Wine Branding: how can we make it possible to recognize a “right” value to wine?

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 16 Ottobre 2023



In my last editorial I underlined how it is a mistake to keep saying that “all wines are qualitative”, that, by now, quality is some sort of prerequisite which every company is practically able to have.

It is a serious mistake from all points of view because it forbids the clear perception of the differences between many wines, and this defines a dangerous consequence on the consumption recognition of the “right” price.

Therefore, being able to give the right value to a wine and make the consumers understand it is a surely a difficult challenge, but it is also a fundamental one if we at least

want to try and increase the wines' perception among consumers and, consequently, its medium price.

In this direction, the cruel Nomisma Wine Monitor numbers arrived at Vinitaly and they showed that the medium price per liter of Italian wines dedicated to the export is today 3,69 Euro as compared to the 8,80 Euro for French wines. Italian wines are sold at even less than half of the French wines and the fact that ten years ago the situation was even more concerning (2,22 Euro/L) does not console us much.

And it should console us to an even lesser extent observing that the medium price for Australian wine is 2,07 Euro/L, for Chilean wine is 1,86 Euro/L and, Spanish wine is 1,17 Euro/L.

These prices confirm once more my sad thesis about how, at a global level, wine benefits (so to speak) from a low, a very low, reputation.

Despite things getting a little better in the past 10 years, thanks to what we can call "premiumization" (premium or super-premium wines are growing proportionally more compared to standard or entry level wines), we absolutely cannot consider ourselves satisfied.

And, to understand the reasons for this low perception among consumers I tried comparing other product typologies.

I took inspiration to what I found in my own closet. I opened it and, doing a small analysis, I can confirm that 50% of my clothes (jackets, trousers, t-shirts, jumpers, coats, etc.) are of medium quality, 20% of them is of low quality and 30% of my wardrobe is of what I could define high quality. I think that my evaluation is strictly objective and tied both to the intrinsic qualitative value of my garments and to the credibility and authoritativeness of their brands.

So, I asked myself: how many consumers are able, today, to make objective evaluations regarding their cellar's value in

terms of wines?

I looked for the answer among friends and relatives and, as much as it was predictable, it was disappointing.

In fact, when we talk about wine, the majority of my interlocutors is “proud” to say they are able to spend a little amount of money while still being able to take home what they consider a qualitative product.

So, I asked my interlocutors if, when the go shopping for clothes (for example at H&M), they have the same perception they do while going to the supermarket to buy a bottle of wine for less than 5 Euro.

“Of course not, Fabio, we go shopping at H&M because we cannot always afford high level clothes”: this is the answer that I received from almost all the relatives and friends that I interviewed.

Here, I think this is the glitch, the short circuit.

If for a jacket, but also a car, a bicycle, a phone, a camera, a hotel, and I could go on and on, the majority of the consumers have a clear perception of the value of what they are buying (in all its different faceting), when we are dealing with wine, it all seems to become vague and practically imperceptible.

When we are dealing with wine, we are often “suspicious” about higher prices, almost as if behind that there is a scam. The easier answer to give to that situation would be that there are many wine etiquettes but the well-known brands are just a few.

This is true: the branding level in the wine world is still low (in spite being the agricultural compartment in the better position for that matter, think about that), but can we only blame the wine producing companies’ scarce investment in

marketing and communication?

I think not, while I still consider it depressing and concerning the absolute negligence, to use a euphemism, that many wine companies in our Country hold against communication.

Indeed, demanding to be recognized a right price without the brand having a little visibility might be considered naïve, if not a true entrepreneurial madness.

That being sad, I believe that our communication world in its whole, from divulgation to enological critique, should take a conscience check.

Because, if after 37 years from the dramatic scandal about methanol, the “new” wine communication model (the one that should have finally been able to make the consumers perceive the high-quality wine) registers these results, it only means one thing: we were able to intercept the interest of very few consumers; we were able to make ourselves understood by just a few chosen.

We thought that we could have transformed millions and millions of consumers in millions and millions of sommeliers. The results are plain to all.