vinetur

Study Finds Millennials Will Pay 15% More for Socially Sustainable Wine

Research shows younger consumers value fair labor practices, but clearer communication needed to drive purchasing decisions

Tuesday, November 25, 2025



A recent study from the University of Burgenland in Austria has found that wine consumers, especially younger buyers, are willing to pay more for wine produced under fair social conditions. The research, conducted by Johanna Stoiber, a winemaker from

Krems and a graduate of the International Wine Marketing program, focused on how social sustainability influences purchasing behavior in the wine market.

The study involved an online experiment with 403 participants, most of whom were from Austria. Participants were presented with a description of a classic white wine. For some, the description included information about social sustainability—such as fair working conditions for vineyard workers—while others received no such information. After reading the descriptions, participants were asked about their willingness to buy and how much they would be willing to pay for the wine.

The results showed that while social sustainability did not directly increase the likelihood of purchase, it did have a clear effect on how much consumers were willing to spend. On average, participants said they would pay about 15 percent more—roughly two euros extra—for wine that was produced under fair social conditions. This willingness to pay more was especially strong among people under 45 years old, particularly those in the millennial generation.

The study also found that a consumer’s level of interest in wine did not significantly affect these results. Both casual drinkers and wine enthusiasts responded similarly when it came to paying more for socially sustainable products.

Stoiber’s research highlights a gap between what consumers say they value and what actually drives their purchasing decisions. While many people express support for fair labor practices and social responsibility, these factors are not yet primary reasons for choosing one bottle of wine over another. One possible explanation is that consumers are not well informed about social sustainability in winemaking, or that wineries do not communicate these efforts clearly enough.

Marketing experts involved in the study suggest that wineries and retailers could benefit from making their social responsibility efforts more visible. Clear labeling, certification programs, and stories about the people behind the wines could help build trust and make the added value of socially sustainable production more apparent to buyers.

The findings come at a time when sustainability is an increasingly important topic in agriculture and food production. While environmental concerns such as organic farming and eco-friendly practices have become common selling points in the wine industry, social aspects like fair wages and safe working conditions have received less attention.

The University of Burgenland’s International Wine Marketing program aims to prepare students for careers in the wine business with a focus on marketing management. The program includes practical projects and visits to major international wine regions. According to Bettina König, a marketing expert who supervised Stoiber’s thesis, understanding consumer attitudes toward sustainability will be crucial for wineries looking to stand out in a competitive market.

As younger generations continue to show greater concern for ethical production methods, Austrian winemakers may find new opportunities by emphasizing their commitment to social responsibility alongside environmental stewardship. The study suggests that while there is still work to be done in raising awareness about social sustainability, there is already a segment of consumers willing to support these efforts with their wallets.