Who is buying sustainable wines and why?
A lifestyle segmentation of German wine consumers

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Abstract

During the last years sustainability has been making slow but steady gains in society’s recognition. An increasing share of producers, retailers and consumers include sustainability in their considerations when it comes to the evaluation of consumer goods and food. There is no common definition of sustainability in the global wine business but nevertheless, sustainability has become part of the corporate and product branding in the world of wine. However, the extent to which the communication of sustainability adds value to consumer’s perception of wine producers or wines is largely unknown.

To analyse the reflection of sustainability in the consumption behavior of German wine consumers we carried out a representative online survey. The sample used (N=1.000), provided by an online sample provider, was representative for people who are at legal drinking age and drink wine at least once a year, concerning age, gender and state. Our quantitative analysis identifies and characterizes consumer segments whose buying behavior is determined by sustainability aspects.

Over the last decades wine producers all over the world have implemented the environmental, social and economic aspects of sustainability at various stages in their business behavior. Furthermore, sustainability has been integrated in their communication strategy. On the one hand, we find companies using their sustainable actions to reinforce their brands and for their market positioning. On the other hand we observe companies focusing on their products and putting claims concerning sustainability on the labels (KLOHR et al. 2012a). In addition, certification programs such as Sustainable Wine South Africa, Certified California Sustainable Winegrowing or FairChoice®, which was implemented in Germany in 2011, embody new extrinsic characteristics for consumers to evaluate wine (KLOHR et al. 2012b;
Due to the fact that extrinsic characteristics are predominant in the determination of wine prices (Lecocq/Visser 2006), it is crucial to know how wine consumers react on these new characteristics dealing with sustainability.

Regarding sustainable consumer behavior German wine consumers were analysed within the cross cultural studies of Remaud, Chabin and Müller (2010) as well as Loveless et al. (2009). Both studies provided aggregated results and segmentations on the multinational level. Mueller Loose and Remaud (2013) gave some more insights on their former findings on the national level concerning the awareness of sustainability claims. Loveless et al. (2009) found that sustainability affects the buying decision in all five evaluated regions. A cluster valuing sustainability was identified which encompasses 29% of the consumers in the covered regions (Loveless et al. 2009). Remaud, Chabin and Müller (2010) as well as Loveless et al. (2009) state that wine markets differ with regard to the size, and hence in the relevance, of the cluster which values sustainability. Concluding, further research on the national level is needed.

For our characterisation of sustainable German wine consumers we took several considerations into account. In their meta-study Verain et al. (2012) showed that, in general, sustainable food consumers could be segmented in ‘greens’, ‘potential greens’ and ‘non-greens’. Following Diamantopoulos et al. (2005) who stressed the limitation of socio-demographic characteristics we focussed alternative segmentation approaches to identify sustainable consumers. This coincides with Verain et al. (2012) who suggested the inclusion of personality, lifestyle and behavior in the segmentation for sustainable food consumers. Considering the above mentioned aspects we based our segmentation on both, wine buying behavior and involvement as well as personality characteristics and lifestyle concerning sustainability. Wine buying behavior is heavily linked with the concept of involvement (Lockshin et al. 1997; Charters/Pettigrew 2007; Brunner/Siegrist 2011). In our questionnaire involvement was covered by a statement battery using a 5 point scale with items based on Aurifeille et al. (2002), Brunner and Siegrist (2011) as well as Ghvanidze (2012). The concepts of personality characteristics and lifestyle concerning sustainability were identified by two more statement batteries. For this purpose items have been adopted which had been used to identify sustainability related topics in former research. Firstly, we took items from the concept of the ‘New Environmental Paradigm’ (NEP) into

3 UK, Ireland, USA (westcoast), Canada, Sweden
account which were provided by DUNLAP and VAN LIERE (1978) and revised by DUNLAP et al. (2000). Secondly, we integrated items from the concept of ‘Perceived Consumer Effectiveness’ (PCE) developed by STRAUGHAN and ROBERTS (1999) as well as items concerning the ‘Social Responsible Consumer Behavior’ (ROBERTS 1996). Finally, the widely discussed Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability (Lohas) represented by items of the INSTITUT FÜR MEDIEN UND KONSUMFORSCHUNG (2012) was integrated. All included segmentation concepts are listed in Table 1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Segmentation concept</th>
<th>Items based on</th>
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<tr>
<td>Involvement</td>
<td>AURIFELLE et al. (2002); BRUNNER/SIEGRIST (2011); GHVARANDZIE (2012)</td>
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<tr>
<td>New Environmental Paradigm</td>
<td>DUNLAP et al. (2000); [DUNLAP/VAN LIERE (1978)]</td>
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<td>Perceived Consumer Effectiveness</td>
<td>STRAUGHAN/ROBERTS (1999)</td>
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<td>Social Responsible Consumer Behavior</td>
<td>ROBERTS (1996)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lifestyle of Health and Sustainability (LOHAS)</td>
<td>INSTITUT FÜR MEDIEN UND KONSUMFORSCHUNG (2012)</td>
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</table>

Our findings promote the growing knowledge about sustainability and especially sustainable consumers in the global wine business. The interaction of involvement, personality and lifestyle provides a comprehensive insight of consumer behavior in the context of sustainability. The segmentation of our extensive database is still in progress. However, our first results lead to the identification of consumer clusters that should be aimed at by the growing number of sustainable wine producers. This is closely linked to product innovations in terms of ‘sustainable wine’ and the communication towards a growing number of consumers. With the more profound knowledge regarding specific consumer behavior ambitious sustainable wine producers could ensure their prospective business success.

**Key words:** Sustainability, lifestyle segmentation, involvement, consumer behavior, wine.

**Sources**


INSTITUT FÜR MEDIEN- UND KONSUMFORSCHUNG (2012), Typologie der Wünsche, Self-publishing.


