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WORD OF MOUTH IMPULSES

EVIDENCE FROM *WINES OF GERMANY*

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Word of Mouth Impulses. Evidence from Wines of Germany

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Publisher: Palgrave MacMillan in “Successful Social Media & Ecommerce Strategies in the Wine Industry”

Abstract

After decades of inflationary applied advertisement investments in tv-, print and online media, today's consumers are exhausted. They switch tv-channels when commercials are being broadcasted, they bin promotion material when checking the letter box, they erase online-newsletters without having read them. 'Wines of Germany' (Deutsches Weininstitut DWI) conquers the given situation with word-of-mouth (WOM) marketing and –communications work. Presentations, seminars, press-, online- and social media work as well as conceptual sales impulses for the on- and off trade or gastronomy all serve a common goal: credible WOM recommendations. Combined with innovative and emotional communications work, the WOM action led to an increase in public awareness for Wines of Germany. It correlates with a moderate but steady increase in domestic and export value in an extremely competitive market. On the long run, memorable encounters of real people in real life situations (WOM) play a more effective and therefore central role in the sought-after awareness upswing than solely advertisements.

It must be frustrating for marketing experts that it is increasingly difficult to actually reach people. Social media marketing (SMM) made us believe that there's an easy way to consumer's attention – but it turned out to be more complicated: first of all social media activities always ask for authenticity, it never works to simply utilize existing promotion posters vertically through all

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media channels. People are very sensitive when it comes to credibility. Secondly, e.g. Facebook posts are not automatically being projected in your peer's timeline any more (without paying for it). The more effective way is to reach influencers and multipliers through memorable situations, in order to make them tell your story/ spread your word (WOM). Therefore, DWI focuses on "ambassadors" - internally within the branch as well as externally in relations to the public – in order to initiate as many WOM impulses as possible.

Conventional WOM mechanisms with social media relevance

"Generation Riesling, young, innovative, open-minded"

An example with increasing global WOM attention is the so called Generation Riesling a supra-regional movement of Germany's young wine makers and professionals¹ initiated by DWI.² The group embraces 500 individuals under the age of 35 who regularly sign up as volunteer exhibitors for wine tasting events in domestic and international metropolis. Young, innovative, open-minded: this is the impression that members of "Generation Riesling" project at dozens of annual events in Germany and abroad. Visitors from the trade have a good time visiting these events, tasting wines and recommending them among their circle of wine professionals and influencers. A great side effect: guests post their snapshots via social media networks and create a "buzz" that has a vertical communication effect from wine experts via wine trade to consumers.

Originally, DWI had initiated the movement in the "German House" in London (2006) in order to provide young members of the wine scene – a group quite distinct from existing regional interest groups – a national and international press friendly presentation platform. It soon turned out that WOM as well as social media effects were even greater than hoped for. At numerous occasions,

¹ Generations Riesling (2015), www.generation-riesling.com

² DWI, Deutsches Weininstitut www.deutscheweine.de i.e. The German Wine Institute www.germanwines.de i.e. Wines of Germany www.winesofgermany.co.uk USA www.germanwineusa.com) is the German wine industry's central marketing organization responsible for the generic promotion of the quality and sales of German wine domestically and abroad. It's part of a network (13 international offices worldwide) working on behalf of the interests of the German wine industry. Its business operations are supervised by the Deutscher Weinfonds (DWF, or German Wine Fund). The German Wine Fund and the German Wine Institute are actively involved in the coordination of generic promotion as prescribed by Federal law.

members of the contribution free initiative acted and still act collectively as ambassadors of Germany's modern, first-class and dynamic wine industry, and realize that it doesn't compromise their individuality. While the name highlights Riesling, the German variety currently "en vogue" and thus most likely to capture attention at home and abroad, Generation Riesling does not exclude growers who focus on other traditional varieties, such as Pinots³, Silvaner, Lemberger, Gewuerztraminer and so on.

The first ever annual Generation Riesling workshop in the summer of 2009 added impetus to the concept for the open-minded, likable and still growing group. The movement started out with some 80 wine-growers at the time but soon won the applause of the entire wine industry and press. The (social) media reach⁴ exceeded expectations in the first year already. Generation Riesling was and still is a fabulous WOM success, initiating lots of press enquiries and consumer's interest. The movement works in two effective ways: internally within the branch – because it motivates young winemakers to team up, taking on DWI support and network, as well as externally towards the press and individual consumers. The DWI sensed this through growing numbers of interview and press enquiries at DWI headquarters, at wine fairs and through social media involvement regarding the topic. Questions surrounding the movement rained upon DWI domestically but also from the USA, Britain, The Netherlands and other export markets, where – until then (2009) – no one had promoted the group actively yet. Hence, the success of the movement was generated by conventional word-of-mouth (WOM) recommendation in those markets. Wine "geeks" discovered Generation Riesling first and spread the word to the trade, the special interest press, the daily press and consequently consumers. Ever since the start of this DWI campaign, publications and online-"hits" for Germany's two most important grape varieties are consistently on the rise: Riesling and Pinot Noir (Spätburgunder).⁵

³ Germany is the third biggest Pinot Noir producer worldwide, see <http://www.deutscheweine.de/service/downloads/>

⁴ Romana Echensperger in Kölner Stadtanzeiger, Generation Riesling, February 12th 2015; Ulrich Traub in Tagesspiegel Berlin, Generation Riesling räumt auf, October 27th 2015

⁵ GOOGLE trends: Riesling <https://www.google.de/trends/explore#q=riesling> and PinotNoir <https://www.google.de/trends/explore#q=Pinot%20Noir> long term media reach is on the rise

In addition to generating fresh ideas and new marketing concepts for the future through annual summits, a corresponding website (www.generation-riesling.com) was launched. In the meantime it provides winemaker's profiles, wine-event announcements as well as news to some 500 registered members from Germany's 13 wine-growing regions. It is also a research tool for journalists within Germany and worldwide. Monika Reule, executive managing director of The German Wine Institute: „We hope that as many young players as possible will continue to join the Generation Riesling movement. They are the ambassadors we are counting on to embody and project the modern image of today's Wines of Germany.”

Promoting journalists, bloggers and seminar participants

Another group of effective word-of-mouth influencers are some 3.000 participants of wine seminars that are being trained by DWI tutors each year. Most of them are members of the trade as well as the hotel and catering industry and have a lot of exposure to consumers. Therefore, in all of these 175 to 200 seminars per year, the domestic as well as international journalists and bloggers will reach an even greater number of wine interested consumers during their daily working routine. Consequently, DWI decided to hire another tutor who will train trade representatives worldwide in order to promote further WOM situations. International seminar participants in the hotel and catering industry of global metropolis are important multipliers for spreading the word in favor of Wines of Germany. Educating these professionals by means of moderated tastings, trainings and with statistical data as well as regional and touristic information, DWI shapes the image of German wines they will pass on to their customers.⁶

Seeing the respective media and social media impact the support of multipliers can have, The German Wine Institute (DWI) offered bloggers an equal treatment from 2010 onwards. Therefore, this paper will not differentiate between full-fledged press representatives and food and wine

⁶ Robert Mai (2011), Der Herkunftslandeffekt: Eine kritische Würdigung der State of the Art, Journal für BWL, ch3.1., pp 91-121.

bloggers in respect to WOM marketing.⁷ The media channel these multipliers publish their findings in (newspapers, magazines, online-journals or blogs) have two multiplying dimensions: one is within the scope of their peers, the other is the one reaching their audience/readers, wine enthusiasts and connoisseurs. Their recommendations might be spread orally or by means of social media posts to their followers. The more DWI provides this network with value added information and topical impulses, the better. DWI offers a helping hand in terms of research work to bloggers as well as journalists in a noiseless and inattentive way. The relations are consistently being cultivated in order to achieve best WOM effects. DWI's press department interacts with numerous editors, suggesting topical issues that keep wine lovers informed and help to gain new consumer interest in Germany's wine growing regions, wine making as well as the product itself. In the early summer of 2015 for example, DWI published figures regarding E-commerce i.e. the online wine trade.⁸ This press release was actively discussed thereafter and found its way into big newspapers and online forums.

In order to promote these multipliers and initiate new WOM impulses, DWI schedules and carries out some 50 press- and blogger-trips through Germany's wine growing regions each year. Each trip has a certain topic, like "The Pinot Noir Miracle" or "The young Generation Riesling" and "Steep Slopes". Furthermore, it has also paid off to reach out to special interest groups like motoring and motorbike enthusiasts⁹ or female gourmets, seeing that most shopping decisions are made by women. All these examples plus additional media relevant recommendations¹⁰ and vast stock material on offer, result in an enduring media attention regarding the niche topic of wine. Also, teaming up with the film¹¹ and soccer industry¹² initiates countless word-of-mouth successes

⁷ See below for further electronic-word-of-mouth (eWOM) examples

⁸ DWI published statistical figures ascertained by GfK (Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung), stating that only five percent in value and three percent in wine sale volume are generated by online-trade/E-commerce

⁹ special press trip for motorcyclists achieved sustainable media coverage and reached a "new audience", recommending trips to wine growing regions in Germany.

¹⁰ e.g. the delicacy of asparagus vegetable and corresponding Silvaner wine in spring, Rosé wine in summer, recipes for "Reds" and more, see also Deutsches Weininstitut homepage <http://www.deutscheweine.de/service/rezepte/> as well as tumblr account <http://deutschesweininstitut.tumblr.com/>

¹¹ DWI cooperates with "Berlinale", Germany's Oscars Awards

¹² Wines of Germany are being served in VIP Lounges of DFB Premier League Matches (men & women)

at stadions and movie theatres nationwide. Numerous Campaigns¹³ with strong partners of the trade, gastronomy and tourism¹⁴ guarantee a high frequency of headlines and a growing public awareness for Wines of Germany.

In doing so, DWI initiates over 3.000 (IVW approved¹⁵) articles in the supra-regional press, exceeding media reach to 300 million copies/readers per year growing in double-digit rates p.a.¹⁶ This figure comprises domestic newspaper publications within Germany only.¹⁷ However, figures from the three most important export markets for German wine, the USA, Great Britain and the Netherlands, backup this data. Solely Wines of Germany USA monthly media reach sums up to 235.000 Facebook plus 115.000 addressees in other media as well as additional 20.000 page views of the respective website germanwineusa.com. Due to its' consistent and sustainable communications work, DWI also notes considerable growth in media attention for Wines of Germany in China, Scandinavia and Switzerland. This is important, regarding the very competitive global market.

Confirmed statistical blogger data is hard to collect. However, seeing the business impact¹⁸ wine bloggers can achieve, it is not surprising that the Top10 representatives generate more visits (per month) than Germany's individual wine magazines sell hard copies.¹⁹ Additionally, the number of individual food and wine blogs is still on the rise. By providing initial content aid (texts/graphics) the roof organization DWI offers the right "humus" for innovative portals and keeps in touch with communicative players, journalists and bloggers alike. The informal consumer-approach of bloggers is perceived very authentically by wine lovers worldwide²⁰. It does not contradict but

¹³ see footer of www.deutscheweine.de, e.g. "Weinentdecker werden", "WeinTour", "Picknick with Generation Riesling Bicycles", "Riesling LOUNGES" in metropolitan upmarket hotels and popular bars, Kochshows etc.

¹⁴ GNTB, German National Tourist Board www.germany.travel

¹⁵ see IVW figures, German Advertising Federation, IVW is a non-profit, neutral and independent organization, arranged as a joint industry committee JIC. All participants of the German advertising industry are represented in the Board of Directors. www.ivw.eu/englische-version

¹⁶ Annual report (2014), The German Wine Institute, Deutsches Weininstitut DWI, p. 19-20

¹⁷ DWI publishes at least 50 press releases p.a. solely within Germany plus an additional 100 worldwide

¹⁸ J. Freitas Santos, Motivations and Characteristics of International Wine Bloggers, AAWE working paper No. 92, www.wine-economics.org

¹⁹ see IVW figures, German Advertising Federation, see aboves footnote describing IVW

²⁰ For further reading: J. Freitag Santon, „Motivation and Characeristics of International Wine Bloggers”, Business and Accounting Institute (ISCAP), Polytechnic Institute of Porto (IPP), Portugal. and NIPE/EEG/Minho University, Braga, Portugal. Rua Jaime Lopes de Amorim, Portugal 4465 S. Mamede de Infesta

complement the professional work of the (wine) press. Both influence buying decisions preliminary. In many cases, their influence reaches far beyond the inner circle of wine geeks. Readers share articles and tasting notes in print and online via numerous social media channels. Therefore, DWI's press trips -releases and pictures alike, can be seen as communicative breeding ground. Its' diverse activities including collaborative exhibition stands at international wine fairs²¹ result in countless word-of-mouth referrals by journalists, bloggers and their respective readers.

Regional guides, ever more professional WOM initiators

Regional wine guides are another dedicated group of WOM multipliers. Only ten years ago, most of these guides were selfmade speakers that simply indulged their passion for wine. Nowadays, most of the individual 13 wine growing regions²² i.e. the respective regional wine marketing associations in Germany educate their guides professionally²³ and their tours are no longer financed by tips solely but cost a modest rate. Forseeing this development, the DWI initiated an annual supra-regional meeting in 2010 to promote knowledge transfer. These gatherings also resulted in strong communication networks that got further PR support by a topical website set up by DWI. The roof organization continues to assist the guides consistently with tour-relevant aspects of wine-history, -culture and other tourism-related facts. For an example, DWI provides wine guides with brochures and booklets containing specific points of interest in Germanys wine growing regions. These embrace DWI campaigns like "Landmarks of Wine Culture"²⁴ and "Famous Vinyard Sights".²⁵ Both series were established with the help of an independent jury of experts and decision makers in tourism and the press. They pleased the desire of the public to get ascertained pieces of information for planning and successfully conducting outdoor activities.

²¹ ProWein Düsseldorf, Vinexpo Bordeaux, Sial Shanghai

²² Ahr, Baden, Franken, Hessische Bergstraße, Mittelrhein, Mosel, Nahe, Pfalz, Rheingau, Rheinhessen, Württemberg

²³ Approved/certified training-duration varies between four weeks and several months. see list of regional wine guide associations <http://www.deutscheweine.de/tourismus/weingastefuehrer/weingastefuehrer-kultur-und-weinbotschafter/>

²⁴ The German Wine Institute's engl. homepage, "Landmarks of Wine Culture" campaign <http://www.germanwines.de/tourism/landmarks-of-wine-culture/>

²⁵ The German Wine Institute's engl. homepage, "Famous Vinyard Sites" campaign <http://www.germanwines.de/tourism/famous-vineyard-sites/>

With the DWI support as well as the dedicated efforts made by numerous regional players, thousands of tourists and consumers experience Wines of Germany year by year.

Spreading the word with the help of wine guides has a double WOM effect: the participants tell their friends about spectacular tours alongside steep vineyards and during entertaining tastings. In doing so, each of Germany's 13 "wine regional brands" gets strengthened by WOM activities.²⁶

Ever since the wine tourism activities experienced the described measures of professionalization, consumers interest as well as revenue and press awareness have picked up pace. The effectiveness of comprised WOM phenomena can be traced by growing page impressions as well as visits regarding wine touristic topics on DWI's homepage www.deutscheweine.de as well as annual figures of the provincial governments. Leading signs for the future are very promising. This encouraged the very dynamic region of Rheinhessen to consider planning a wine entertainment park providing information and entertainment to promote wine knowledge.²⁷

Germany's Wine Queen: well educated, effective and likable PR professional

Possibly the most unique representative of the branch, Germany's Wine Queen symbolizes a 67-year-old tradition on the one hand side as well as the modern and forward thinking side of Germany's thriving wine branch on the other hand side. She is a brilliant educated wine expert and an empathetic ambassador taking on some 250 events in which she plays an active role each year. Germany's Wine Queen gets supported not only by DWI but by two official Wine Princesses being equally well trained in wine market knowledge and presentations skills who step in in cases of double bookings. Every fall a new supra-regional German Wine Queen gets elected among the 13 regional Winequeen candidates. An 80-head-jury consisting of wine- and press experts judge her bilingual (German/English) free speech skills as well as her wine wisdom and presentation abilities. During

²⁶ e.g. "Mosel" is a very strong brand, see Prof. Dr. Bernd Eisenstein (2013), Destination Brand 13, Einzelbericht Mosel i.A. des Deutschen Weininstituts, FH Westküste, Hochschule für Wirtschaft und Technik, Institut für Management und Tourismus (IMT), ch 6, p. 71.

²⁷ Stephanie Schreiber, FH Worms, University of Applied Science, M.A. Thesis "Weintourismus und Edutainment" 15. 01. 2013

two separate live TV shows²⁸, the jury poses questions on complex issues related to wine; the candidates are challenged to respond competently, clearly, and concisely – and to do so with the confidence and charm expected of an ambassador for German wine.

The public perceives German Wine Queens as professional young women who are dedicated to German wine and capable of competently dealing with nearly every subject related to wine. This distinguishes them from other representatives of agrarian branches that try to profit of the Wine Queens media reach and publicity. The Wine Queens themselves view their position as ambassadors on behalf of German wine, as representatives of a wine culture that is rich in tradition, yet thoroughly contemporary and open minded. Their role is not that of a salesperson, but rather that of a communicator. She provides fans, the press as well as the general publicity with word-of-mouth (WOM) impulses on a daily basis. Her consumer relevant information reaches from the vine to the glass, to trends and touristic recommendations. She also addresses controversial issues, such as the criteria for wine quality or the pros and cons of wine pleasure, to name but a few.

Election guidelines stipulate that all candidates must be able to demonstrate a strong commitment to German wine. This could stem from wine-related professional training, family heritage or ties to local viticulture. This is to ensure that incumbents have the professional knowledge and understanding required for the job. Yet, the term of every German Wine Queen is unique in that it is marked by the distinctive personality with which she fulfills her official duties and WOM-impulses.

DWI coordinates the schedule of these young female professionals at home and abroad. The German Wine Queen, for example, is “on the road” some 200 days of her year in office. Monika Reule, managing director of the wine institute emphasizes: “We take the office of the German wine queen and princesses seriously. As ambassadors of German wine, they are sent around the world for all kinds of events, and they must be capable of making a perfect appearance on the international stage.” A year as “German Wine Queen” means personal sacrifice on many fronts; enduring separation from

²⁸ SWR Television’s respective homepage <http://www.swr.de/weinkoenigin/-/id=13831236/110qktz/>

family and friends, putting hobbies on hold, and even taking a time-out in the midst of professional training and/or a career. Only those who are willing to accept these terms “in the name of German wine,” and who are willing to tirelessly and enthusiastically share their fascination for German wine – each and every day for a year – can make the grade and reach countless people.

In each of the above exemplary cases, DWI activities follow the goal to promote thousands of encounters of "real" and interested people who have multiplicity potentials due to their function as guide, trainer, press representative or dedicated wine enthusiast. Their WOM-work in being supported, and in many cases initiated, by DWI contents, promotion materials and network.

Successful electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) impulses

The online awareness in favor of Wines of Germany has quadrupled during the past few years²⁹.

This was made possible through a combination of eWOM actions that commenced in the year of 2009 and resulted in a slight but steady growth of export value:

TABLE 2. Increase in export value (EURO per hl) corresponds with increase in SMM and eWOM



²⁹ see (e.g. Google) Analytics tools as well as website rankings

Intensified website output

Starting in the spring of 2009, DWI increased the frequency of weekly online articles, mailers and consequently website contents of its 15 websites³⁰ and 20 campaign portals. These unfolded "fire starter" effects in several ways: internally, they extended and strengthened the network within the branch reflected in a higher percentage of press releases being published by regional wine promotion organisations. Externally, i.e. in respect to the general public this action made the branch more visible in the ocean of daily news. A tender bud at first, this increase in online-publicity was further expanded by widening the range of addressees. Traditionally, DWI had concentrated on mainly communicating with professional multipliers like the press and wine experts (trainers)³¹. However, the intensified online work showed within a few years that more and more average consumers with little wine knowledge discovered and reacted to DWI's website contents as well. Seasonal recipes with matching wines (e.g., "Perfect Pairings") as well as up to date wine event recommendations support this development ever since and develop ever growing horizontal eWOM phenomena. Last but not least, an intensified reporting of Wines of Germany presentations worldwide, respective awards and big media mentions strengthened the communicative success. In addition to globally renowned prizes for outstanding Riesling qualities, Pinot Noirs from Germany won groundbreaking awards in London and Hong Kong, for example. This resulted in excessive media coverage and sustainable interest of the press.

Following the example of DWI's headquarter in Bodenheim, near Great Wine Capital of Mainz, the 13 individual information offices followed down the path of higher publications frequency worldwide. After half a decade this eWOM-strategy paid off not only in media statistics expanding social media involvement but also in growing value per liter - even in very difficult export

³⁰ See dropdown menu in header of The German Wine Institute's homepage www.deutscheweine.de

³¹ e.g. The German Wine Academy

markets.

Social Media for greater reach and improved involvement

It was only a little but labor intensive step to take advantage of social media portals in order to create even more eWOM impulses.³² The German Wine Institute's ("Deutsches Weininstitut") first Facebook activities commenced in 2009, and the development of a dozen fan sites and another dozen of lively Facebook "groups" has been breathtaking since then. Given the fact that DWI had to work with 50 percent of the regular budgets at the time, the worldwide "social media miracle" was the right horse to ride. Some seven years down the road, DWI Facebook fans sum up to 100.000 fans³³ and reach millions of people in a very authentic way, constantly initiating eWOM recommendations for wine geeks as well as average people on a daily basis.³⁴ It is hereby important to note that buying decisions are more and more influenced by e-commerce and especially recommendations by online users rather than conventional promotion work.³⁵ There is an invisible shift to eWOM going on. DWI has to make sure that the engagement with the Wines of Germany topic in general and the preliminary purchase decision in concrete is being promoted and conveyed as conscientiously as possible. DWI's social media marketing (SMM) hereby revives the way multipliers get involved with and comment on Wines of Germany.³⁶

When running successful global campaigns like "RieslingWeeks" and "31 days of Riesling", conventional DWI press and online work gets flanked by Facebook-posts and ads (Wines of Germany USA). The latter one will have to play a greater role in the near future in order to remain

³² out of all DWI social media channels this paper will concentrate on Facebook, twitter and YouTube as well as a selection of photo-sites like Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest and Tumblr.

³³ including Facebook accounts of all DWI information offices in the USA and elsewhere

³⁴ Peter Pal Zubcsek, Quant Mark Econ (2011) 9:71–107, DOI 10.1007/s11129-010-9093-9
"Advertising to a social network"

³⁵ Hans-Peter Fröschle, Lis, Bettina; Korchmar, Simon (2015), HMD Praxis der Wirtschaftsinformatik, Digitales Empfehlungsmarketing. Konzeption, Theorien und Determinanten zur Glaubwürdigkeit des Electronic Word-of-Mouth (EWOM), ch 52, p.314–315, Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden 2015

³⁶ Michael Möller (2011), Online-Kommunikationsverhalten von Multiplikatoren, Persönlichkeitsspezifische Analyse und Steigerung des Innovationsinput über User Generated Content, pp 32-69, Springer Verlag

visible on this mass portal. DWI's quality analyses showed that there are times during the week when posts are more successful than others. For example, monday mornings are great for sharing news, friday afternoons are not. Furthermore, individual channels ask for individual proceedings. In the case of twitter five posting per day are fine, in the case of facebook this might be too much.³⁷

The eWOM successes are only partly foreseeable: A simple quote like "Riesling is the Answer" (white letters on black ground) turned out to be as effective as high resolution scenic pictures or happy faces enjoying a glass of wine in good company. Quoting celebrities helps of course: the statement of premier league (1. Bundesliga) soccer coach Pep Guardiola that he "likes to enjoy a glass of Riesling the night before important matches", was shared 133 times within hours, reaching a six digit number of readers. In this particular case one post, executed in seconds, reached more people on one day than all DWI websites (and respective time consuming editing work) could achieve collectively. A similar quota of "shares" was achieved by stating that the Pope (Benedict at the time) is a Riesling fan or by involving users in creating picture galleries (blooming, heat wave, harvest a.s.o.).

The electronic way of sharing news has intensified wine communications also in respect to the ambassador "German Wine Queen" and consumer reactions. Her worldwide activities are being commented promptly by followers of the DWI's respective fansite ("Deutsche Weinkönigin").³⁸ In terms of online interaction and media reach, her Facebook postings are more effective than her homepage³⁹ which offers basic information about her work and that of her forerunners.

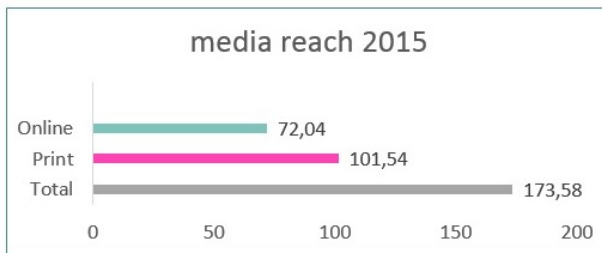
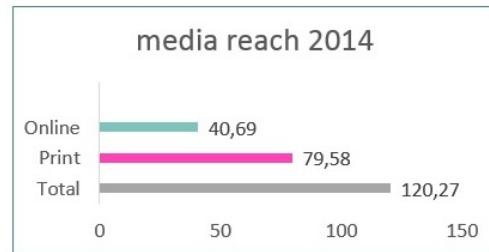
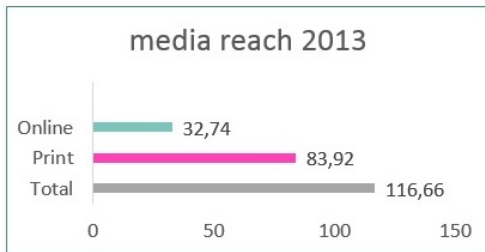
³⁷ Tobias Gillen (2015), <http://www.tobiasgillen.de/social-media-frequenz-posting-anzahl/>, date accessed august 14th 2015; for further reading (German language) Alexander Schreck (2013), *Weinmarketing – Das Praxishandbuch, Marketingpraxis und Anwendungen der neuen Medien für Weinerzeuger und Weinhändler*, 1st edn, Verlag Gebrüder Kornmayer.

³⁸ Katharina Fladung (2015), *Auswirkungen des Kommunikationsinstruments Deutsche Weinkönigin in Nichtanbaugebieten am Beispiel von Hamburg*, B.A. Thesis IWW Internationale Wein Wirtschaft, Hochschule Geisenheim University, ch 4.4., p. 24.

³⁹ by factor 10x-100x, e.g. during the election night (LIVE tv show) every fall, her homepage may be visited 30.000 times but her Facebook media reach will be ten times as high.



Media share and reach of Deutsches Weininstitut/ The German Wine Institute (3rd quarter 2015)



In the case of the short message service twitter, the combined DWI channels keep in touch with some 30.000 multipliers. Many of which are professional PR representatives, communicators or members of the press. It's a perfect tool for an umbrella organisation and central marketing and communications body to promote and expand the network. There are also some rules to obey in order to get the most benefit out of the tweets. The intelligent use of so called hashtags (#Riesling), pictures and premium content add value to the readers' eyes and consequently increase the chance of getting a "Retweet" or "Fav" (Favorit). These interactions are eWOM-recommendations which multiply the range of the individual tweet. At the same time, these eWOM impulses inspire the audience to pick up Wines of Germany topics on their respective communications channels as well, boosting the basic noise and demand for German wines to an even greater extent. In many cases a circular eWOM communication process is being initiated by DWI press releases that get spread via twitter or other social media channels. For an example, the consumers'/readers' reaction to DWI's tweets may inspire the Institute's headquarter to spin offs or even genuine new and

additional tweets who's topics were brought up by the community.

The trend to visual communication increased the significance of moving pictures as well as photographs. DWI screens these via YouTube.com/deutscheweine and www.oechsle.tv.

Furthermore, the public's increasing and seemingly never ending desire for graphics is met by numerous photo sites (e.g. Instagram, Pinterest, Flickr, tumblr⁴⁰). All of these DWI channels initiate eWOM actions by transmitting emotional moments, suggesting to share these with family and friends. Effective graphics as displayed via DWI's tumblr account allure either directly or subliminally. However, the work involved in using these boundless channels most effectively exceed most human resource capacities by far.⁴¹

In the case of YouTube the DWI's authentic low budget production ("How to pronounce German wine") turned out to be viral within this topical niche. However, it is foreseeable that more and more video content will be necessary in order to maintain and expand eWOM activities in the future. In cooperation with Geisenheim University, DWI realized an international food and wine pairings series as well as a wine knowledge series with student actors. However, projects with young academics will not substitute but complement professional videos, e.g. portraying Germany's 13 individual wine regions. Respective clips are being reproduced in high resolution standard, more event videos will be added continuously and clips explaining month-by-month vineyard work will be promoted.⁴² So far, DWI YouTube videos are called 100.000 per year comprising 200.000 minutes of wine information and entertainment. The gender of the audience currently lies by 75 percent male and 25 percent female. The Facebook audience is balanced 50/50.

⁴⁰ see The German Wine Institute's tumblr account: <http://deutschesweininstitut.tumblr.com/>

⁴¹ Christina Olinger (2014), B.A. Thesis "Visuelle Kommunikation in der Weinbranche - Nutzung von Bildplattformen am Beispiel der Deutschen Weininstitut GmbH", Hochschule Neu-Ulm

⁴² DWI's YouTube Channel (2015), <https://www.youtube.com/deutscheweine> date accessed august 14th 2015

eWOM through third parties like the GNTB

Another example of DWI's eWOM provisions is the allocation of premium content to third parties. Be it in the communications, cultural, culinary, fine glass industry or the touristic sector (to name just a few), one objective is to find and cooperate with strong partners. The German National Tourist Board (GNTB) is one of them⁴³ and supports some of DWI's campaigns and communicative goals⁴⁴. With its' 30 individual language versions, GNTB homepages are effective tools to spread DWI's generic marketing messages. A formal cooperation was outlined in 2012 focusing on some of DWI's evolving (Switzerland) and established export markets (UK, The Netherlands, USA). DWI collected and selected texts and graphics that are being displayed on GNTB-Websites. Both parties recommend the other one via deep links and value added content⁴⁵. In doing so, the online media reach gets expanded even further among a related but different group of outdoor activists.⁴⁶

Conclusion

Creating and preparing WOM and eWOM impulses can be very time consuming and is a Sisyphean task, be it in event marketing or authentic digital communications work. However, the prospects are enormous when concentrating on promising campaigns, contents and the right network of strong communication partners. In the case of DWI's race to more global consumer awareness, "old school" WOM as well as eWOM recommendations turned out to strengthen Germany's wine branch to a considerable extent - internally and externally. Arguably, these strategic measures were much more effective than sole advertisements. Authentic, dedicated and sustainable communications work, be it conventional or electronic, put Wines of Germany in a

⁴³ Other partners: SELTERS Premium Mineral Water, ZWIESEL Kristallglas, Hochschule Geisenheim University, Regional Marketing Associations (GWW), IHK Trier, Germany's Wine Export Association.

⁴⁴ spreading the word of Germany's versatile grape varieties, low in alcohol (see Wine in Moderation) but full bodied and aromatic wine styles as well as unique wine touristic highlights. Germany is worldwide no.1 in Riesling, producing more than half of the world's Riesling production, second when it comes to PinotGris and third in PinotNoir volume on a global scale.

⁴⁵ places to stay, "wine hotels", events, Landmarks of Wine Culture

⁴⁶ Premium Content is also being shared with SWR Television (Südwestrundfunk), DW (Deutsche Welle), ZEIT Verlag, TheLocal (Germany's News in English) to name just a few.

strong position and a respectable online ranking, ready to take on new market challenges. These might lie in governing radio frequency identification (RFID) in favor of eWOM and therefore ever more precise communication towards influencers.⁴⁷

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Publisher: Palgrave MacMillan in “Successful Social Media & Ecommerce Strategies in the Wine Industry”

⁴⁷ For further reading: Dag Sletteå, RFID – the “Next Step” in Consumer - Product Relations or Orwellian Nightmare? Challenges for Research and Policy, Springer Science + Business Media, LLC. 2009