The ten most significant challenges for Italian wine

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 22 Giugno 2024



During this period, many have asked me what the main challenges are for the Italian wine sector, in a phase that calling “revolutionary” does not seem exaggerated to me.

It is not simple to make a precise hierarchy of the main challenges for our wine sector considering that they are all somewhat dependent on each other.

Read also: The connection between voting abstention and the decline in wine consumption

However, I have tried to identify the ten that I consider most relevant and which I summarize below:

1. **Renewal** of the leadership of companies and wine

institutions (human resources are and will be the key to whether our sector is competitive in the future or not). It is obvious to everyone that there is a concerning delay in the renewal of the governance of Italian wine. But more generally, there continues to be a deficit in investment in human resources that could dramatically penalize our wine system.

2. **Development** of concrete wine tourism activities. There has never been so much talk about wine tourism as in these last few years, stimulated especially by the Covid and post-Covid experience. Unfortunately, the words are being followed by few actions with many, too many companies still struggling to consider hospitality a real business unit in which to invest and make the right profits.
3. **Expansion** of the number of markets for our exports thanks also to a profound modification of the Ocm wine promotion measure in third countries. If we look at the data, in fact, our exports concentrate in five markets (USA, Germany, UK, Canada, and Switzerland). Just when the USA (which is happening) shows negative signs, our trade balance suffers heavily. We still have 70% of the world that we are not facing, perhaps it is time to do so.
4. **Renewal** of wine communication still today anchored to the old models written in the post-methanol period (mid-1980s). It has become our mantra because we believe that the current communication of wine is no longer able to expand the pool of consumers and enthusiasts. Changes are urgent.
5. **Greater attention** to the young target both in terms of communication and involvement within companies. Young people are increasingly distant from wine and the sector does very little to approach them.
6. **Serious analysis** of consumers. It is useless to continue repeating that consumers are changing, their lifestyles are changing, but in the end, we do nothing to seriously

investigate their different expectations.

7. **Improvement** in the control of international markets. There are still those who delude themselves that it is enough to find an importer to have effective exports to a specific market. Is there anyone explaining to these companies that delegating to the importer to develop their business abroad is dead?
8. **Important review** of our system of denominations. What sense does it have to have a heritage of over 500 denominations and exploit less than half of them (and I am being generous)? The time has come to handle this setup and especially to define a new way to manage and promote our denominations. It is useless to give roles to the Consortia for protection and then not give them the tools to be effective.
9. **Incentivize** the formation of business networks. The production structure of Italian wine continues to be strongly fragmented and for this reason business networks represent the best answer to the size limitation of many of our companies. But the business network is also an extraordinary tool to better control the markets, communicate with a stronger voice, share human resources, increase their appeal to buyers.
10. **Greater investment** (it takes little) in marketing and communication of our companies. The average investment in communication of Italian wine companies barely exceeds 1%, just to cite this data alone is enough to state without fear of being contradicted that Italian wine in fact does not communicate.