

Authentic Wines, a useful trend for (small) specialized wine traders?

Introduction

In reaction to our globalizing society, people are searching for authenticity. Obviously, availability, pricing and quality of both products and services are no longer enough. As far as consumption of food and drinks is concerned, consumers are looking for real, pure and lighter products. I wondered if this demand for authenticity also goes for wine. In addition, if so, is this trend useful for (small) specialized wine traders? Do consumers really want authentic wines and if so, are they willing to pay (more) for them? What do the specialist wine traders themselves think about this trend? These questions will be answered in the following chapters.

What about authenticity and authentic wines?

Before writing this thesis, I looked up the definition of authenticity and used this as a guideline to come to a definition of authentic wines. This definition of authentic wines was also made thanks to the suppliers I interviewed.

When looking up authenticity in the dictionary, you will find that it is described as reliable, trustworthy, and real. It also refers to the truthfulness of origins, attributions, commitments, sincerity, devotion and intentions. Most of these descriptions also came up when I discussed it with the specialized wine traders. Eventually, I came up with the definition of authentic wines.

When looking up authentic wines on the internet, I noticed that often organic, biodynamic and sustainable were mentioned. I wanted to know what their importance was in respect of authentic wines. Moreover, what do the wine traders have to say about it?

And what is the importance of marketing and volume in this? If you have substantial volume as a wine producer, does that mean that your wines are not authentic? Not if it is your aim as a wine producer to make authentic wines, clearly representing grape variety, region, terroir, etc. It does when the wines you make are interchangeable thus could come from whatever country or region.

Marketing can definitely help when it comes to authentic wines, however the wine traders think it is more important on consumer level. Marketing can influence consumer behaviour. Authenticity itself can be a marketing tool. Look at concepts like Marqt for example and Willem & Drees. Making authentic products available to consumers was the philosophy behind these concepts. Using the term authentic is the marketing tool, since it is the consumer that demands authenticity.

Do consumers *really* want authentic wines? What type of consumers wants them and are they willing to pay for those wines?

In this chapter, I describe if there really is demand for authentic wines on the Dutch market.

Although there is demand for authentic wines according to the specialized wine traders I interviewed, it is only a small group. They do expect that this group will grow slowly in future. The on-trade plays a leading role in this demand for authentic products. Chefs like Johnnie Boer (De Librije), Sergio Herman (Oud Sluis) set the trend, and (eventually) the consumer will follow. When you see that the even top restaurants like those mentioned before and companies like The Royal Dutch Airlines KLM serve Dutch wines or even regional wines like from Wijnhoeve De Kleine Schorre in Dreischor, demand for those wines in wine shops and at the wineries themselves increases.

Research also showed that this demand is also geographically determined. Demand proves to be larger in the urban conglomeration than in other regions of the country. It is also expected that the gap between those who are really looking for authentic products and those who have no interest at all will increase. The relatively large middle group is expected to disappear.

Are consumers willing to pay for those wines? When you look at the statistics and see that most wine purchases are still done in supermarkets (nearly 90 %!) and that the average price for a bottle of wine is only € 2.83, you probably think not. Fortunately, for the specialist wine traders the number of consumers that wants authentic wines and is willing to pay, a bit more for them is slightly increasing. In addition, with concepts like Marqt expanding, I think this might have a positive effect on demand for authentic wines as well. However, it is also up to the wine traders. They constantly have to be innovative when it comes to their business, defend their market share and make sure that they are noticed.

Consumers will find authentic wines in specialized wine shops or via the importers that sell directly to individuals. They have the knowledge and they can properly advice consumers. In order to keep doing that continuing education is necessary.

Finally, I will describe what the specialized wine traders think of this trend. Most of them told me that they have always been looking for authentic wines. It is their philosophy. They consider authenticity is a growth market for the future instead of a trend. Marketing can be used to increase awareness and market share. Emphasize the authentic characteristics of the wines you offer. Add a map of the region when selling a particular wine and give some background information on it. This will increase knowledge and enjoyment!

Finally yet importantly, in order to make use of this trend for authenticity, I recommend specialist wine traders to be authentic himself or herself!

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