

## **Critical appraisal of Neuromarketing in Wine Business – sound future or another face of neuromania**

Wine has been part of the civilization almost since Neolithic revolution. Some say it is because of some evolutionary innate drive. Wine has had strong influence on social, cultural, health, political and economic aspects of human ways. Producing, storing, selling and taxing wine has been heavily regulated as an important tool and symbol of governance.

In recent decades we are facing extensive social changes described by terms like democratization, globalization and liberalization supported with faster scientific progress and new perception of human rights. These changes reflect in the wine business as well: the booming of the "New world" wine production, competition with other fermented beverages for the market share, globalization of varieties and brands, searching for Marketing niches with natural / no intervention wines or authentic local varieties and new approaches to Marketing, to name just a few. Selling wine today is hardly an easy business.

We are living in the times of fascination with human mind and brain – "neuromania". The fast growing business of Neuromarketing – use of modern investigation methods of human nervous system functions and psychology in order to study and influence purchasing decision making - shared between Neuroscience, technology, sociology and economy, can therefor come as no surprise. Aside some overwhelming enthusiasm about the potential importance of Neuroscience in Marketing, serious opposition from medical world regarding the correlation between what we measure and meaningful function exists. Neuromarketing is not without real ethical dilemmas, too.

So far, the literature on Neuromarketing in wine is scarce. There might be several reasons for that. Perhaps, the Neuromarketing does not offer more than has already been known as the purchasing decision making in wine Marketing has been well studied. Second, the bulk of wine is sold in the price basin that does not allow the investments in such relatively expensive Marketing approach. Further on, the market share is not concentrated enough and investment of one could actually help everyone else in the business without investing. Next, the purchasing decision-making process in wine buying might be just too complex. The differences of brain-activation between wine connoisseurs and non-connoisseurs exist when exposed to wine and are probably important in appreciating wine and in purchasing decision-making, as are differences in physiological abilities in tasting. Last but not least, there are social differences based on wine-consuming/producing tradition: in traditional wine producing countries wine is mainly perceived as lubrication versus aesthetic, moral or status-bestowing symbol in non-producing countries. These particularities could affect the interpretation of measurements in Neuromarketing in wine business.

Anyhow, it is surprising that in the well-recognized “bullshit prone” wine business Neuromarketing has not produced much echo.

Neuromarketing, at least at this moment, is not adequately defined or proven in diverse mental processing in different groups of wine buyers for regular use in wine Marketing.

The aim of the thesis is to test the present knowledge, attitude toward Neuromarketing and the possibilities for applying Neuromarketing in the wine business regarding the justification of investment, knowledge and willingness to reach for Neuromarketing among wine producers in Slovenia. For that purpose we prepared a short questioner and sent it through e-mails to 131 most prominent wine producers in Slovenia. The results show, if we recognize them as representative, that most of the wine producers in Slovenia do not know much about Neuromarketing. Perhaps, we can stretch out a bit and risk to say they do not have to, as long the Slovenian wine market is closed as it is and fit their small production. On the other hand, due to an overrepresentation of the biggest vineries in the group of producers who confirmed their knowledge of Neuromarketing, one can conclude that the producers who depend on export of wine have professional Marketing teams with much more knowledge of modern trends in Marketing. Even more, they are capable to express well-founded critique of what is on the Marketing market today. It has been said before, that the national economy obviously needs bigger players or systems, which can lead the way forward for all.

Finally, we conclude that at the moment the practical utility of Neuromarketing in wine business is certainly not adequately defined, valid or proven. However, Neuromarketing, an integrated approach to influence, seems like a brilliant concept with bright future.

