

“Mr Szolnoki, is social media a blessing or a curse?”

„Nickenig meets ...“ with Prof. Dr. Gergely Szolnoki, Hochschule Geisenheim University

With the birth of social media, Internet users went from being pure consumers and recipients to being authors and senders. One consequence of this is that purchasing decisions are no longer made at the point of sale, but are made beforehand on discussion forums on social media. Some people see that as a blessing. What do we do though when the information and opinions out there are fake? Here is where you have to start thinking about blessing or curse, costs and benefits, opportunities and risks etc. These questions and others apply to companies in the wine industry just as much as to industry in general. In any event, they are part of the questions that will be examined at the “Viticulture 4.0 – Digitisation in the process chain” conference on 5 November 2018. I talk about this with Prof. Dr. Gergely Szolnoki, who is set to present the session “Social media in the wine industry – a blessing or a curse?” as part of the conference.



Can he imagine a life without social media?

Szolnoki: “Yes, I definitely can imagine it because I did live without social media for decades, before it conquered the world the way it has done. However, I must say that

life without social media would be much more difficult than it used to be. It plays an important role for me both in my professional and personal life, and it’s become almost impossible to separate the two when you use SM.”

“SM”? I type “SM” into Google and see that the first hit isn’t related to social media - not yet.

Szolnoki (laughing): “I realise that the abbreviation S&M stands for something else, but I’ve got used to abbreviating words and phrases since I came to Germany. So I can distinguish between SM and S&M. But when we’re using it to talk about social media, SM is something that can’t be underemphasised or we can’t go without any more, whether it’s in our private or professional lives. The possibilities for using social media channels for advertising purposes are endless, the question is just how skilfully the company goes about it – and this applies regardless of the industry. Research findings into the most up-to-date figures on the use of social media channels in the wine industry will hopefully be available by the time the INTERVITIS kicks off.”

What impetus can the session “Social media in the wine industry – a blessing or a curse” provide?

Szolnoki: “I expect a somewhat controversial but honest exchange between participants and speakers. The speakers are

there to show what's possible and what isn't. However, they will also be asked to show the costs and the limits of the use of social media as well as to share some practical tips for successful strategies with the audience. In the session we will speak with producers and also with dealers and consumers. The fact that social media is used in both B2B and B2C sectors means all actors in the value chain are affected. Also, we're happy to be welcoming some confirmed social media freaks as well as sceptics and laymen, and they will all contribute towards a varied discussion. And don't be scared! We won't try and convert you! The session is about both the pros and cons of social media."

And only about social media!

We'll finish off the conversation with a Silvaner from the Main, which is known for its distinctive "Bocksbeutel PS" bottle type.