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How relevant is social media to wine drinking? This business bulletin focuses on insights from our latest report series which questions how consumers are interacting with online media in their quest for wine information. Read about the debate our research provoked amongst bloggers; what is going on online in the US more specifically; and future social media potential for the Chinese wine market.

Meanwhile, Brian Howard, founder and former business development director, announced his retirement from his full time role at Wine Intelligence. He will be now working as an associate director for the company. Read about what he is getting up to in his spare time in the Hunter Valley.

Bloggers bite back

Around 20% of consumers say they trust recommendations from an independent wine blogger. Is this good news or bad news for the wine industry's fastest-growing method of communication? Arguably we took the sensationalist approach: "Bloggers are one of the least trusted source of wine recommendations" said our press release last week announcing the launch of the Internet and Social Media report, in part because it was true (the six other sources we tested, from supermarkets to regional promotion agencies, had significantly higher trust levels) and partly because we wanted to generate some debate (and sell some reports).

Predictably, and understandably, the blogosphere didn't take this lying down. For more details on our response to the e-vitriol that's been flying our way, see the next issue of Harpers Wine & Spirit.

To summarize our position: we asked our normal sample of regular wine drinkers in three markets (USA, UK, France) a few questions about their internet and social media use. It turns out that many of them use the Internet now to find out more information on wine, and a smaller proportion of them use more "Web 2.0" stuff – Facebook, blogs, and other interactive message-posting sites.

One widely reported criticism of the research is that if you have a small population using something, and ask everyone (users and non-users) what they think of that thing, the large number of non-users are often going to introduce a negative bias, and vice versa. Researchers call this the "double jeopardy" effect. Of course it is not universally true: ask 1,000 people whether they have driven a Ferrari, and you'll get perhaps a 1% usage rate; ask them what they think of Ferrari the brand, and it's likely that you'll get a strongly positive response, even though 99% of the population have never sat in one.

In this narrow sense, the critics have a point: if, for instance, only 1 in 7 people use social media in the UK, trust levels in bloggers might be lower than they would be for, say, a supermarket's website, which would be visited by a much larger proportion of the population.

But let's follow this argument through. If we isolate those respondents in the UK using social media in the context of wine, we find that trust levels rise to 44% of users (as opposed to 19% for the total population). Unfortunately this still leaves the majority of social media users either distrusting or indifferent to the opinions voiced by independent bloggers, and also means that this source still comes 7th (out of 7) in terms of trustworthiness even among these active social media users – behind supermarkets, wine region promotion agencies, and brand owners themselves.

The other main criticism is that we didn't ask the right questions. Clearly this is an area that we can debate – in fact we would invite critiques of our questionnaire if anyone is interested in making them – since we need to develop an effective assessment system for this medium in comparison with more traditional sources of wine information. I look forward to hearing your views.

Vinifact...

43% of wine drinkers in France distrust wine information posted by independent bloggers

Source: Wine Intelligence Vinitrac® France Nov '10, n=1,003



Read the [Press Release](#) in question and learn more about the [Social Media Report series](#) at www.wineintelligence.com

Facebook: the US wine future?



Status update from US wine consumers: Facebook is the most popular online source when searching for and sharing wine information (source: the Internet and Social Media report, Northeastern USA).

Latest research from Wine Intelligence has confirmed that social media is an integral source of wine information for wine drinkers in the US: some two thirds of the US regular wine drinkers surveyed now look for wine information online, with 1 in 3 using social media as a source. Furthermore, unlike other countries included in this report series (France and UK), US consumers place their trust in independent bloggers above supermarkets as a source of wine information.

Of all categories of social media (Facebook, Twitter and independent blogs), Facebook was the preferred online source for both 'Opinion Leaders' (regular wine drinkers who use the Internet to find information about wine and have posted or published feedback about a specific wine on social media platforms), and 'Users' (those who don't publish info but do look for it online).

It is predicted that social media spending in the U.S. will grow to more than US\$3.1 billion in 2014, a 34 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR)*; a significantly higher growth rate than future spending on other interactive marketing channels.

Learn which wine consumers are using the Internet and social media and where they are looking for wine information in the latest Internet and Social Media report series published last week.

Related Reports:

- Internet and Social Media Report Series, published January 2011, available for USA, UK and France

China developing a palate for Australian wine

International social networking websites such as Facebook and Twitter are censored in China, but the potential for social media marketing is huge if you know how to penetrate the domestic online channels.

In a country of over 384 million internet users, the Chinese have developed their own versions of Facebook (such as Renren and Kaixin) and Twitter (Microblog). The only difference is that the sites are operated locally and the focus is on domestic market. The vast potential reach of social media in China is exemplified by actress Yao Chen, who has 5 million followers on her microblog. Another impressive example, this one from the wine world, is the discussion group "red wine knowledge" on Renren.com, which attracted 50,000 members within one month of launching.

Akin to Facebook, companies can create public profiles that provide dynamic discussion forums for interacting with customers. This is also a brilliant way to educate potential consumers, as Chinese wine drinkers show a strong interest in developing their wine knowledge, even if they still do not drink as frequently as their European counterparts. There are relatively few online wine critics and bloggers in China, and they appear to have limited influence as opinion leaders in the industry, which means that there is still space for other parts of the wine industry to step in and fill the gap.

Wine Intelligence will be exploring wine consumer use of the Internet and social media as a source of wine information in China as a part of the upcoming Vinitrac® Global wave – the omnibus survey of wine drinkers around the world.

Related Reports:

- China Landscapes, comprehensive consumer insights for the Chinese wine market. Latest update due for publication in April 2011



Hunter Valley heaven



Brian Howard, Associate Director, reports on his travels in Australia

As some of you will be aware, I have stepped back from day-to-day operations at Wine Intelligence, and will now occupy a more free-form, roving brief for the company. So what better way to mark the next chapter of my Wine Intelligence career – one that I hope will involve fewer late nights slaving over a hot laptop and more warm evenings with a crisp Albarino in hand – than a series of observations about wine tourism in general and Australia’s revered Hunter Valley.

When we finally found the region’s epicentre (a crossroads!), oriented ourselves, and started talking to locals, we were enveloped in a world of dedicated craftsmen, welcoming hospitality at every gate (but to us Brits, expensive), and great winemaking. All in a wonderful setting of gentle rolling hills, manicured roadsides, and some wineries that were stunning just to behold even before nosing up to world-class Semillon, Chardonnay and Shiraz. I was immediately struck by the luxuriant layout of the whole region – space for everyone and everything; vineyards morphing into parkland, leading to inviting wineries. While most of my wine region experience is European, I’ve seen nothing like this, except perhaps in Napa and parts of South Africa. Hunter has it all, much to be proud of and to tell the world about.

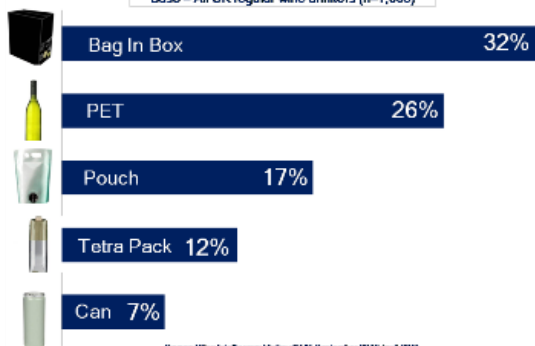
As we travelled, tasted and sipped, several lasting impressions began to develop – wine-making up close and personal (especially as the first Semillon fruit was coming into the sheds); wine in its ideal countryside and food-focused setting; an open-hearted welcome that only Aussies do naturally. Overall reflections on less than three days in the region: compelling, something for nearly everybody, almost hedonistic... when can I come again, please!

All eight wineries we visited were equally welcoming and equipped for all types of visitors – day-trippers with no/little wine knowledge, to experts who have their favourite wineries and even vintages. The staff were always friendly, helpful and, with one exception, knowledgeable (didn’t know whether a particular wine was from the region or not). The overriding impression was of enthusiasm, pride in their wineries’ output, and commitment to the region.

For the involved consumer, Hunter is quite close to heaven – accessible, passionate, meet and talk to the families whose names are on the bottles, taste your way round some legendary wines... and stock up the cellar. We intercepted a couple of Adventurous Connoisseurs*, and enjoyed an almost-tutored tasting at Scarborough Wines with one of them. One consumer had driven up from Sydney on a hot Sunday afternoon with his family (“180 kilometres, but only a couple of hours or so”) to stock up on three of his favourite wines to enjoy with a visiting Japanese friend. He knew what he wanted, tasted and compared several vintages, tried a couple of new wines, and bought 4 cases, making a \$1000 hole in his credit card.

In case this is beginning to read like a paid-for placement, two negatives about the Hunter. One fixable, one to work around. Unbelievably (to us Brits), only one serious restaurant in the Valley offers BYO, in the middle of the country that invented the phrase. Needs fixing, since most visitors out for dinner will have hotel rooms full of bottles purchased at cellar doors. OK, most restaurants do have expensive overheads (the business model took some understanding), but even \$10 per person would make sense, and get Hunter Valley wines drunk and no doubt talked about at more dining tables.

The second is more fundamental. There’s no central town, no wine villages. With respect to Cessnock and Brankston (towns on the south-east and northern periphery), they’re hardly “gateway cities”. The other and upcoming New South Wales wine region, Orange, does score on this measure, with the small city of Orange itself being an attractive destination. Town planners of the region, please note.

% likely to buy wine with an alternative packaging
 Base = All UK regular wine drinkers (n=1,008)

Source: Wine Intelligence Vinitrac® UK, September 2010 (n=1,008)

Vinitrac® Global: Alternative Packaging

In September, **32% of UK regular wine drinkers were likely to buy wine in Bag-in-Box**, Vinitrac® Sep'10.

Find out what the acceptance is of the different wine packaging options across major wine consumption countries in the next wave of Vinitrac® Global - the Wine Intelligence omnibus survey of regular wine drinkers around the world - **launching in 4 weeks**.

Coup de projecteur sur les médias sociaux

La nouvelle série de rapports « Internet et les médias sociaux » révèle que :

- Les consommateurs de vin au Royaume-Uni, aux Etats-Unis et en France considèrent les bloggeurs comme la source de renseignements la moins fiable quand ils recherchent des informations sur le vin.
- Facebook est l'une des sources en ligne les plus prisées pour des informations sur le vin aux Etats-Unis. Internet en général est une source d'information importante avec deux tiers des consommateurs américains interrogés se tournant vers Internet pour des renseignements ayant trait au vin, parmi lesquels 1 sur 3 utilise les médias sociaux (définis comme étant les blogs indépendants et les sites Facebook et Twitter) comme source d'info sur le vin.
- [Veuillez consulter www.wineintelligence.com](http://www.wineintelligence.com) pour plus d'infos sur cette série de rapports.

Obtenez un aperçu des consommateurs de vin qui vous intéressent avec Vinitrac® - l'enquête en ligne de Wine Intelligence qui interroge les consommateurs de vin dans le monde entier. La prochaine vague d'enquêtes sera lancée en mars dans 10 pays.

Pour tout complément d'information sur un des ces sujets veuillez contacter Natasha par email natasha@wineintelligence.com



Français

Destacados de este boletín:

El nuevo estudio sobre el uso de Internet y medios sociales como fuentes de información vinícola muestran que:

- Los consumidores de vino en el Reino Unido, noreste de los Estados Unidos y Francia muestran una mayor desconfianza en las publicaciones de "bloggers independientes" de vino a la hora de informarse que en otras fuentes de información más tradicionales.
- Facebook se sitúa como una de las fuentes de información más populares en la red para los consumidores de vino del noreste de los EEUU. Las redes sociales en general son importantes para los consumidores: dos de cada tres consumidores encuestados buscan información de vino en la web y uno de cada tres utiliza redes sociales por ese motivo.
- Más información sobre los estudios en www.wineintelligence.com

Obtenga información y entienda las perspectivas de consumidores con Vinitrac® Global. Vinitrac® Global es la única encuesta online que entrevista consumidores de vino alrededor del mundo. El siguiente lanzamiento de [Vinitrac® Global](http://www.wineintelligence.com) tiene lugar en 10 mercados dentro de cuatro semanas.



Español

互联网与社交新媒体报告系列显示

英国、美国和法国的消费者认为博客是最不被信任的葡萄酒信息来源。在美国，Facebook是网络中最受欢迎的信息来源。社交媒体成为消费者了解葡萄酒信息的重要载体：三分之二的受访美国葡萄酒经常性饮用者从互联网上获取葡萄酒信息，三分之一利用社交媒体作为信息来源。

获取您需要的葡萄酒消费者的最新动态，请垂询酒智。Vinitrac®全球消费者市场调查，最新一轮调查将在2011年3月将在10个国家启动。

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