

The struggle between Italian wines and the Dutch wine consumers

Introduction

Italy is well integrated in our society. We love the Italian food, fashion, cars, cappuccino, spaghetti and pizza's. So you might think that the Italian wines are also popular by the Dutch wine consumers. But that is not the case. Strangely enough in our neighboring country Germany the Italian wines are immensely popular.

Important to know is the fact that the Netherlands is no wine producing country and because of that the Dutch wine consumers are not well educated in consuming wine in general. On the other hand the Netherlands represents a significant opportunity for both Old World and New World wine producers. So there should be a potential market share for Italian wines.

What about the history, culture and demographics of the Dutch?

The Netherlands are one of the most densely populated countries of the world and one of the most prosperous. This richness is due to the long history of trade. The Dutch culture is diverse, reflecting regional differences as well as foreign influences thanks to the merchant and exploring spirit of the Dutch and the influx of immigrants. Due to that the Dutch cannot be characterized as a country with one predominant type of beverage preference.

Immediately after the Second World War there was an important period for the current wine market. It was the period of the so-called 'baby boom generation'. In this period a lot of children were born. One of the consequences of this enormous birth wave is the fact that we now have a large age group of 55 – 75 years old. An age group which has a relatively low level of education compared with the younger generations. On the other hand they are relatively prosperous and therefore an interesting age group for the Italian wine producers.

Where can we buy Italian wines in the Dutch market and what does it do with the buying behavior?

In this paragraph I describe what the effects are of the dominant position of the more than 7000 supermarkets in the Netherlands. And what that does with the buying behavior of the Dutch wine consumer. The Dutch retail market is divided into supermarkets and liquor stores. By government law it is stated that one can buy all the alcoholic beverages in a liquor store but in the supermarkets you can only buy alcoholic beverages with an alcohol level of maximum 15% vol.

Because of their dominance the supermarkets are increasingly able to force wine producers and other food producers to give them extremely low prices as well as other financial advantages. Supermarkets are using cheaper wine prices, in comparison to the liquor stores. Price is the most important wine attribute that a great number of Dutch wine consumers considers when buying a bottle of wine. More customer volume in turn makes the supermarkets even more powerful as buyers of wine.

The supermarkets don't have a lot of Italian wines on the shelves because there are a lot of other wine countries which offer cheaper wines which are soft and velvety of taste. The Dutch wine consumer likes to drink these types of wine. Also wines from the southern part of France are immensely popular. One of the reasons that these wines are so popular is the fact that, especially the 'baby boom generation', has liked to go on holiday to France for many years.

In this paragraph I give an overview of what can be done to change the negative image of Italian wines among the Dutch wine lovers into a more positive one.

If we would like that the Italian wines to become more popular in the future we first need to focus on the independent liquor stores and wine shops because we need time. That's why the supermarkets are not the main objective at the moment. They need too much volume and they want the lowest possible price.

To educate our professionals and the Dutch wine consumers on the long term we have to open an **Information Point** on Italian Wines in which at least three parties work together. Also an internet site with constantly updated data should be promoted.

To make the age group of 35 – 65 years old enthusiastic for Italian wines one has to organize various activities. From complete dining and wine tastings to wine tastings with a travel agency, specialized in holidays to Italy. After all, the age group of 55- 75 years old is the most prosperous group who wants to be kept busy with all kinds of activities.

An age group we certainly must not forget is the group of 18 to 35 years old. They already embraced Italian wines, like Prosecco, HUGO and Spritz. Internet is also an important buying tool for these age group so it is important, especially for the Italian wine producers, to focus on this group.

Finally if the demand towards Italian wines will increase because of these kind of activities then the supermarkets will eventually put the (good) Italian wines on the shelves. And then this will give the Italian wines a better position in the future on the Dutch wine market.

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