them (96%). Wineries in South Africa also use the advertisement function of the new media as well as obtaining new customers for the winery. Similar to the other participating countries, social media as a tool for communicating with other wineries is not very popular.

South African wineries plan to extend their social media portfolio by using video-platforms (42%) and picture based communication tools, such as Instagram and Pinterest (41%). Some of them will try to reach consumers in the future via their own blog (19%) or Twitter (21%).

4. DISCUSSION

In this chapter we discuss the differences and similarities between the countries participating in the survey. Since the comparison of eleven different results one-by-one with each other would go beyond the constraints of this paper, we focus here rather on the most interesting results and try to compare Europe with overseas countries.

When analysing the methods of communication between wineries and consumers (Tab. 3), it is apparent the personal communication is still the most important tool wineries use to reach their consumers. Post, as a traditional communication tool, has lost its dominance and is used frequently only in Germany nowadays. In comparison, the modern way of sending mail (e-mails), became very popular and is used in each country. In terms of using social media for communication, overseas countries have a clear lead. Telephone is still important, however it is experiencing a downwards trend.

Table 3 How wineries communicate with their customers (percent)

	Austria (n=427)	Germany (n=377)	Italy (n=254)	France (n=106)	Hungary (n=61)	UK (n=25)	USA (n=375)	Australia (n=346)	New Zealand (n=102)	South Africa (n=76)	Canada (n=75)
personally	97	98	97	73	61	92	88	86	89	82	84
via post	53	84	47	36	9	12	37	30	29	11	24
Telephone / Fax	86	83	84	56	55	60	81	51	64	61	53
via Email	92	86	96	76	47	84	98	87	90	96	89
via Newsletter	45	34	44	31	16	32		44	56	61	68
via Social Media	44	34	67	68	35	74	87	65	65	92	80

For this question the sample size was reduced, since only participants which use social media for the winery were analysed (Tab. 4). This survey confirmed the results of previous researches (Bouquet 2012; Szolnoki 2014) which showed that Facebook is the most popular social media platform - independent of the country, this platform achieved the highest score. Using Twitter and writing blog shows huge differences, especially when comparing Austria and Germany with other countries. Similar differences occur in terms of using video sharing systems and Instagram/Pinterest. These results demonstrate that potentially German and Austrian wineries should improve their social media utilization.

Table 4 Which social media platforms do wineries utilize for their business (percent)

	Austria (n=249)	Germany (n=193)	Italy (n=170)	France (n=72)	Hungary (n=41)	UK (n=20)	USA (n=326)	Australia (n=274)	New Zealand (n=66)	South Africa (n=74)	Canada (n=60)
Facebook	91	84	93	78	32	80	92	87	67	100	93
Twitter	14	12	50	50	6	70	64	55	55	88	93
Video sharing	19	14	65	32	5	30	37	31	32	49	41
Blog	7	7	20	22	3	25	23	21	17	24	16
Read blogs	33	43	84	20	16	35	41	35	32	50	39
Comment blogs	8	14	52	20	8	20	16	35	8	18	9
Google+	14	11	48	31	2	5	17	22	17	12	24
Instagram/ Pinterest	7	1	51	47	8	30	33	24	27	41	52

It is difficult to notice a trend when investigating the aims of using social media in the wine business, however when European and overseas countries are analysed separately, there are main differences (Tab. 5): Overseas countries put more emphasis on the ‘acquisition of new customers’ function of social media and communicate more with their customers, while European wineries use social media platforms more to inform consumers about events, especially about wine tastings.

Table 5 The aims of using social media (percent)

	Austria (n=249)	Germany (n=193)	Italy (n=170)	France (n=72)	Hungary (n=41)	UK (n=20)	USA (n=326)	Australia (n=274)	New Zealand (n=66)	South Africa (n=74)	Canada (n=60)
Customer service	51	33	81	67	6	50	51	56	44	66	72
Getting new customers	52	40	85	59	27	85	78	78	61	82	86
Advertisement for my winery	76	60	88	60	31	75	73	66	48	88	85
Information about events	88	85	88	58	20	80	77	63	48	78	83
Information about wine tasting	47	38	89	40	19	60	56	48	35	62	68
Public relations	59	72	83	47	19	75	70	62	52	78	73
Communication with consumers	46	43	83	59	27	80	81	76	57	96	87
Communication with other wineries	20	17	75	30	11	45	34	29	30	31	47
It is not exactly defined	9	14	10	8	2	5	8	7		1	3

Finally, the future activities on social media platforms were analysed (Tab. 6). Although Facebook is one of the most widely used social media platforms, participated wineries, mainly in Europe will extend their future internet activities by this medium. In the future, wineries look to improve their social media presence by using video- and photo-platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, and Pinterest.

Table 6 Future activities on Social Media platforms

	Austria (n=427)	Germany (n=377)	Italy (n=254)	France (n=106)	Hungary (n=61)	UK (n=25)	USA (n=375)	Australia (n=346)	New Zealand (n=102)	South Africa (n=76)	Canada (n=75)
Set up a blog	4	5	17	ns	6	8	14	13	5	19	28
Use of Facebook	23	19	17	ns	8	20	20	25	12	15	32
Use of Twitter	8	6	17	ns	2	8	14	19	9	21	30
Use of Video-Platforms	13	10	17	ns	6	32	28	13	17	42	31
Use of Google+	5	6	10	ns	4	12	12	11	7	8	10
Use of Instagram/Pinterest	3	2	21	ns	2	28	22	12	10	41	26
Other	4	3	1	ns	1	0	2	6	3	1	0
No, I am not planning any further activities	51	68	53	ns	36	44	45	56	44	30	0

This study demonstrates that social media has been accepted and is already widely used as a communication tool in the wine industry. A high level of acceptance of social media tools were observed in each participating countries. Facebook is the most important among the available social media tools; however video- and photo-sharing systems are developing rapidly. There is a significant difference between European and overseas countries. Wineries of the latter more frequently utilize social media than those from Europe. It might be based on the fact that most of the social media tools were developed in overseas countries and that the wine industry in Europe has a deep tradition of more than a hundred years which is reflected also in the way of communication between producers and consumers.

The current study provides only a snapshot of the wine industry in the selected countries. Only a limited number of wineries with Internet access were involved, and the study did not take into account wineries without this facility. On the other hand, we expect that wine makers and employees of wineries who are interested in social media, took part in the survey. Finally, cultural differences and the diversity of the data base which was used to reach wineries in the certain countries might also lead to bias within the results.

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