

# Consumer expectations and values: The role of digitalization in understanding and meeting consumer needs in the wine industry

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**Abstract.** This review begins by examining the changing expectations and values of wine consumers, focusing on the growing interest in sustainability, authenticity, and health and wellness. The authors then discuss how digitalization can help the wine industry better understand and meet these expectations and values. The review highlights several examples of digital technologies being used to gather data on consumer preferences and behaviour, including social media monitoring, sentiment analysis, and consumer surveys. The authors also discuss the importance of developing digital tools and platforms that facilitate direct communication between wine producers and consumers, allowing for personalised marketing and sales strategies. The review concludes by emphasising the importance of adopting a customer-centric approach to digitalization in the wine industry, which requires a deep understanding of consumer psychology and preferences. The authors argue that by leveraging digital technologies to gain insights into consumer needs and values, the wine industry can create more authentic and meaningful products and experiences, while also driving growth and profitability.

## 1 Introduction

### 1.1 Background and rationale of the study

The wine industry, like many other sectors, is undergoing significant transformation in response to changes in consumer behaviour and technological advancements. The contemporary wine consumer is increasingly sophisticated and discerning, expecting more from their wine than just good taste. There is a growing interest in the wine's provenance, its sustainability practices, its authenticity, and its potential health and wellness benefits [1]. As such, understanding and meeting these changing expectations and values have become a pressing concern for the wine industry.

Digitalization is emerging as a critical tool to aid this understanding. With the pervasiveness of digital technology and the increasing importance of online channels for purchasing decisions, digitalization offers the wine industry new ways to gather data on consumer preferences and behaviour, and to communicate with consumers directly [2]. It also provides the potential for

creating personalised marketing and sales strategies, thus enhancing customer engagement and satisfaction.

However, the role of digitalization in understanding and meeting consumer needs in the wine industry remains understudied. The majority of existing research focuses on digitalization's technical and operational aspects, neglecting the consumer-centric perspective [3]. This review aims to address this gap in the literature, providing a comprehensive exploration of how digitalization can help the wine industry better understand and meet consumer expectations and values.

### 1.2 Objectives of the review

The primary objectives of this review are threefold.

Firstly, to explore the changing expectations and values of wine consumers, with a particular focus on the growing interest in sustainability, authenticity, and health and wellness.

Secondly, to examine how digitalization can assist the wine industry in understanding and meeting these evolving expectations and values. We will review various digital tools being used to gather data on consumer preferences and behaviour, including social media monitoring, sentiment analysis, and consumer surveys. We will also discuss the development of digital platforms that facilitate direct communication between wine producers and consumers, enabling personalised marketing and sales strategies.

Lastly, we will argue that leveraging digital technologies to gain insights into consumer needs and values can help the wine industry create more authentic, personalised and meaningful products and experiences, while also driving growth and profitability.

## **2 Changing expectations and values of wine consumers**

### **2.1 The increasing interest in sustainability, authenticity, and health and wellness in the wine industry**

The values and expectations of wine consumers are in flux, shaped by broader societal trends and individual consumer attitudes. One notable trend is the increasing importance of sustainability in wine production. Consumers, particularly those in younger demographics, are more conscious of environmental issues and are thus more likely to support brands that demonstrate sustainable practices [4]. For example, even though they are not yet the majority, there is an increasing enthusiasm for organic and biodynamic wines, highlighting an interest in environmental stewardship and reducing chemical use in viticulture.

Similarly, authenticity is becoming a key value for wine consumers. This trend is driven by a desire for transparency and a deeper connection with the product. Consumers increasingly want to know the story behind the wine - its provenance, the winemaking process, and the people involved [5]. Wine producers who can demonstrate authenticity in their branding and storytelling can thereby establish a deeper connection with their customers.

Furthermore, the focus on health and wellness is another emerging trend in the wine industry. The health-conscious consumer is seeking wines with lower alcohol content, fewer additives, and potential health benefits, such as resveratrol's antioxidant properties in red wine.

### **2.2 Impact of these changing expectations on the wine industry**

These shifting consumer expectations and values have significant implications for the wine industry. Producers must adapt their strategies to meet the demands of the modern wine consumer.

The rising demand for sustainable wines necessitates a re-evaluation of viticulture and production practices.

This may involve adopting organic or biodynamic farming methods, reducing water usage, or minimising carbon emissions. Producers may also need to communicate their sustainability efforts more effectively to consumers, as research indicates that consumers are often unaware of the sustainable practices used in wine production [6].

The desire for authenticity profoundly influences how wine producers brand and market their products, necessitating transparency and a story that resonates with consumers' yearning for authenticity. This craving stems from a consumer's need to connect with real, meaningful experiences and products that embody genuine craftsmanship, a sense of place, and a rich history [7].

Transparency is central to this process. Consumers are increasingly interested in understanding the provenance of their wine, including where the grapes were grown, the methods used in cultivation, and the philosophy behind the winemaking process (Gokcekus & Finnegan, 2016). Wine producers need to be forthcoming with this information, providing detailed descriptions on labels, websites, and promotional materials. Transparency builds trust and assures consumers that the wine they are purchasing is genuine and authentically crafted.

In addition to transparency, creating narratives that resonate with consumers' desire for authentic experiences is another critical aspect of branding and marketing in the wine industry. These narratives should weave a compelling story about the wine's origin, the winemaker's passion and dedication, and the unique characteristics of the wine. They can be conveyed through various channels, such as product descriptions, brand stories on websites, social media posts, and even through virtual or in-person tours of vineyards and wineries. Such narratives can help consumers form a deeper connection with the wine, making their consumption experience more meaningful and authentic [5].

In essence, as the pursuit of authenticity continues to shape consumer behaviour, wine producers need to adapt their branding and marketing strategies accordingly. By providing transparent information about their wines and crafting narratives that resonate with consumers' desire for authentic experiences, they can better meet the evolving expectations of modern wine consumers.

The health and wellness trend, while still limited in its influence in the wine and spirits industry, is increasingly driving changes in the types of wines produced, much like it has transformed other industries. This trend has seen consumers becoming more conscious of their consumption habits and the impact of these habits on their health. Consequently, there is a growing demand for wines that align with these health-conscious values [8].

One manifestation of this trend is the development of low-alcohol or alcohol-free wines. A growing number of consumers, particularly among younger demographics, are reducing their alcohol intake for health reasons. In response, some wineries are starting to produce wines with lower alcohol content or even alcohol-free versions of their wines. While these products still constitute a small segment of the market, their popularity is expected to increase as consumer awareness and acceptance grow.

Reducing the use of additives is another way in which the health and wellness trend is influencing wine production. Consumers are increasingly interested in natural, organic, and biodynamic wines, which are produced with minimal intervention and without synthetic additives. The demand for these wines is driven by the perception that they are healthier and more environmentally friendly. As a result, many wineries are adopting more sustainable and natural winemaking practices [9].

Lastly, some wineries are promoting the potential health benefits of their wines, particularly those made from grape varieties that are high in antioxidants, such as resveratrol. These wineries are capitalising on research suggesting that moderate wine consumption can have health benefits, including cardiovascular health and longevity [10].

As the health and wellness trend continues to gain momentum, the wine and spirits industry will need to adapt to meet these changing consumer preferences. However, this adaptation must be carefully managed, as it involves not only technical challenges but also regulatory and communication considerations.

### **3 Role of digitalization in meeting consumer expectations and values**

#### **3.1 Understanding the digitization process in the wine industry**

Digitalization refers to the use of digital technologies to change a business model and provide new revenue and value-producing opportunities [11]. In the context of the wine industry, digitalization encompasses a broad range of technologies and practices, from e-commerce and digital marketing to data analytics and customer relationship management systems.

Digitalization, the process of leveraging digital technologies to improve various aspects of a business, has tremendous potential for the wine industry, especially in understanding and meeting the evolving consumer expectations and values. This transformation offers multiple benefits, but its success hinges on adopting a customer-centric approach, which places the consumer at the core of all digital strategies.

Through digitalization, wine producers can gather valuable data on consumer preferences and behaviours. Digital tools such as social media platforms, online surveys, and sentiment analysis offer rich sources of data that can provide insights into what consumers value in wine, their purchasing habits, and their responses to different marketing strategies [12].

For instance, social media monitoring can reveal consumers' attitudes towards different wine varieties, brands, or sustainability practices in wine production. Sentiment analysis can quantify consumers' emotional responses to marketing campaigns or new product launches. Online surveys can gather detailed information on consumers' wine preferences and purchasing habits.

Collectively, these data can inform decision-making in areas such as product development, marketing, and customer service.

Digitalization also enables direct engagement with consumers, which can enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty. Digital platforms like websites, apps, and social media allow wine producers to interact with consumers in real-time, respond to their queries or concerns, and even involve them in product development or marketing initiatives. This direct engagement can build stronger relationships with consumers and increase their emotional connection to the brand [13].

Furthermore, digitalization can facilitate the development of personalised marketing and sales strategies. By analysing consumer data, wine producers can segment their customer base and tailor their marketing messages and offers to each segment's unique preferences and needs. Personalization can increase the effectiveness of marketing campaigns, leading to higher conversion rates and sales [14].

However, to fully leverage the potential of digitalization, the wine industry needs to adopt a customer-centric approach, which requires a deep understanding of consumer psychology and preferences. This involves not just gathering and analysing consumer data, but also empathising with consumers and anticipating their needs and desires. By doing so, wine producers can ensure that their digital strategies are aligned with consumer expectations and values, leading to better customer experiences and higher customer satisfaction.

#### **3.2 Digital tools for gathering data on consumer preferences and behavior**

To understand and meet consumer expectations and values, the wine industry can leverage several digital tools for gathering data on consumer preferences and behaviour.

**Social Media Monitoring:** social media platforms offer a wealth of data on consumer attitudes and behaviours. By monitoring social media interactions, wine producers can gain insights into consumer preferences, trends, and sentiments. **Sentiment Analysis:** Sentiment analysis involves using machine learning algorithms to analyse text data (such as social media posts or online reviews) and determine the underlying sentiment. This can provide insights into how consumers feel about a particular wine or brand, helping wine producers to adjust their strategies accordingly.

**Consumer Surveys:** Digitalization has also made it easier to conduct consumer surveys. Online surveys can reach a wider audience, provide real-time results, and allow for more detailed data analysis.

Beyond leveraging these digital tools, the critical step for wine producers is to truly listen to their consumers. Understanding what consumers are saying, how they feel, and respecting their opinions is fundamental. When these opinions are shared publicly, they need to be acknowledged and taken seriously. By listening

attentively to consumers, wine producers can develop more authentic and meaningful relationships with them, leading to increased brand loyalty and customer satisfaction [15]. Wine producers should embrace the idea that every consumer voice matters and that each interaction is an opportunity to learn and improve.

## **4 Digital communication between wine producers and consumers**

### **4.1 Understanding the digitization process in the wine industry**

In an increasingly digital world, direct communication between wine producers and consumers has become not just advantageous, but essential. The rise of digital technologies has empowered consumers, giving them access to more information and enabling them to be more discerning in their choices. To succeed in this digital environment, wine producers need to establish a direct dialogue with their consumers.

Direct digital communication, facilitated by platforms such as social media, brand websites, and customer relationship management systems, allows wine producers to better understand their consumers. They can gain insights into consumer preferences, consumption habits, and purchasing decisions, which can inform various aspects of their business, from product development to marketing strategy [16,17].

This direct engagement also facilitates transparency and authenticity, two values highly prized by modern wine consumers. By sharing information about their winemaking processes, vineyard management practices, and company values, wine producers can cater to consumers' desire for authentic and sustainable products. They can also build trust and foster an emotional connection with their consumers, which can enhance brand loyalty and customer retention [18].

Moreover, direct digital communication enables wine producers to receive immediate feedback from their consumers. Whether it's a customer inquiry, a complaint, or a review, this feedback is invaluable for continuous improvement. It allows wine producers to quickly identify and address issues, enhance their products and services, and deliver a superior customer experience. In this way, direct digital communication can not only improve customer satisfaction but also drive business growth and profitability [17].

Finally, direct digital communication provides an opportunity for wine producers to tell their story. By sharing their history, mission, and the people behind the brand, they can create a narrative that resonates with consumers and differentiates them from their competitors. This storytelling can enhance the perceived value of their wines and increase consumer engagement [17].

### **4.2 Facilitation of personalized marketing and sales strategies through digital platforms**

Digital platforms offer various tools and opportunities for personalised marketing and sales strategies. Through data gathered from social media, sentiment analysis, and consumer surveys, wine producers can develop a detailed understanding of individual consumer preferences and behaviours. This enables them to create personalised marketing messages, recommend products tailored to individual tastes, and provide personalised customer service..

For instance, wine producers can use customer relationship management (CRM) systems to track individual customer interactions and preferences, allowing them to tailor their communications and offers to each customer [19]. They can also use recommender systems to suggest wines based on a customer's past purchases or browsing behaviour.

Personalised marketing and sales strategies can increase customer engagement, satisfaction, and loyalty, thereby driving growth and profitability. Moreover, they can enhance the consumer's experience, making it more meaningful and authentic, in line with the changing values and expectations of the modern wine consumer.

## **5 Customer-centric approach to digitalization in the wine industry**

### **5.1 Deep understanding of consumer psychology and preferences**

A customer-centric approach to digitalization in the wine industry necessitates a deep understanding of consumer psychology and preferences. This understanding allows wine producers to create products, experiences, and messages that resonate with their target audience.

Consumer psychology refers to the study of how people relate to the products and services they use. It encompasses a wide range of factors, including attitudes, motivations, decision-making processes, and emotional responses. In the context of the wine industry, research has shown that consumers' attitudes towards wine are influenced by a variety of factors such as perceived quality, brand image, price, and social influence. By understanding these factors, wine producers can tailor their digital strategies to appeal to their consumers more effectively.

For instance, wine producers can use insights from consumer psychology to inform their product development, marketing, and customer service strategies. If consumers value quality and authenticity, wine producers can focus on communicating their commitment to these values through their branding and marketing materials. If consumers are motivated by social influence,



wine producers can leverage social media influencers or user-generated content to promote their products.

Digital technologies offer various tools for gaining insights into consumer psychology and preferences. Sentiment analysis, for example, can provide insights into consumers' emotional responses to a particular wine or brand. By analysing consumers' comments and reviews on social media, wine producers can understand how their products are perceived and how they evoke emotional responses.

Similarly, online consumer surveys can reveal information about consumers' attitudes, motivations, and preferences. They can provide data on why consumers choose certain wines, what they value in a wine, and how they make their purchasing decisions.

Moreover, advanced data analytics can be used to identify patterns and trends in consumer behaviour. By analysing large datasets of consumer interactions and transactions, wine producers can predict future behaviour, segment their consumer base, and tailor their offerings to each segment's unique preferences and needs.

By leveraging these digital tools and the insights they provide, wine producers can gain a deep understanding of their consumers, enabling them to create more personalised and meaningful experiences and drive customer engagement and loyalty.

## **5.2 Leveraging digital technologies for insightful consumer engagement**

Leveraging digital technologies for consumer engagement involves using these technologies to interact with consumers in meaningful and personalised ways. This can be achieved through various strategies, such as personalised marketing, social media engagement, and the provision of customised digital experiences.

Personalised marketing is a strategy that leverages consumer data to create tailored messages and offers. By utilising data gathered from various digital touchpoints, wine producers can understand the unique preferences, behaviours, and needs of each consumer. This knowledge enables them to personalise their marketing messages and offers, making them more relevant and engaging for each consumer. Studies have shown that personalised marketing can increase engagement and conversion rates, as consumers are more likely to respond to messages that are tailored to their interests and needs (Sigala, 2020).

Social media is another powerful tool for consumer engagement. It provides opportunities for direct, real-time engagement with consumers, allowing wine producers to build relationships, foster community, and gain insights into consumer preferences and sentiments. Through social media, wine producers can engage in two-way communication with their consumers, respond to their questions and feedback, and involve them in their brand narrative. This direct and interactive engagement can enhance consumer trust and loyalty, and provide valuable insights for product development and marketing strategy.

Interactive digital experiences, such as virtual winery tours or online wine tastings, can further enhance consumer engagement. By leveraging digital technologies

such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and live streaming, wine producers can provide unique and immersive experiences that resonate with the modern consumer's desire for authenticity and experiential consumption. These digital experiences can bring the winery to the consumer, allowing them to explore the vineyards, learn about the winemaking process, and taste the wines from the comfort of their own homes. They can also provide opportunities for education and storytelling, enhancing the perceived value of the wines and the overall brand image [20].

By leveraging digital technologies for insightful consumer engagement, the wine industry can create more authentic and meaningful experiences, aligning with the changing values and expectations of wine consumers. This not only enhances consumer satisfaction and loyalty, but also drives growth and profitability by attracting new consumers, increasing sales, and strengthening the brand image.

## **6 Benefits of digitalization in the wine industry**

### **6.1 Creation of more authentic and meaningful products and experiences**

Digitalization plays an instrumental role in facilitating the creation of authentic, immersive, and seamless experiences for consumers in the wine industry. The integration of digital tools in the consumer journey, from pre-sales to after-sales service, paves the way for a more coherent and personalised consumer experience.

Through digitalization, wine producers can exercise their creativity to curate unique experiences that resonate with their target audience. For instance, virtual winery tours and online wine tastings offer immersive experiences that can be tailored to the interests and preferences of each consumer. These digital experiences bring the winery and its stories to the consumer, enhancing the perceived authenticity of the wines and the overall brand image [21].

Moreover, digital tools can streamline the consumer journey, creating a seamless experience from pre-sales to after-sales service. Websites, mobile apps, and social media platforms can provide accessible and user-friendly channels for consumers to discover wines, learn about their provenance and production, make purchases, and receive customer service. These digital touchpoints can maintain the link between the wine producer and the consumer, fostering ongoing engagement and loyalty.

Digitalization can also facilitate personalised after-sales service. By leveraging consumer data, wine producers can understand the unique needs and issues of each consumer, and provide tailored solutions and recommendations. This personalised service can enhance consumer satisfaction, foster repeat purchases, and redirect the consumer back to the brand.

By leveraging digital technologies to create authentic and seamless experiences, the wine industry can meet the changing expectations and values of wine consumers, enhancing their satisfaction and loyalty, and driving growth and profitability.

Digitalization, when strategically employed, has the potential to significantly drive growth and profitability in the wine industry. By delivering a better understanding of consumer preferences, and facilitating the creation of authentic and meaningful products and experiences, digitalization can enhance the industry's competitive edge.

Firstly, digitalization can substantially augment the industry's visibility and communication effectiveness. Leveraging digital channels such as websites, social media platforms, and email marketing allows wine producers to reach a broader audience, thereby increasing their market reach and potential sales. Additionally, personalised marketing strategies, hinged on detailed consumer data, can elevate conversion rates by delivering messages and offers that resonate with consumers' interests and needs [22].

Secondly, digitalization can foster stronger ties and loyalty with consumers. By facilitating direct communication and offering personalised experiences, digital technologies can heighten customer satisfaction. This ongoing engagement cultivates a deeper relationship, leading to higher customer retention and propensity for repeat purchases, thus driving up customer lifetime value.

Furthermore, digitalization can lead to more efficient and effective operations. Data analytics, one of the key offerings of digitalization, can inform decision-making in various facets such as production, inventory management, and pricing. This data-driven approach can lead to cost savings, improved allocation of resources, and ultimately, increased profitability.

Lastly, digitalization sets apart the industry leaders from the followers. As wine producers embark on their digital transformation journey, they gradually distance themselves from competitors who are slower to adapt. The early adopters who effectively leverage digital technologies can gain a significant competitive advantage, leading the pack in terms of market share, consumer loyalty, and profitability.

Digitalization is not merely a trend but a strategic necessity for the wine industry. It provides an opportunity to enhance communication, visibility, consumer ties, and operational efficiency, thus driving growth and profitability. Wine producers that embrace digitalization can forge ahead, leaving their less digitally-inclined counterparts behind.

## 7 Conclusion

### 7.1 Summary of the findings

This review has explored the changing expectations and values of wine consumers, focusing on their increasing interest in sustainability, authenticity, and health and wellness. We examined how digitalization can help the wine industry better understand and meet these expectations and values. Digital tools such as social media monitoring, sentiment analysis, and consumer surveys offer effective ways to gather data on consumer preferences and behaviour.

Furthermore, we highlighted the importance of developing digital platforms that facilitate direct communication between wine producers and consumers, thereby enabling personalised marketing and sales strategies. A customer-centric approach to digitalization in the wine industry was emphasised, requiring a deep understanding of consumer psychology and preferences.

### 7.2 Implications for the wine industry

The findings of this review have several important implications for the wine industry. First, they underscore the need for wine producers to align their offerings with the changing values and expectations of consumers, particularly in terms of sustainability, authenticity, and health and wellness. Second, they highlight the potential of digitalization to enhance understanding of consumer preferences, personalise marketing and sales strategies, and improve operational efficiency.

The findings also suggest that a customer-centric approach to digitalization, which prioritises understanding and meeting consumer needs and values, can drive growth and profitability in the wine industry. This approach can also enable the creation of more authentic and meaningful products and experiences, aligning with the desires of modern wine consumers.

### 7.3 Recommendations for future research

Future research could explore the specific strategies and practices that wine producers can use to leverage digital technologies more effectively. For example, studies could investigate the use of advanced data analytics techniques, such as predictive modelling or machine learning, to analyse consumer data and predict future behaviour. Research could also examine the effectiveness of different digital platforms for engaging with consumers and delivering personalised experiences.

Additionally, more research is needed to understand the specific ways in which digitalization can drive growth and profitability in the wine industry. For example, studies could assess the impact of digitalization on sales, customer retention, and operational efficiency. Finally, future research could investigate the potential challenges or barriers to digitalization in the wine industry and propose strategies for overcoming them.

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