



Master's Thesis Title: Evaluating the importance and effectiveness of word-of-mouth in consumer wine purchase decisions.

Student name:	Aneep Pradhan
Institution/Company involved:	Hochschule Geisenheim

Jury members (name/position):

Dr. Gergely Szolnoki , Department of Economics, Hochschule Geisenheim, Germany
Dr. Antonia Mantonakis , Associate Professor of Marketing, Brock University, Canada
Dr. Roberta Capitello , Professor of Marketing, University of Verona, Italy
Dr. Joachim Schmid, Hochschule Geisenheim University
Marianne SteinSchulte, M.SC., Hochschule Geisenheim University

Names and emails of supervisors:

Dr. Gergely Szolnoki , Department of Economics, Hochschule Geisenheim, Germany	
Dr. Antonia Mantonakis , Associate Professor of Marketing, Brock University, Canada	

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Abstract (max 300 words):

Topic position and objectives:
This master thesis project specifically sought to examine the effect of word-of-mouth (WOM) on the wine purchase decision.

Methods:
Preliminary information was gathered through a bibliographical research, while actual on-field insights were collected through focus group discussions.

Results:
Wine purchase is a very personal experience across all groups with cultural and regional characteristics shaping consumption. WOM was found to be extremely important across all consumer groups. However, WOM perception of different customer groups is also found to be different according to their interest and experience in wine drinking.

Main conclusions:
For all groups, wine marketing is not expected to be mass-scale, is expected to be more intimate, such as sales associates at specialized wine stores, wine tastings, personal interactions with wine-experts as well as reputed brand ambassadors (pleasing and passionate, yet highly reputed).

The study suggests that WOM permeates across the entire spectrum of services of a

wine business – Product, Brand, Marketing & Customer Services. The study finds that WOM goes hand in hand with all other aspects of wine marketing and acts as a reinforcing / conclusive factor during purchase decisions. Wineries could study consumer profiles and attitudes to customize their offerings and services – for example New / Casual wine consumers – positive reinforcement, High Knowledge Male consumers – information & expert opinions and High Knowledge Female – product & purchase experience.

Opinion leaders increase product awareness / popularity improving customer satisfaction, and creating horizontal product differentiation (Bao et al, 2014). Cultivating online brand influencers / opinion leaders to increase the spread of positive WOM regarding the product seems to be a promising strategy.

Keywords (5):

Word-of-Mouth

Consumer Behaviour

Qualitative Market Research

HK – High Knowledge

HKM – High Knowledge Male

HKF – High Knowledge Female