

Bachelor Thesis

The Value of a Sommelier to a Company

Why decide restaurants not to employ a sommelier,
even though positive value is recognized through his work?

Research Paper

in order to achieve the academic level

Bachelor of Business Administration in Tourism and Hospitality Management

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1. Statutory declaration

I herewith declare that I have completed the present thesis independently making use only of the specified literature and aids. Sentences or parts of sentences quoted literally are marked as quotations; identification of other references with regard to the statement and scope of the work is quoted. The thesis in this form or in any other form has not been submitted to an examination body and has not been published.

It shall be remarked here that genders are not distinguished when professions, persons, etc. are addressed due to simplifying readability. By stating the male form both genders are meant to be addressed and are equally valued.

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2. Abstract

Despite the prestigious perception of sommeliers as useful professionals in their field a significant part of restaurants decides against employing one. The thesis aims to detect activities how sommeliers contribute positively to restaurant operations, and furthermore, reasons explaining why businesses dismiss this option. His duties and responsibilities were analyzed and explained how he creates value to the business. On the other hand negative impacts of his work were found and described. In order to accomplish this goal primary and secondary research was conducted. The first incorporated eight in-depth interviews with experts, such as sommeliers or restaurant managers, in this field. The latter set out reviewing existing literature on this topic, which was mainly composed of journals and articles. The research's focus was to complement insufficient literature with relevant data from interviewees' expertise. It was found that sommeliers fulfill valuable duties that optimize operations, promote the business, and increase customers' satisfaction and revenues. However, a sommelier is also seen as cost factor and employing one is heavily dependent on the business's concept and its guests' expectations. This means customers who are willed to utilize and appreciate the sommelier's service and, thus, pay for this extra value, are vital to justify this cost factor. However, it will be of importance to demonstrate how sommeliers can further contribute to businesses besides serving guests in order to convince restaurants to employ one.

3. Introduction

This BBA thesis aims to demonstrate the role, duties and responsibilities of sommeliers in order to justify costs of employing one by showing its value. However, it also tries to discover arguments for not employing one despite the positive aspects. This research is set in the restaurant industry.

Wine is among the oldest alcoholic beverages known to human kind and throughout the history it became a favorite companion to food meals. It enhances flavors and enjoyment – and some even argue that it is also good for your health. However, the offer of wine varieties and its consumption became more and more overwhelming and complex for ordinary customers. Considering this issue the need of expertise seems to be obvious. The responsibilities of consulting guests in their choices, preparing suitable wine lists for the menu, and maintaining the restaurant's inventory became more significant (Dewald, 2008).

Sommeliers are known as professionals responsible for those tasks. A sommelier is a specialist in the field of wine, and more commonly in other fields of culinary delights, such as cheese or tea, as well. He basically assists consumers with his professional knowledge to choose the right wine accompanying their food, selecting the right cigar for their whiskey, or just having the right flush of tea to calm their mood. Overall it is all about increasing the enjoyment of consumption (Jones & Dewald, 2006). However, the work of Jones and Dewald (2006) also deals with the sommeliers' role and influence as wine marketers in the United States, who aim for an increase in wine sales in restaurants. He can be seen as a binding link between the service operators and the end-consumers by taking professionally care of the latter. It is of importance to understand that the value and role of sommeliers is seen from various perspectives.

As sommeliers are service providers in the hospitality industry a definition of service is important for a better comprehension of this matter. Lovelock and Wirtz (2007, p. 15) define service as follows:

“Services are economic activities offered by one party to another, most commonly employing time-based performances to bring about desired results in recipients themselves or in objects or other assets for which purchasers have responsibility. In exchange for their money, time, and effort, service customers expect to obtain value from access to goods, labor, professional skills, facilities, networks, and systems; but they do not normally take ownership of any of the physical elements involved.”

This service to the customers is only a part of a sommelier's work (Dewald, 2008). He chooses wines, presents them to the guests and finally pours them into glasses for consumption. His product knowledge

and professional skills are important factors for this work. However, a sommelier's duties go further. As he also manages the inventory and designs the wine list he takes over responsibility for the products offered as well (Sirieix, Remaud, Lockshin, Thach, & Lease, 2011).

This thesis aims first to analyze the profession of a sommelier and how he makes himself valuable to a company. This is split up into two parts. First the literature review that presents already published findings on this topic and analyzes them. This part will be followed by qualitative research in form of in-depth interviews with experts in this field. Although his contribution to restaurant businesses is seen positively, many restaurants do not employ one. In those interviews arguments shall be found that stand against employing a sommelier in restaurants. Ultimately the research question is to be answered:

Why decide restaurants not to employ a sommelier, even though positive value is recognized through his work?

These findings shall also contribute to a clearer picture whether a sommelier is economically important, also in the sense of profits, or simply an additional prestigious service offered to customers.

5. Theoretical Background: The Profession Sommelier

In order to get better insight into this topic it is crucial to understand the profession of a sommelier. The Association de la Sommellerie Internationale (ASI), an International sommelier association, defines it as follows:

“The responsibilities of a modern sommelier are today seen as going far beyond merely serving wines. As well as a complete knowledge of this field, and an indispensable gift for human relationships, he/she must also display a considerable understanding of purchase and stocks management. A good sommelier is today also associated with the marketing of the business.” (www.sommellerie-internationale.com , 2010).

This statement clearly shows the broad range of tasks a sommelier has to cover. The core duty definitely remains serving and assisting guests. However, more fields of responsibility came up, especially in regard to the economical side business itself. Purchasing and inventory management is an essential part of a foodservice organization, and coming to wine, a well educated sommelier can make a difference concerning saving costs and quality control (www.sommellerie-internationale.com , 2010).

Dewald (2008), Manske and Cordua (2005), and Apfel (1998) state a number of main duties that make a sommelier valuable, which could be summarized in four categories:

1. **Wine list** – A sommelier is responsible for choosing suitable wines and assembling them to create an attractive wine list. Doing this, the food menu must not be neglected, as the wine is mostly accompanying meals. Therefore food and wine pairing is significant. When creating a wine list, user-friendliness and comprehensibility are two important features to please guests.
2. **Inventory management** – As being knowledgeable about qualities of wine and how to stock them properly the sommelier should be in charge of purchasing and managing the inventory. Costs can be saved by handling and storing wine correctly. Moreover, being up to date with current trends a sommelier should also replace wines on the menu to provide variety. Two third of the restaurants analyzed by Dewald (2008) who have a designated sommelier in charge update their wine menu monthly or even in shorter periods.
3. **Customer relationship and service** – As stated by the ASI, one of the core duties of a sommelier is to assist and serve guests. This means consulting them in their choice of wine, and giving them more knowledge about the product in case of interest. Especially for laymen a sommelier is of enormous help to recommend suitable wines. From the business’s point of view a sommelier

can also use such situations well to promote certain wines. Manske and Cordua (2005) add a sommelier's credibility and special sales techniques – adaptive and persuasive selling – as further key qualities to increase wine sales.

4. **Training** – Apfel (1998) did research on how important wine training for servers is to increase sales in this area. By being the expert in this field, it is the sommelier's duty to support and educate his servers and colleagues about this subject. Wine handled properly allows to be sold by glass or bottles which increases the offer. Furthermore, serving it correctly can enhance flavor and the dining experience, and pleases guests. It can be even necessary to start with basics, such as what glasses go with which wine, how to open bottles correctly and pouring the wine into the glass properly.

It was found that product knowledge and credibility – which are somehow related – are the most important features of servers to sell wine successfully. However, the overall staff training, including selling techniques and wine service, for the whole team rose in importance. By having all staff, chefs and servers, enthusiastic and knowledgeable about wine, the guest experience improved as well as increased sales (Dewald, 2008).

According to Manske and Cordua (2005) a sommelier shall also be seen as a sales person, increasing business's revenues through his work. They prepare their deals by choosing complementing wines to the various food items, and offer specific selections. They think about the guests' wishes and how to fulfill them. And ultimately, when the guests arrive and ask for a recommendation, sommeliers either adapt to those wishes or try to persuade guests to choose a certain wine. His tools to close the deal is his product knowledge, which means providing the guest with information about the products and describing its benefits; and credibility that should convince guests to trust that very recommendation.

Jones and Dewald (2006) stated numerous demographics of sommeliers based on a report by Yankolevich Partners (2000) in which 250 persons in charge of sommelier duties at fine restaurants were interviewed. These restaurants were picked from Wine Spectator's "Gold Medal Winners" list and supplemented by Zagat's Top 2000 restaurants. In summary these sommeliers – and other workforces fulfilling those duties - worked in this profession on average for 15 years and holding the current position for 8 years. Almost each one of them is part of choosing the wines; about 72% have the sole responsibility, and approximately 77% execute the pricing for the wine list. On average 60% receive education during their work from more experienced sommeliers. Their average age is 41, and 83% are male.

In the year 2011 Alexander Koblinger earned the 195th title of "Master Sommelier" and currently represents the only one of this kind in Austria. The Master Sommelier Diploma was introduced in cooperation of the Institute of Masters of Wine, the British Hotels & Restaurants Association, the Wine & Spirit Association of Great Britain, and further various associations in 1969. It represents the highest degree level a sommelier can reach. In 2012 Alexander Koblinger explained his view on the role of a sommelier in an interview with the Österreichischen Gastronomie- & Hotel-Zeitung (ÖGZ), an Austrian magazine about news and trends in gastronomy. He sees the responsibilities of a sommelier in both sales, and purchase and storage - not only of wine, but also of spirits, liquor, coffee, tea, furs - mainly cigars - and non-alcoholic beverages. He argues that a sommelier can increase value by purchasing and storing wine correctly. Consequently the inventory shall increase its value and not losing it. Nevertheless, sales and the qualitative guest contact is of high importance as he accompanies all restaurant's guests throughout their whole menu and is not bound to one station. Guests are mainly aware of presentation, service and sale of wines they order, but this can be introduced and followed up by aperitifs and digestives. Thus this generates further revenue for the business. He recommends restaurants and hotels that are not in the luxury or gourmet segment to think about employing a sommelier, as they bring value and revenue. The idea of combining the chef de rang (head waiter) with a sommelier, hence one person is responsible for tasks of both professions, is none he supports. As both positions have a full set of duties this cannot work out well. On conclusion he is convinced that a good sommelier finances his costs by increasing revenues. (ÖGZ, 2012)

6. Literature Review

When thinking about the value of a sommelier the question arises, whether it is actually necessary to have one in a business. Many restaurants decide against employing one and still are well known for their wine offer. As Dewald (2008) found in his research approximately half of the restaurants listed on the wine spectator's "Gold Medal Winners" list as well as Zagat's top 2000 restaurants chose to have a sommelier or designated wine steward in their business. Consequently the other half work without one and also made it into that very list.

So what is a sommelier needed for? For restaurants wine sales are an important part of revenues and can increase profits significantly (Manske & Cordua, 2005). A sommelier's responsibility in order to increase profits is to improve the overall wine handling in a business and to increase the related sales by marketing the offer (www.sommellerie-internationale.com, 2010). This leads to the assumption that certain tasks and responsibilities he fulfills benefit the business and make him a valuable employee. It was found that small, this means with seating less than 130 people, and fine dining restaurants employing a designated sommelier have on average more parties ordering wine, a higher check, and furthermore, the wine list gets updated more frequently (Dewald, 2008). This can be caused by the direct and indirect influence of sommeliers. Especially the organization and design of the restaurant's wine list is seen as important as well as personalized part of a sommelier's duties (Sirieix, Remaud, Lockshin, Thach, & Lease, 2011). Dewald (2008) further includes that besides choosing wineries and their products a sommelier's strength lies within understanding customers' preferences and expectations and accordingly selecting suitable wines.

However, a sommelier still receives a salary for his work – he is a cost factor in other words. Manske and Cordua (2005) bring up the question whether a sommelier can cover those costs by increasing wine sales and even more raise profits. Not accomplishing this task could lead to the assumption that he is a luxury, prestige asset for a business without generating sufficient revenues.

6.1. What activities potentially have an impact on a sommelier's performance?

In order to understand the research question better activities that could make a sommelier valuable shall be analyzed first.

6.1.1. Training

An important factor in literature is training and education of staff. Several papers highlight its importance. Manske and Cordua (2005) see a clear responsibility of the sommelier to train and educate his servers and colleagues on wine related matters, who consequently shall use this knowledge and skills to sell more wine. Apfel (1998) recommend education and training to increase the product knowledge and selling skills of servers, which consequently boosts wine sales, too. Moreover, as wine can have a crucial contribution to restaurant's revenues, measures such as wine-service training and how to purchase and sell it more effectively can be seen as good investment (Gultek, Dodd, & Guydosh, 2006).

Sommeliers need to figure out what elements to include in such trainings to help staff improving their skills and increasing their product knowledge. Apfel (1998) states that an often neglected part of training is letting your servers actually taste and savor the wines. This can be even enhanced by providing suitable food pairings. This leads to the assumption that this is more a practical rather than a theoretical training. Servers shall taste the wines to get a better impression of them, as they have to explain the wine later to customers and support them in their decision. To cover a wine list there also is information on different grapes, but also what wines go well with what food items. Therefore education shall also include wine varieties, service skills, and food and wine pairing (Manske & Cordua, 2005). When training servers it is also of importance focusing on basics, such as what glasses go with which wines, how to open bottles in a correct and elegant way, and finally to pour the wine properly into the glass (Apfel, 1998). Sommeliers can help their servers working on their individual weaknesses. Furthermore they can adjust skill sets individually according to the restaurant's needs.

Apfel (1998) concludes that undergoing further education boosts wine sales and related profits according to a comprehensive formula: The more staff members know about wine, the more wine they will sell. As servers are more likely to recommend and suggest familiar products such trainings can have a direct influence on what they offer the guests and enables promoting certain products.

The motivation behind these trainings is improving the business's performance and avoiding staff committing critical mistakes. Apfel (1998) highlights that by serving wine the wrongly or giving false information about products can have a bad impact on guests' dining experience or even insulting guests.

As such incidents could lead to a customers' dissatisfaction this is not in the restaurant's interest. Moreover, it could reduce the customer's trust towards the servers – they lose their credibility which is essential in selling processes (Manske & Cordua, 2005). Ultimately this could mean that the guest does not buy wine from that server and will not take any further recommendations, too. The worst case could even be losing those customers due to their dissatisfaction. Missing or poor training could therefore even lead to a decreasing business performance and dropping wine sales.

Granucci et al. (1994) conducted an experimental study in two restaurants of the same small, regional chain. It investigated the impact of product knowledge, and sales and service skills on wine sales. Their findings highlighted that increased product knowledge influenced the servers' behavior and consequently resulted in higher wine sales. Their data stated that a raise of 44% in wine sales could be detected. Furthermore it indicated the staff's satisfaction with the training. It ultimately showed that this experimental study lead to an increased profitability of those two restaurants (Granucci, Huffman, & Couch, 1994). Improving the financial performance is a desired result and can motivate restaurant owners to undertake such trainings. Having a sommelier in the team whose expertise can be used for such trainings is consequently helpful and supports the theory that training is an activity that makes sommeliers valuable.

6.1.2. Selling techniques and skills

The traditional key aspect of a sommelier's job is selling wine to customers. Therefore he can be seen as a salesperson (Manske & Cordua, 2005), and, thus, selling strategies and methods shall be trained as well. Important selling techniques mentioned in the literature include adaptive and persuasive selling as well as suggestive selling.

Adaptive selling sets out that a sommelier or server adapts his selling behavior to the guest's needs and preferences, especially in case of uncertainty of the guest. It is important to understand what a customer is looking for in a wine and the overall dining experience. Sharma (2001) argues that training to improve adaptive selling shall also involve categorizing consumers based on initial expectations. An understanding of your guests is important to find suitable products fulfilling their needs and wishes. This perception of consumers also needs to be increased by enhancing their listening skills and providing market research information about their consumers (Sharma, 2001). Helpful information can be received through conversation and asking the right questions. In order to successfully adopt adaptive selling three skills are essential: a learning orientation, questioning ability, and product knowledge (Manske & Cordua, 2005). The first skill, a learning orientation, sets out how well a salesperson learns

about the product and the customer who uses it. The second skill, a questioning ability, is used to find out more about your customer by asking right questions and using such information to meet the customer's needs and preferences. The third skill, product knowledge, is a key factor in all possible selling situations. By knowing your product salespeople appear more confident and trustworthy. Furthermore he needs to be capable of answering a customer's questions about the product. It appears that especially for the second and third skill experience over time is important to improve them. A sommelier with certain experience and expertise seems to be of support in this case to help servers developing those skills. Acquiring such skills and experience, and practicing adaptive selling can help servers to create individual selling strategies for customers and their requests (Manske & Cordua, 2005).

As mentioned above, when utilizing adaptive selling servers need to be capable of categorizing customers. They understand consumer needs, select the best sales strategies, and then suggest products that will satisfy their consumers' needs (Sharma, 2001). This phenomenon does not only increase wine sales as the recommended bottle of wine is likely to be ordered, but also satisfies customers and can turn them into returning customers generating ongoing revenues. This is why Sharma (2001) argues that restaurant owners shall select and retain adaptive sales people.

Contrary to adaptive selling, Manske and Cordua (2005) present a second important selling technique: persuasive selling. It has a different starting point. This is that the salesperson has a better understanding and bigger knowledge of the products and customers' wants. Therefore he is capable of telling the customer which product is suitable and persuades the customer to accept his recommendation. Problems finding effective selling strategies for this technique were noted. However, six main principles were found having an impact on it (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2002):

1. **Liking:** due to various factors, such as physical attractiveness, similarity, or cooperation, a customer can develop positive affection to a salesperson and start liking him. This could increase the chances of a successful sale (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2002).
2. **Reciprocation:** This means returning to others what they received from them – a positive reward. This could make customers ordering another bottle of wine or becoming a returning customer after receiving a satisfying recommendation (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2002).
3. **Consistency:** By being consistent in persuasive selling, Cialdini and Goldstein (2002) indicate the importance of offering a service continuously. For example suggesting sweet wine as a dessert option in the beginning of a dinner and actually offering it when dessert is ordered.

4. **Scarcity:** This sets out to tell customers that a product is getting scarce and if they do not purchase it soon it may get unavailable. This can motivate customers to choose this product (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2002).
5. **Social validation:** This is about what influence the society and atmosphere have on customers. This could make them more willing to order wine if their surrounding encourages doing so, e.g. the restaurant's reputation for its wine offer or other guests ordering wine (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2002).
6. **Authority:** Authority indicates a phenomenon that people listen and believe others more in case that they perceive them as knowledgeable or superior in a certain field of interest (Cialdini & Goldstein, 2002). As sommeliers are wine experts, also indicated by their job title, guests can be more willing to accept their recommendation as they see them as an authority concerning wine.

Those two selling techniques help sommeliers and servers improving their performance and ultimately selling more wine. However, product knowledge remains a key factor which can be boosted by effective training and education (Manske & Cordua, 2005).

Suggestive selling in a restaurant environment was tested by Ralis and O'Brien (1987). This study was undertaken in a large suburban restaurant with a middle-aged clientele. This restaurant discovered lagging wine sales and wanted to increase them. Therefore a suggestive selling system with prompts, goals and feedback was introduced. Suggestive selling is a technique where employees try to sell extra products by suggesting and recommending them to the customer (Ralis & O'Brien, 1987). Or, as defined by Gultek et al. (2006), suggestive selling is a method where servers try drawing customers' attention to certain products to increase sales.

All servers' meal checks were altered with two boxes on the top, labeled as "ask" and "sold". Those served as prompts. The plan was that with every meal order servers were motivated to at least asking guests whether they would like to enjoy a glass of wine with their food. This suggestive part was followed by the selling of the alcoholic beverage. The server ticked the respective boxes on the check, either only "ask" or in case of success also "sold". Additionally certain goals were set to influence the servers' performance. That was selling wine on 20% of order, for example. Another important factor of this study was feedback. Either visually, by weekly wall-postings about sales and suggestion percentages, and more importantly individual consultations with the servers were used to test impacts on performance. This program was going for 18 weeks with a six weeks follow up period (Ralis & O'Brien, 1987).

It was found that this suggestive selling measure had notable effects on the restaurant's wine sales. Both red and white wine sales doubled, and even increased further after feedback was given. However, after the 18 weeks testing period ended and the follow up period started checks without prompts were used again and no goals were set or feedback provided. Ultimately sales fell back to the usual sales percentage. Nevertheless this project revealed a positive impact of prompts, goal-setting and feedback for suggestive selling and, furthermore, the notable effect on wine sales in a restaurant (Ralis & O'Brien, 1987).

Sommeliers do have a similar behavioral pattern in their work: they either approach guests or are asked for consultation and start recommending wines suitable for customers' expectations and preferences. So the question arises whether this form of service has a similar effect as suggestive selling methods and ultimately increases wine sales. For both it is included that product knowledge, and serving and selling skills are essential to fulfill this task successfully (Gultek, Dodd, & Guydosh, 2006).

Overall, Jones and Dewald (2006) give a further interesting picture of the selling performance of sommeliers. They reviewed data from a report conducted by Yankelovich Partners in the year 2000, by order of Ste. Michelle Wine Estates, which contains data from 250 telephone interviews among professionals selecting and recommending wines to customers in restaurants. They found that wine sales mainly happen at the guests' table. On average customers asked for wine recommendation 38 per cent of the time, and the sommeliers or designated wine stewards offered their wine recommendation voluntarily 42% of the times on average (Jones & Dewald, 2006). This could lead to the assumption that a big share of guests rely on a sommelier's service to enjoy their dining experience. Furthermore in this situation of receiving requests for wine recommendation and offering them it occurred more often to sommeliers than to their colleagues with different job titles, such as director of beverage. In restaurants with a designated sommelier more parties were found to order wine, and also their average check was higher. This raises the question if the job title "sommelier" already has a positive influence on customers, meaning that they feel more comfortable asking for wine and ordering it. A further finding was that in smaller restaurants guests order more wine than in larger restaurants.

6.1.3. Inventory management and wine list design

A further activity which can be fulfilled by a sommelier and thus could increase his value is managing the inventory – in this case wine and other beverages. Dewald (2008) states that creating and organizing the restaurant's wine list is another main duty of a sommelier which shall result in increasing sales.

Inventory management can be defined as the activity to ensure that the optimum amount of inventory items is available (www.businessdictionary.com, 2012). This shall prevent shortcuts and disruptions in service by running out of stock. A sommelier is capable of providing a certain assessment of supply and demand with his expertise to ensure such an optimum inventory level. Moreover, a sommelier can contribute to the business by putting the inventory together and designing a user-friendly and effective wine list which shall support both servers and guests. Gil et al. (2009) see the wine list as an effective management tool offering guests a complete emotional experience, by surprising and informing them. In order to achieve this it should be varied as well as selective - covering a sufficient range of wines, imaginative and user-friendly.

Apfel (1998) argues that in order to get customers' interest in wine the ordering process needs to be simplified. This also sets out a solid but not overwhelming wine list. However, a good wine list needs a lot of input by experienced sommeliers or restaurateur. They can make it an evolving and lively, but with certain regularity, component of the business (Gil, Berenguer, & Ruiz, 2009). This assumes that by creating an approachable wine list suited for the individual needs of the restaurant and its guests could increase wine consumption and customer satisfaction. Jones and Dewald (2006) also imply the importance of a user-friendly wine list to support guests in their choices and ultimately enhancing their dining experience.

Gil et al. (2009) concluded a study analyzing wine lists of 50 different upscale restaurants in Valencia and its metropolitan area. They found three distinctive profiles of restaurants according to their wine list management: selection, specialization, and complementarity. Those were presented in a cluster analysis. For the majority of the restaurants in the selection and complementarity clusters two factors were of high importance: wine and food pairing, and differentiation from competitors (Gil, Berenguer, & Ruiz, 2009). So managing the wine list can be seen as marketing tool for restaurants. It helps them to take a certain position in the market and to differentiate from competitors. Some may even find a unique selling proposition with this tool. It further supports the overall team to highlight certain food and wine pairings to enhance dining experience and ultimately customer satisfaction. A sommelier has the responsibility to adjust the wine list according to the restaurant's culinary offer. Therefore, a wine list can be seen as a tool to enhance customer satisfaction, establish prestige and increase value of the restaurant, and raise the profitability (Gil, Berenguer, & Ruiz, 2009).

6.2. The importance of product knowledge and credibility for a sommelier

Literature on this topic also suggests that various characteristics are vital to be an effective sommelier that have a positive influence on the business's performance.

Sommeliers have the duty to recommend and sell wines to customers, in order to enhance their dining experience, and ultimately their satisfaction, and furthermore to increase wine sales (Manske & Cordua, 2005). In such situations sommeliers encounter various guests: ones who are knowledgeable and confident enough to make their own decision, others who are in need for consultation due to lack in wine knowledge, or customers who just enjoy the service (Apfel, 1998).

However, the second group - customers with little or no knowledge on wine - encounter a risk whenever ordering wine. This risk could mean ordering a wine that is not suitable to the food meal, or just not meeting personal tastes. When asking for a recommendation it is argued that staff which demonstrates product knowledge support customers by lowering this perceived risk. Customers therefore feel less concerned when ordering wine (Gultek, Dodd, & Guydosh, 2006). Sharma (2001) argues from the salesperson's point of view and states that product knowledge is essential in persuading customers and further has a strong influence on customers' perception of the products. It helps to reduce the perceived risk and gives customers needed and demanded information. Moreover, as customers have problems to evaluate the products' quality; the salesperson tackles this issue by supporting customers with their product knowledge (Sharma, 2001). These findings highlight the importance of product knowledge to persuade customers and closing deals. The assumption is close that sommeliers need to possess a good knowledge on wine in order to sell wine more effectively to customers.

The importance of product knowledge in the purchasing of wine was suggested in market research (Granucci, Huffman, & Couch, 1994), and moreover, that many of the first ever glasses of wine experienced by customers are due to servers' experienced wine suggestions. Some customers appear to avoid ordering wine when they do not have experience in it. Sommeliers seem to be an essential support to motivate them consuming wine. Therefore knowledgeable staff influences customers' drinking behavior and can make customers select wine with their food meal more often. As argued in Apfel's paper (1998), too, wine is an essential part of fine dining experience and satisfying wine recommendations can increase related revenues.

When recommending wine to customers sommeliers see importance in value, variety and taste and the winery's reputation (Dewald, 2008). These factors can be seen as influenced and improved by product

knowledge. This knowledge appears to be a necessary requisite to understand wine and successfully recommend it to guests. The importance of product knowledge is also highlighted by a finding of Sirieix (2011) which states that sommeliers prefer making their own decisions when putting the wine list together rather than relying on suppliers' recommendations. In order to do this well it appears that knowledge on various wines and pairing possibilities with food is essential. This does not directly influence the outcome of selling situations, however, shows the importance of product knowledge in other areas of responsibility. As mentioned above, the restaurant's wine list is a useful tool to increase wine sales by supporting customers ordering it and simplifying the process (Sirieix, Remaud, Lockshin, Thach, & Lease, 2011). This can be seen as an indirect impact of a sommelier's product knowledge on a restaurant's wine sales performance.

Sharma (2001) states in his paper another key characteristic to be an effective salesperson: credibility. Credibility can be seen as "the degree to which a communication source or channel is perceived as trustworthy and competent by the receiver" (Rogers & Shoemaker, 1971). This could mean that customers who see a sommelier as credible and trustworthy source are more likely to accept recommendations and advice, and may increase buying intentions (Sharma, 2001). By becoming familiar and experienced with wine sommeliers can enhance credibility. Therefore product knowledge may be essential.

According to Manske and Cordua (2005) sommeliers have a direct influence on wine sales by establishing credibility, which evolves out of product knowledge. Customers appear to trust and accept recommendations from credible sources and therefore are more likely to order suggested wines. An important factor in keeping up credibility is the capability to answer customers' questions about the product, or at least finding someone who has the answers. A broad knowledge about products can help to answer potential questions by customers. In this case sommeliers with a wide knowledge on wine are more capable of giving customers useful and satisfying information. By failing this task customers could lose the trust in the sommelier or server and ultimately decline the recommended product. Consequently product knowledge and credibility seem to be related and, moreover, important to ensure sustainable wine sales.

Additionally, previous studies' findings let assume that sommeliers remain relying on product knowledge and relationship marketing and are not convinced of adopting recommended selling strategies (Jones & Dewald, 2006). This highlights the importance for sommeliers having product knowledge and increasing

their credibility. However, it also raises the question how important selling techniques and skill are, and what impact they could have on wine sales when acquiring them successfully.

The reviewed literature gives a picture of important tasks sommeliers fulfill in order to support customers and colleagues which ultimately shall lead to an improved business performance. However, there are no clear findings how important certain factors are in terms of a sommelier's value to a business. It is of importance to research and analyze the value of certain activities, the possible superiority of one selling technique over another, recommended characteristics to focus on as sommelier, and whether product knowledge and related credibility the key to customer satisfaction and increasing wine sales are. These issue appear to demand more research and show importance to evaluate the use of sommeliers in restaurants.

7. Methodology

The thesis's goal is assessing a sommelier's value and further to find out why restaurants decide not to employ a sommelier in their business. To reach this goal data must be gathered giving a clearer picture of this matter and, furthermore, underlining arguments received from the literature review. However, the overall picture from the literature review shows a positive picture of sommeliers. It appears that he is valuable to restaurant operations due to various factors and tasks he fulfills. Nevertheless, negative factors of his profession are not dealt with, which could argue why restaurants do not employ any. Consequently as there is a lack of substantial data on this matter which could be tested further with quantitative methods, a qualitative research method is appropriate.

An exploratory study with interviews are a common method to collect further information on a certain issue to get a better insight, even though its results can only be seen as preliminary (Flick, 2006). By conducting an exploratory research its results may give an improved insight into the sommelier's value. It can highlight a direction further research should be targeted at. Such results could motivate to do further research with quantitative methods (Malhotra, 2007).

From the point of supporters of quantitative research it is said that quantitative research delivers more useful results in order to explain problems understandably. Qualitative research on the other hand can be seen as a method analyzing and illustrating problems prior quantitative research (Flick, 2006). And its results, statements from open interviews for example, can be tested in form of quantitative research consequently.

However, it is also argued contrarily that quantitative research only gives easily comprehensive but not very deep results, and qualitative research is necessary to actually explaining those founded facts (Flick, 2006). A more neutral explanation quoted in Flick (2006) argues that qualitative research methods are more appropriate when answering micro sociological questions, whereas quantitative research methods are more suitable for macro sociological questions. This could be seen as justification to choose qualitative research methods in this matter, as the work of a sommelier in a restaurant takes place on the micro level.

For this thesis primary and secondary research will be used. Concerning the primary research an exploratory research approach appears to be suitable which will be conducted in form of in-depth interviews. The secondary research part is about analyzing and reviewing existing literature and data on this topic to get further insight and raising supporting arguments and questions. These were dealt with

in the literature review and are integrated in the qualitative research methods. The material for the secondary research consists mainly of journals and articles, but also books and websites, covering elements of this topic. They were gathered either online or in libraries. This data contains reviews, studies, and findings that were already conducted and presented on scientific platforms. Secondary research helps finding meaningful information on topics of interest fast and easily, as it already exists and researchers do not need to generate new data.

In order to receive data contributing to the assessment of a sommelier's value in-depth interviews will be conducted. They are a qualitative research method and commonly used for leisure and tourism studies (Veal, 2007). They are characterized by their length and structure, and shall last at least half an hour. The in-depth interviews' objective is to deal with a matter in more detail and going into the subject more deeply. Another aim is to establish a discussion friendly atmosphere, which shall endorse supplementary questions and, furthermore, motivate interviewees to explain their answers in more details (Veal, 2007).

As stated by Flick (2006) conducting qualitative research pre-requisites a certain understanding of the relation between issue and method. The individual elements need to be analyzed well, also in terms of what importance they withhold for each other. This also highlights the importance of the right sampling. Sampling sets out to find and select suitable partners for the research, in this case interviewees. This task can be of various difficulties, as appropriate partners need to be figured out as well as relying on their enthusiasm and motivation to participate (Flick, 2006). As qualitative research is more time intensive than quantitative methods the sample size also needs to be limited. Therefore it is more essential to choose right interviewees.

To receive meaningful data the sample is important. For this research it was set out to conduct eight interviews with individuals responsible for wine related tasks in both restaurants employing a sommelier as well as one which do not employ one. The questionnaire will contain the same open questions which shall encourage interviewees to give detailed insight into the matter and motivating them to explain their ideas (Malhotra, 2007). The answers to those questions were analyzed and compared in order to find various trends. The received data shall ideally underline findings from the literature review and highlights their importance.

In order to investigate the research question the knowledge and opinion of experts in the restaurant industry were questioned and their work patterns analyzed. In-depth interviews were conducted with

those experts. Special interest was put in the areas of advantages and disadvantages of employing sommeliers in restaurants. This focus is also found in the research question of this thesis, which is:

Why decide restaurants not to employ a sommelier, even though positive value is recognized through his work?

The interview guideline sets out that the experts give statements what negative impacts employing sommeliers has, but also what overall value he delivers. To get sufficient information on these topics the interview orientated itself on following key questions:

- *To what extent did the role of a sommelier changed within the last ten years?*

This question tried to show recent changes and trends that help clarifying findings of the following questions.

- *Where do you see the duties and tasks of sommeliers?*

Here the personal and general opinion of the respective expert was asked, not mandatorily in relation to the restaurant business he is working at. It was important to find out where those duties lay subjectively to relate them properly to both literature review and further findings.

- *When you think of your business, how important are those duties and tasks?*

In this part the expert's opinion was related to the respective restaurant he is working at. This helps to understand what duties and tasks are valuable for what business concepts or restaurant type.

- *What advantages does it have to employ a sommelier?*

By answering this question the interviewees were expected to formulate positive factors about the sommelier's job. Those findings shall be used to underline arguments from the literature review and shall clarify the profession's profile.

- *What disadvantages does it have to employ a sommelier?*

This question is seen a key element to answer the research question. Experts were expected to state negative impacts of a sommeliers work, and ultimately to raise arguments not to employ one.

- *How do you predict the sommeliers' future in their working environment?*

This was the concluding question giving interviewees the chance to state their opinion about sommeliers' professional outlook. At this point the experts also mentioned critical current

problems that need to be changed in future so sommeliers remain attractive workforces in future.

It was decided to use narrow but open ended questions, to motivate interviewees to give unbiased information. During the interviews follow-up questions were raised, in case of any ambiguities or to get into more detail.

7.1. In-depth interviews

In regard to the research question, current research was lacking arguments not to employ sommeliers. Consequently it was decided not to use quantitative research methods, which request clearer results to research effectively in the right direction. Qualitative research was chosen in form of in-depth interviews with experts in this field to gain further insight clarifying the overall picture.

With the ultimate goal to discover the interviewee's view on the matter, rather than the researcher's one, such in-depth interviews are similar to conversations with a certain structure. The researcher constructs a line of questions aiming to retrieve useful information and arguments. This method has the strength to obtain a high amount of data quickly if used successfully. On the other hand it requires personal interaction heavily. Therefore the researcher relies on the goodwill and amount of relevant knowledge the interviewees have. Conversation partners who are not motivated to cooperate or show a lack of expertise could sabotage the whole interview (Marshall & Rossmann, 2006).

The sample for interviews contained eight experts in this field. In-depth interviews were conducted with all of them. The sample was further split up in four restaurants employing one or more sommeliers, and four restaurants not employing ones. They are located in and around Vienna, the capitol of Austria, and vary in business concept, type, and size to give a broad overview of opinions an expertise.

The interviews were built on three areas containing vital information:

1. Hard facts about the restaurant business and the interviewee
2. Intro part with two questions concerning the business model and philosophy as well as the current situation regarding employing a sommelier
3. Six main questions covering various aspects of the matter

As mentioned above, further follow up questions were raised in case of ambiguities or to get into more detail. On average an interview lasted 39 minutes and 20 seconds, where the shortest was 25 minutes

and 41 seconds, and the longest one 55 minutes and 21 seconds. These time periods include the whole conversation, breaks, and disruptions.

7.2. Interview Partners

In this section the interview partners and the respective businesses are presented and analyzed. The sample was made up of eight restaurants in and around Vienna, half of them employing one or more sommeliers and the other half not. The selection process was on the one hand difficult to find suitable businesses but convenient on the other hand as most of them very willed and enthusiastic to support this research. They are listed chronologically:

7.2.1. St. Martins Therme & Lodge - Hotel Restaurant

Location: Frauenkirchen, Burgenland

Interviewee: Mr. Bradley Knowles, Food & Beverage Manager

Business Structure: Resort hotel, part of a chain

Stand-alone Sommelier: No

Employees: 36 (F&B department)

Seating Capacity: 240 pax.

General Information: St. Martin Therme & Lodge is a resort hotel with a thermal spa, and a lodge with safari offers, due to its vicinity to a nature park. Their target market contains leisure guests seeking relaxation and enjoyment, in form of wellness and culinary experiences, corporate guests attending seminars or teambuilding projects, and the MICE segment. It is approximately a 50 minutes drive from Vienna (St. Martins, 2012).

7.2.2. Loisium Wine & Spa Resort Langenlois - Restaurant Vineyard

Location: Langenlois, Lower Austria

Interviewee: Mr. Michael Fözö, Chef Sommelier

Business Structure: Resort hotel, part of *Design Hotels*

Stand-alone Sommelier: 1

Employees: 15 (Service)

Seating Capacity: 130 pax.

General Information: Loisium Wine & Spa Resort Hotel focuses on design, lifestyle, relaxation and, of course, wine. A wine shop is located next to the hotel offering numerous local wines. The restaurant *Vineyard* cooks on a high level (two chef-hats) and uses regional, seasonal products. The sommelier tries

to create attractive food-wine pairings. Langenlois counts as the wine capitol of lower Austria. It is approximately a 50 minutes drive from Vienna (Loisium, 2012).

7.2.3. Restaurant Tian

Location: Vienna, 1010

Interviewee: Mr. Michael Kajdocsi, Restaurant Manager

Business Structure: Restaurant facility including a bar, a café, and a take-away market

Stand-alone Sommelier: 0

Employees: 11 (Service)

Seating Capacity: 60 pax.

General Information: Opening in December 2011, Tian is a new lifestyle restaurant in Vienna's city center. Its menu is completely vegetarian and focuses on healthy, tasty and qualitative meals which shall be an experience for guests. Seasonal food and sustainability are important factors for the business that wants to represent vegetarian food in a modern and positive way (Restaurant Tian, 2012).

7.2.4. Grand Hotel Vienna - Restaurant Le Ciel

Location: Vienna, 1010

Interviewee: Mr. Franz Messeritsch, Chef Sommelier

Business Structure: Hotel, part of JJW Hotels & Resorts Group, with six F&B outlets

Stand-alone Sommelier: 1

Employees: 9 (Service)

Seating Capacity: 60 pax.

General Information: Le Ciel is a well-known French restaurant and part of the Grand Hotel in Vienna, which is one the most modern and luxurious hotels in town. It has a long history going back till 1870. The wine menu focuses on French and Austrian wine, but has also some newcomers on offer, like Bulgarian wine (Grand Hotel, 2012).

7.2.5. Palais Coburg - Restaurant Basteigarten

Location: Vienna, 1010

Interviewees: Mr. Maximilian Weil, Sommelier

Business Structure: Stand-alone hotel, part of Relais & Chateaux

Stand-alone Sommeliers: 7 (total in hotel)

Employees: 7 (Service)

Seating Capacity: 90 pax.

General Information: The Basteigarten restaurant (two chef-hats) is one of the two restaurants at Palais Coburg, besides Silvio Nickol, the two Michelin-star gourmet restaurant. The business concept sets a strong focus on the hotel's wine offer, in form of the extensive wine menu (approx. 5.500 positions) and the infamous wine cellar (around 50.000 bottles), and of course their team of sommeliers. Palais Coburg employs seven sommeliers at the moment, three of them only for taking care of the wine cellar and the storage (Palais Coburg, 2012).

7.2.6. Restaurant ON

Location: Vienna, 1050

Interviewee: Mr. Simon Xie Hong and Mr. Robert Ernecker

Business Structure: Stand-alone restaurant with partner operation "China Bar"

Stand-alone Sommelier: 0

Employees: 12

Seating Capacity: 110 pax.

General Information: ON is Simon Xie Hong's restaurant in Vienna, a well-known Chinese chef. The cuisine focuses on South-Chinese cooking from the province Wenzhou with international and Austrian influences. The concept is anti-cliché and thus offers a modern and professional wine menu with well corresponding wines to the meals. It achieved 13 points in the Gault Millau guide in 2012. It tries to establish a modern Chinese restaurant with Viennese flair and a relaxed atmosphere (Restaurant ON, 2012).

7.2.7. Restaurant Landhaus Bacher

Location: Mautern, Lower Austria

Interviewee: Mr. Andreas Rottensteiner

Business Structure: Stand-alone gourmet restaurant with small hotel (10 rooms)

Stand-alone Sommelier: 1

Employees: 25

Seating Capacity: 70 pax.

General Information: Landhaus Bacher in Mautern is one of the best gourmet restaurants in Austria and also listed as number 91 of the top 100 restaurants worldwide. (www.theworlds50best.com, 2012) Chef

Lisl Wagner-Bacher is one of the best female chefs in the world and already earned two Michelin-star, 18 points in the Gault Millau guide 2018 (three chef-hats), and many more awards. The wine menu builds on regional wines from the Wachau and international wines, from Bordeaux or Champagne for example (Landhaus Bacher, 2012).

7.2.8. Hotel InterContinental Vienna - Restaurant MediterraNeo

Location: Vienna, 1037

Interviewee: Mr. Thomas Leber, Restaurant Manager and Sommelier

Business Structure: Luxury hotel of the international hotel chain Intercontinental Hotels Group

Stand-alone Sommelier: 0

Employees: 20 (Service)

Seating Capacity: 30 pax.

General Information: MediterraNeo, the restaurant in the Intercontinental Hotel Vienna, was opened in the year 2000. As a full service hotel the restaurant provides guests with breakfast and dinner. The Intercontinental Vienna was in its opening year 1964 the first one of an international brand and the largest property with 504 rooms. Using local products the cuisine is healthy and light. The hotel also has a bar, a cafe, and an exclusive club lounge (Hotel InterContinental, 2012).

The interviews were audio recorded, a fact that was no problem for all interviewees. The key areas of the interview questions were pointed out to the experts before the actual interview started to get a better overview of the questions. Afterwards it got started with the opening question to get basic information about the business concept and to relax the atmosphere. This was followed by the main questions and ultimately the key facts about the business. After completion each interview was transliterated and analyzed in regard to the research question.

7.3. Data Analysis and Interpretation

When conducting qualitative research one aims to discover relationships and underlying themes by investigating the interviewee's statements. Ideally similarities in content and linguistics are found and can be compared. The core activities at this point are describing, analyzing and interpretation of the data (Marshall & Rossmann, 2006).

After transliterating the interviews the data gets organized in an effective way. This is followed by immersing the data by reading it carefully in order to generate categories and themes - a very complex and demanding task. The researcher needs to find patterns and recurring ideas or languages. Before the interpretation and reporting starts the data needs to be coded. This supports finding final meanings by highlighting important passages (Marshall & Rossmann, 2006).

Coding the retrieved data is done by setting key words or arguments and linking them to each chapter of the interviews. This technique is vital for various forms of analyzing data, just like the grounded theory or the content analysis. In the former Strauss & Corbin (1990) explain that their idea of open coding includes "breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data". The goal is to analyze the complete information including experiences and actions retrieved by the research. Similarities and differences are investigated in the text and ultimately compared. In the latter, content analysis, a more quantitative approach is used in analyzing the interviews. Certain categories or keywords are set and then systematically analyzed in their quantity of appearance in the data, hence their level of importance and value (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

For this research the grounded theory was chosen to analyze and interpret the interviews. It is of importance to find comprehensive similarities and opinions to create arguments both supporting the literature review and answering the research question.

8. Results

In the following chapter the collected and analyzed data will be presented. The important key areas are split up and information from all interviews will be compared with each other. In course of the interpretation of the translated data following categories arose: Role definition of a sommelier and changes in guests' behavior, duties of sommeliers, advantages and disadvantages of employing a sommelier, and finally future perspectives of sommeliers in the workforce. In order to increase comprehensibility of the arguments various examples given by the interviewees are stated. As most of the key areas are closely connected arguments and topics repetitions occurred in regards to the content.

8.1. Role definition of sommeliers and changes in guests' behavior

This chapter sums up all findings concerning how the sommelier's role is perceived and how it changed over the last ten years. Moreover how guests and their behavior changed, which is of high importance as they are his customers. The content is not covered by the literature review to a large extent, as the information is mainly about personal opinions and regional trends.

After analyzing all translated interviews it appears that majority of interviewees back up the ASI's (2010) statement that essential changes took place regarding his role and his surroundings, like guests' behavior and organizational structures.

His area of responsibilities widened extremely. As Mr. Fözö, sommelier at Hotel Loisiium, Mr. Weil, sommelier at Palais Coburg, and Mr. Leber restaurant manager and sommelier at Hotel InterContinental Vienna, state he is no longer only taking care of wine, he also needs expertise in other products, such as coffee, tea, beer, non-alcoholic drinks, and furs (e.g. cigars). (vs. IV 2, p. 2, lines 25-27; IV 5, p. 2, lines 28-30; IV 8, p. 2, lines 1-10) This increased field of expertise is also mentioned by Mr. Koblinger in his interview with ÖGZ. (ÖGZ, 2012) Mr. Weil even describes sommeliers as "Genuss Manager", whereas "Genuss" is the German word for indulgence, enjoyment or pleasure. He assists guests throughout the whole menu by giving recommendations, but, moreover, also entertaining them. Therefore he definitely needs sufficient knowledge in all those fields, and as more production areas and varieties enter the market staying up to date became more difficult. However, he is convinced that focusing on regional products is always a benefit, besides covering classic products from countries like France. (vs. IV 5, p. 2, lines 27-35) Mr. Leber claims the importance of pairing beverages then with the food menus to create a harmonized experience for the guests. It appears that a sommelier's expertise is necessary to combine food and beverages well. (vs. IV 8, p. 2, lines 11-13) Mr. Fözö argues that it also is a sommelier's responsibility to find and integrate new trends and products, like it is happening with the current "bio"-

movement. A sommelier's function can also be seen as binding link between winemakers and consumers. He passes on information and stories and ultimately sells the wines. By fulfilling this task well he can both introduce guests to new products and also motivate them to become returning guests. As guests get more knowledgeable about wine, too, a sommelier is also advised to stay current in order to remain being the credible expert. Completing a good education and gathering experience is the key to do so. (vs. IV 2, p. 2, lines 26-37; p. 3, lines 4-18)

As wine is rising in popularity and complexity experts are useful advisors to guests. Guests changed in their behavior, too, and increased their knowledge. Mr. Fözö, sommelier at Hotel Loisium, experienced on his duty as sommelier that guests increased their knowledge and detected a general trend that the topic wine became popular. Dealing with it at least on a simple level is fashionable nowadays. Importance of wine rose parallel to other factors like quality and presence of the products. (vs. IV 2, p. 2, lines 3-20) Mr. Messeritsch, Chef Sommelier and the Grand Hotel Vienna, highlights here that even though guests are better informed and more interested they still are no experts in this field whatsoever. However, they can easily use techniques like name dropping (referencing famous names in conversations as arguments, e.g. winemakers, remark) which makes them appear like specialists. (vs. IV 4, p. 2, lines 10-15) Mr. Xie Hong, owner of restaurant ON, and Mr. Rottensteiner, sommelier at Landhaus Bacher, confirmed this development of increasing knowledge, curiosity and open mindedness of guests. This occurred simultaneously with a rising quality in wine over the last two decades. (vs. IV 7, p. 2, lines 21-23) Mr. Xie Hong and his external wine consultant, Mr. Ernecker, point out a challenge here: Due to their bigger knowledge base they demand more qualitative information from sommeliers and more precise recommendations. (vs. IV 6, p. 2, lines 23-30) These changes apparently have an impact on the job requirements of sommeliers, as sophisticated expertise is necessary in order to remain credible in the eyes of guests and also to fulfill their demands. Mr. Knowles argues that sommeliers can increase sales by convincing guests. By giving satisfying recommendations guests are mostly willed to buy another glass of wine as well. However, expertise is demanded to back up recommendations with facts and information. (vs. IV 1, p. 3, lines 1-16) By adapting to the guests' knowledge and wishes - and exceeding it - a sommelier can optimize recommendations resulting in higher sales. Meeting such expectations also require social skills, like empathy. According to Mr. Leber guests request an expert advising them who knows all wines on the restaurant's wine list, and further can pair them to the food menu. Sommeliers therefore need empathy in order to find out what guests' desires and expectations are and find the suitable beverage. (vs. IV 8, p. 5, lines 18-28)

As argued by Manske and Cordua (2005) a sommelier is a cost factor, as he earns a salary. Therefore he has the duty to generate economical value. The interviewees had various opinions on this topic, how the settings changed, how to compensate this issue or working with it. To Mr. Kajdocsi, restaurant manager of restaurant TIAN, it depends on two clear factors: first if the restaurant's ambiance is suitable for employing a sommelier, and second if the business can afford one as he is a cost factor. He argues that some business concepts request having a sommelier like the new Sofitel Hotel in Vienna (Luxury Brand of the Accor Hotels Group, remark) which he mentioned as example. Here guests expect a 5 star luxury service including a sommelier. However, he refers that wine consumption and prices are generally higher and therefore sufficient to finance this position. (vs. IV 3, p. 2, lines 5-8; 14-24) Mr. Weil, sommelier at Palais Coburg, justifies the cost factor as he is an expert in the field of wine, and good sommeliers are self-financing. By doing their job well revenues are increased and cover up for it. (vs. IV 5, p. 3, lines 6-9) Mr. Knowles, F&B manager at St. Martins Lodge, is also aware of this problematic cost factor and detects how the industry reacts. Sommeliers are to him the first level to cut costs, which indicates that they are "luxury assets". Therefore businesses decide against employing one and distribute his tasks among servers and supervisors. They fulfill the sommelier's responsibilities in a more cost-effective way. (vs. IV 1, p. 1, lines 14-15) At restaurant TIAN the restaurant manager, Mr. Kajdocsi, is also responsible for sommeliers' duties. He argues similarly as Mr. Knowles that the workload can be distributed among both the chef de range (head waiter, remark), who would take care of wine service at the guest, and the restaurant manager, who would fulfill all administrative and purchasing tasks. He recommends businesses to decide whether spending money to employ a sommelier, or using those funds on advanced training of employees in this field. (vs. IV 3, p. 2, lines 25-27; 30-33) By improving knowledge and skills of existing and motivated staff an organization could save running costs but offer qualitative wine service at the same time. Mr. Xie Hong clearly sees the benefits of having a sommelier, even though he is a cost factor. However, he argues that the respective restaurant also needs sufficient expensive wines on its wine list and guests will order them. With a low price level and, thus, low profit margin, it is difficult to finance one. (vs. IV 6, p. 3, 6-12) In Mr. Leber's opinion sommeliers were only employed by restaurants which could afford it so far, and furthermore have the respective food offer, ambiance and wine list. Nevertheless, it all come to one point: what do my guests expect? And can I use a sommelier as sales tool to fulfill these expectations? (vs. IV 8, p. 2, lines 16-30) Due to their expertise they are capable of explaining differences in quality and therefore also justifying prices to customers. This helps selling more expensive bottles bringing higher revenues. Autonomous sommelier have a further advantage as they choose the products they sell themselves which mostly increases

confidence and passion about the wines. This leads ultimately to a higher motivation and rising sales. (vs. IV 8, p. 4, lines 14-20)

8.2. The duties of a sommelier

This chapter sums up the gathered data on what interviewees referred to as sommeliers' duties. The findings suit well to the reviewed literature, where a number of main duties were presented, and also analyzed in detail. Most of tasks repeated themselves but the focuses and background information varied. This shall give a general picture what duties the interviewed experts perceived as important and what has to be considered in order to do the job well. Ultimately the following information can be seen as factors how a sommelier can make himself valuable.

Purchasing activities were mentioned during all interviews as important duty of a sommelier. Despite that this was not covered well in the reviewed literature the respective opinions and findings will be presented here. St. Martin Lodge's F&B Manager, Mr. Knowles, stated numerous duties but highlighted the importance of a professional purchasing process and inventory management. As he also worked as a sommelier before he combines both professions and points out critical issues. He argues that sommeliers shall do cost of sales calculations and create sales statistics. Such measure can increase cost efficiency. Furthermore, he is convinced that sommelier shall also use their expertise to introduce modern sales, promotion and efficiency procedures to the business. He recommends making a dead-stock report every 2-4 months, which checks whether there is stock in the storage that is not sold and remains untouched in the cellar. Hence the sommelier is advised to promote these products with special offers and other activities to boost sales. At the Grand Hotel Vienna Mr. Messeritsch has the advantage that all stock is documented electronically with amount and vintages. He also mentions the importance to promote wines that shall be sold due to declining sales. (vs. IV 4, p. 3, lines 4-13) Otherwise the business could face a financial loss and the wine is tied-up capital. A further example of him is working with a par-stock system, a simple system by setting a stock amount of bottles that shall be available. When a certain number is sold, Mr. Knowles and his colleagues can easily see the difference and orders this amount. This method increases efficiency and control over the cellar. Overall there shall be a good circulation in the cellar under a FIFO policy, in order to stay current with the stock. (vs. IV 1, p. 2, lines 4-13; p. 3, lines 24-29) Mr. Fözö of Hotel Loisium sums it up briefly, that sommeliers are responsible for wine purchasing, introduction of new products, checking stocks, inventory control, cellar management, pricing and calculations, and ultimately creating and updating the wine list. (vs. IV 2, p. 3, lines 21-28) This shows how wide the range of duties became, as these tasks are only part of the purchasing and

inventory management. Mr. Kajdocsi adds, that even though sommeliers often do the purchasing for various beverages, his focus still shall be on wine. Purchasing has to be economical, meaning to compare prices from different wholesalers. (vs. IV 3, p. 3, lines 31-35)

Mr. Weil, sommelier at Palais Coburg, and his colleagues detect another financial benefit of optimizing purchasing. As a team of skilled sommeliers they always aim to get discounts or other benefits, like free delivery. It is always of importance to buy cost-effectively. If prices soar up they drop the products and look for new offers. (vs. IV 5, p. 6, lines 10-14) In the end it has to be profitable, and keeping purchase prices low is essential therefore. Mr. Rottensteiner of Landhaus Bacher claims the importance of a professional purchasing process done by a sommelier, too. With a focus on guests' preferences the right amounts and vintages shall be bought cost-effectively. After all, a sommelier has to sell everything off afterwards and the risk of not selling them equals a potential financial loss. Mr. Rottensteiner explains it with the help of an example. Some light wines from Austria are consumed within two years businesses should not store them longer than that but rather get new vintages. The wines would still be edible after two years, however, the demand is just not assured afterwards. (vs. IV 7, p.2, lines 24-36) It appears as crucial combining expertise in wine with experience what guests demand. Both factors need to be optimized together. Mr. Ernecker, external wine consultant of the restaurant ON, sees opportunities for sommeliers to please frequent guests by focusing on continuous variety when purchasing wine. Such customers enjoy a changing offer rather than having the same wine list every time. Sommeliers' knowledge and experience are supportive to create such a varying wine offer on a qualitative and cost-effective level. (vs. IV 6, p. 4, lines 1-10)

Mr. Leber also highlights important areas as making calculations and managing the storage. Moreover he is convinced the better a sommelier does the purchasing the easier he can calculate the prices and consequently guests benefit. Therefore sommeliers shall check prices on a regular basis. (vs. IV 8, p. 3, lines 2-12; 19-31) All products need to be sold again, he argues, in order to keep up this cycle. (vs. IV 8, p. 4, lines 10-12) By buying the wrong amounts, either too much or less, financial losses can occur which a sommelier can compensate with his expertise and skills. As Mr. Leber is also responsible for wine purchases of all F&B outlets at the hotel he assesses a sommelier's expertise as important as he needs to reach the quality standards of the brand. (vs. IV 8, p. 4, lines 26-32)

A sommelier is also responsible for managing the wine cellar. This means checking inventory and assuring correct storing of the products. Wine is a delicate beverage and if handled incorrectly it could mature too fast and go off. This is especially a problem with expensive rarities as bottles that become

inedible are a financial loss to the company. Mr. Kajdocsi explains the importance of establishing sufficient capacity and storing furniture, in order to simplify inventory checks and ordering processes. (vs. IV 3, p. 4, lines 4-9) Wines need to be stored correctly, this means at the right temperature and position. Otherwise quality suffers, and wines could even go bad. Both Mr. Ernecker (vs. IV 6, p. 4, lines 22-25) and Mr. Weil, sommelier at Palais Coburg, are convinced of this matter. Mr. Weil adds, that a good sommelier needs know-how in this field and also conducts important measure to enhance storage quality and lower the risk of wines becoming inedible. He claims that phenomenon as waste of money resulting in a financial loss for the owner. (vs. IV 5, p. 5, lines 34-35; p. 6, lines 1-8) Mr. Knowles goes along with these opinions that wines need correct storage to keep their value and quality. He adds that due to the importance of the right temperature it is recommendable to store red, white, sparkling, and sweet wines separately. (vs. IV 1, p. 2, lines 17-21) Consequently a sommelier's knowledge is of advantage as laymen could easily make storing mistakes turning into financial losses to the business.

At this point the chapter sales and service to the guest was not covered sufficiently. During the interviews it appeared as the participants did not need to mention it, as it seems obvious for this profession anyway. As discussed extensively in the literature selling wines to guests and serving them as advisor is the core duty of a sommelier. In the literature part it went more into detail what techniques and methods are applied in order to increase sales. (ASI, 2010; Sharma, 2011; Manske and Cordua, 2005; Apfel, 1998; Gultek et al, 2006; Ralis and O'Brien, 1987; Jones and Dewald, 2006) Consequently it is plausible that interviewees did not mention this field explicitly as it appears obvious. Mr. Kajdocsi mentions the service at the guest as part of a sommelier's duty (vs. IV 3, p. 2, lines 30-33), Mr. Messeritsch perceives his role as chef sommelier at the Grand Hotel Vienna mainly in working as wine counselor and wine steward in the gourmet restaurant (vs. IV 4, p.2, lines 6-8), Mr. Xie Hong warns that sommeliers shall not be too intrusive but assist and advise guests professionally (vs. IV 6, p. 5, lines 21-25), and Mr. Rottensteiner remarks sales of wines as important part of a sommelier's duty (vs. IV 7, p. 2, lines 24-26). Mr. Leber of the Hotel InterContinental Vienna sees the sommelier in regard to sales and service from two different perspectives. He is primarily the guest's guide through the dining experience and takes care of all beverages. Secondly he is a sales tool to fulfill guests' expectations for companies in order to increase monetary value. (vs. IV 8, p.2, lines 1-13; 16-30) The data highlights the importance of sales, but also that it is a general part of a sommelier's job. The interviewees, similar to the literature, refer to further details, like selling techniques and motives. Mr. Weil also highlights the importance of sommeliers supporting guests in their wine choices. Furthermore he mentioned an interesting future concept regarding this area. The Palais Coburg's team of sommeliers thinks about integrating electric

devices, as Apple's iPad®, as electronic wine lists with extra multimedia supported information advising guests in their choices. (vs. IV 5, p. 5, lines 1-13) This is an interesting aspect, as it shows that the industry is trying to enhance and improve the sommelier's initial core duty of advising guests by supporting him with electronic devices covering parts of this task.

As discussed in the literature, Apfel (1998), Manske and Cordua (2005), and Gultek, et al (2006) are convinced of the importance of sommeliers training their staff members and colleagues. The education's content shall be win focused, like product knowledge, wine service and selling and purchasing skills. Actually letting servers taste and savor the wine are important factors often neglected in such training mentions Apfel (1998). She argues how important practical training is. Education, however, shall also include wine varieties, service skills, and food and wine pairing (Manske & Cordua, 2005). Mr. Knowles also states the importance of training staff in knowledge and skills regarding wine and other areas of interest, like liquor or glasses. The goal is to increase wine sales and up-selling as the waiter ideally demonstrates the guest this expertise and consequently convinces him of his recommendation. The knowledge about the products selling is of highest importance for sommeliers, in Mr. Knowles' opinion, in order to increase sales by convincing guests. This was also argued by Sharma (2001) and Gultek, et al (2006), that product knowledge is an important factor to lower the guests' perceived risk in ordering wine. Mr. Knowles adds, however, expertise is demanded to back up recommendations with facts and information. (vs. IV 1, p. 2, lines 14-16; 24-29; p. 3, lines 11-16) In Mr. Fözö's opinion besides increasing wine knowledge such trainings can also raise employees' enthusiasm, which has a positive impact on sales, too. The learned knowledge shall be presented to customers, but also entertaining stories about the products, as sommeliers are bindings links between winemakers and consumers. (vs. IV 2, p. 3, lines 4-18) Mr. Messeritsch educated his staff about production areas, grape varieties, flavors and service skills. He highlights the importance of those sessions for trainees. These trainings are conducted in order to increase knowledge and skills, so employees can meet guests' demands and complete a full wine service. (vs. IV 4, p. 3, lines 19-26) Mr. Weil sees the value of trainings similarly to spread knowledge among the team. It shall enable them to recommend and sell wine, especially in the sommelier's absence. Besides basics like wine production, production areas, etc. he also refers to the importance of tasting wines. (vs. IV 5, p. 4, lines 1-5) Mr. Rottensteiner clearly sees the value of training employees, especially new, motivated staff. However, there is a lack of time, thus education happens during service or after events. Wines get tasted and discussed as well as information of winemaker, vineyard and general basics. (vs. IV 7, p. 3, lines 16-20; 39-40; p. 4, lines 1-13)

8.2. Advantages of employing a sommelier

Various areas of advantages were found in the interviews. A sommelier can increase efficiency of a restaurant's operations, builds up a loyal customer base, promotes the business, establishes a supporting network with winemakers, and ultimately increases revenues.

As Mr. Knowles, F&B manager of St. Martins Lodge, described earlier a sommelier is responsible for purchasing, storing and selling of all beverages in house. By interacting in all those fields and introducing new techniques and optimizing processes he has a positive impact on the restaurant's efficiency. Mr. Knowles is convinced that by doing this well operational cost can be reduced by around € 20.000 per month. (vs. IV 1, p. 4, lines 3-26) Mr. Kajdocsi and Mr. Leber argued similarly that sommeliers cannot be solely responsible for wine in order to be economical. Mr. Kajdocsi, restaurant manager of restaurant TIAN, highlights that a sommelier as skilled labor force shall also assist the service team in other areas, especially whenever colleagues are absent from work. By doing so he can compensate work-flow issues and furthermore increase his value. (vs. IV 3, p. 6, lines 22-23) Hotel InterContinental's restaurant manager, Mr. Leber mentions the cost factor of employees and that it is necessary to allocate further duties to sommeliers or shifting his duties on other service members in order to stay economical. The InterContinental Vienna aims to promote and train its staff in order to cover those responsibilities cost-effectively. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to have a sole sommelier and a restaurant manager. Mr. Leber officially is the restaurant manager who also is responsible for all sommeliers' activities, like consulting guests or doing the wine purchase and creating the wine list. (vs. IV 8, p. 6, lines 8-21) Mr. Weil, sommelier at Palais Coburg, sees it as more and more popular trend to combine a sommelier's duties with further administrative and representative obligations. As he can be seen as manager who guides his service team he also is responsible for their performance. This leads to the assumption that as the profession sommelier got more complex itself also the responsibilities increased. (vs. IV 5, p. 7, lines 4-10)

By taking good care of guests and a general close contact a sommelier is capable of boosting a restaurant's reputation, value and , thus, its revenues. Mr. Fözö, Hotel Loisium's sommelier, sees a clear advantage of employing a sommelier as he can attract new guests, promote the restaurant and possibly turn customers into returning ones. (vs. IV 2, p. 5, lines 2-6) Mr. Kajdocsi emphasizes that good wine service and recommendations will be noticed by guests and they will choose this restaurant for enjoying wine in future, too. Guests will associate that the restaurant deals with wine critically and will offer qualitative products. (vs. IV 3, p. 5, lines 33-34) Attracting wine enthusiasts as guests is definitely a goal s

they appear willed to spend more on wine consumption. Employing an experienced sommelier has also the advantage of guests feeling well advised and trusting the recommendations, according to Mr. Messeritsch. However, experience and intuition are important to complete this task successfully. When doing this well, Mr. Messeritsch expects guests becoming willed to return and a loyal customer base is emerging. (vs. IV 4, p. 5, lines 9-14; 20-22; 26-29) Assisting the guests gets also more important regarding finding corresponding wines with meals. A sommelier has the expertise to find harmonizing pairings. Successes here can result in an increasing positive word-of-mouth and a sommelier hence fulfills promotional activity. This argument is backed up by the team of restaurant ON, who see a clear advantage here to serve customers well. (vs. IV 6, p. 5, lines 28-32; p. 6, lines 7-8) Mr. Rottensteiner of Landhaus Bacher sees the vital and personal contact to the guests as essential opportunity to improve guest relations and ultimately promoting wine per glass more effectively. He states that the current sales mix of wine is about 70 % per glass and 30 % bottles and clearly highlights the financial advantage of it. Serving glasses over bottles result in higher revenues, especially when selling corresponding menus with nine courses, for example. (vs. IV 7, p. 5, lines 17-21; 29-34; p. 6, lines 7-13; p. 7, lines 14-16) Mr. Leber adds that a sommelier has the possibilities with his special knowledge to exceed guests' expectations by presenting new experiences and thus creating "Wow"-effects. In order to achieve this a sommelier also needs to understand guests' wishes and likes, but done so both word-of-mouth and the chance of the guest returning are increased significantly. (vs. IV 8, p. 7, lines 2-4) Summarized a sommelier can improve the restaurant's customer base and their attitude. However, he is also important in difficult situations that could harm a restaurant. Mr. Weil sees the sommelier as leader of the service team as first contact person for guests, especially in case of reclamations or complaints. He ought to have sufficient knowledge and social skills to solve such issues with guests. (vs. IV 5, p. 7, lines 8-11)

Mr. Knowles, Mr. Fözö and Mr. Rottensteiner all mentioned the advantage of cooperating with winemakers. Their operations are also all outside of Vienna in rural areas. Mr. Rottensteiner tastes various new wines of young winemakers by chance looking for new products for his wine list. If the quality, taste and price work well he integrates them in his wine list. This has the aim to both presenting guests new, qualitative products, and promoting young winemakers. (vs. IV 7, p. 6, lines 33-35) Mr. Fözö sees such networking also as part of quality management. If you have good connections to your suppliers, i.e. winemakers, then you can rely on qualitative products. With low quality a sommelier cannot fulfill his job well. (vs. IV 2, p. 5, lines 2-6) Mr. Knowles' motivation for cooperating close with winemakers is also a financial one. First he mentioned the chance of negotiating economic prices for the business, but, moreover, about the possibility to create a special edition wine that can be easier

promoted due to its rarity, and also be purchased for a relatively cheaper price. A good network can also support sommeliers in organizing events, decoration or utilities. (vs. IV 1, p. 4, lines 27-30; 32-38) Building up and taking care of such a network apparently has multiple advantages, and therefore results. Operations are optimized by gaining discounts and more economical prices, the quality is assured, and it is a promotional factor. Guests appreciate new products and the social part of supporting young winemakers new on the market.

All those advantages - no matter if it is a financial or promotional factor - lead to a ultimate result: they raise profits by decreasing costs and boosting wine sales. Mr. Fözö sees another essential part of how sommeliers increase revenues as currently the trend shifts from cheap wines to more qualitative ones, for which guests are willed to pay more. For higher prices and quality it is necessary to have a good sommelier selling such qualitative products well by explaining differences. Untrained service staff is just not capable of presenting wines sufficiently well. (vs. IV 2, p. 4, lines 23-30) Mr. Weil, Mr. Leber, and Mr. Rottensteiner all conclude that sommeliers shall have the skills and expertise to conduct their duties well and are therefore capable of generating higher revenues for the business. (vs. I 5, p. 7, lines 7-23; IV 7, p. 5, lines 17-19; IV 8, p. 6, lines 24-30) According to Mr. Weil sommeliers can also have negative impacts on the business when they tell guests what wines to order even though they do not live up to the guests' expectations. Consequently such guests will be disappointed by the recommendations and would not return anymore. As building up a loyal customer base was found as a duty of sommeliers, losing guests is a significant concern to sommeliers. (vs. IV 5, p. 7, lines 28-29)

8.3. Disadvantages of employing a sommelier

The aim of this research was first to demonstrate value of a sommelier and secondly to find arguments why restaurants decide against employing one, even though those positive aspects are recognized. In this chapter the disadvantages of employing a sommelier found in the interviews are presented. The discovered factors are split up on two areas: the financial and the performance factor.

The sommelier is as an expert and human resources a cost factor. This was also previously found in the reviewed literature by Manske and Cordua (2005). The majority of the interviewees raised this issue as major disadvantage. Mr. Kajdocsi, restaurant manager at TIAN, Mr. Fözö, sommelier at Hotel Loisium, Mr. Xie Hong, owner of restaurant ON, Mr. Messeritsch, chef sommelier at the Grand Hotel Vienna, Mr. Weil, sommelier at Palais Coburg, and Mr. Leber, restaurant manager at Hotel InterContinental Vienna, all agree on this issue, that a sommelier is an extra cost factor. (vs. IV 2, p. 6, lines 9-23; 25-29; IV 3, p. 6, lines 21-26; p. 7, lines 7-12; IV 4, p.5, lines 31-33; IV 5, p. 7, lines 27-33; IV 6, p. 6, lines 10-21; 26-28; IV 8,

p. 7, lines 7-21) Mr. Fözö adds that it is especially for smaller restaurants difficult to cover such costs, whereas bigger operations have an advantage here. Nevertheless, a competent person needs to be recruited in order to increase sales. He argues, however, the same as Mr. Kajdocsi and Mr. Leber, that sommeliers can compensate this disadvantage by being flexible at work. By covering other tasks and responsibilities, e.g. administration and service duties, another position could and related costs could be saved. The ability to work in other areas too, helps optimizing the operations as well. Mr. Leber sees this especially necessary at restaurants with a high seasonality, this means stronger demand during a certain period of the year. He previously worked in St. Moritz, Switzerland, where the winter season was remarkably stronger than summer. Therefore a sommelier needed to take over other duties during the off season to justify his salary, as there was no sufficient number of guests. Mr. Messeritsch assures that sommeliers can easily compensate the mentioned cost factor as they optimize purchasing, take good care of the cellar, and vitalize the wine list. The latter offers the guests to try and enjoy new products in order to experience their dinners differently (vs. IV 4, p. 6, lines 1-14) Mr. Weil sees besides the high salary, as a sommelier is an expert in his field, a disadvantage that sommeliers need an adequate stock to work with. Wine lists with only 50 positions are insufficient, a size of 200-300 wines is needed at least. On the bottom line purchasing and storing such amounts is also a high cost factor. And all that stock needs to be sold, otherwise it is dead capital to the owner. With small wine lists, however, that mostly do not contain any expensive wines but mainly standard wines, it is difficult to generate revenues sufficient to afford a sommelier. Ultimately he needs to take care of guests and sell as much wine as necessary to justify his costs. (vs. IV 5, p. 7, lines 27-33; p. 8, lines 5-16)

A sommelier can also have a negative impact on businesses due to their bad performance. Mr. Knowles sees the selection of the right person as critical task. The "right" sommelier needs to possess knowledge and skills beyond selling wine to customers. If he does not have the expertise and experience to fulfill tasks regarding storage, purchase, or cost of sales calculations employing a sommelier will not be profitable. (vs. IV 1, p. 5, lines 5-14) Mr. Xie Hong and Mr. Ernecker of restaurant ON see it similarly. Sommeliers can cause disadvantages by performing badly, like being intrusive and telling guests what to order without minding their wishes and expectations. It is also negatively seen if sommeliers work too profit-oriented and recommend always the most expensive wines. Guests could feel embarrassed by turning down such recommendations due to the price, and therefore possibly even accept it. However, these guests are very likely not returning to the premise anymore after such an experience. (vs. IV 6, p. 6, lines 10-21; 26-28) Mr. Rottensteiner argues that employing a sommelier can turn out bad if he purchases too large amounts and under no control. This can result in too huge stocks that are hard to

sell off and, thus, turn into a financial loss for the owner. Therefore, he adds, sommeliers need to continue education and training to improve skills and knowledge and thus increase their value. (vs. IV 7, p.7, lines 25-27; p. 8, lines 2-6; p. 9, lines 1-5) Mr. Leber sees it similarly but more critical, as wine is an emotional field of interest sommeliers therefore need control. If there is no control in purchasing it could result in a financial disaster as the sommelier might order not profit-oriented. Therefore the economical thinking always needs to be priority. He needs to be aware of the products and their prices, assessing produced storing costs, and ultimately conducting pricing correctly. (vs. IV 8, p. 8, lines 10-17; 20-27) On the bottom line, Mr. Knowles argues, know-how, expertise, and experience are important to be a valuable sommelier. Regarding education Mr. Knowles refers to going further than just a sommelier diploma and rather taking courses in business and statistics - ideally F&B manager programs. This shows the trend of combining positions and furthermore adjusting the education of sommeliers in order to fit into those changes. (vs. IV 1, p. 5, lines 17-32)

8.4. Future perspectives of sommeliers in the workforce

The interview's final question dealt with the future perspective of sommeliers in the workforce. The interviewees pointed out a range of opinions and arguments - ranging from optimistic to pessimistic all alike.

Due to costs related to employing a sommelier, Mr. Knowles forecasts a trend of distributing his duties among supervisor and manager positions. A supervisor possesses service skills and shall adapt further knowledge and skills to take this area over, with an important focus on training colleagues.

Consequently he expects fewer sommeliers in future. (vs. IV 1, p. 6, lines 20-32) Mr. Weil of Palais Coburg presents a related argument. He forecasts that fewer restaurants will employ a sommelier. It will be more common to combine his position with the restaurant manager. He furthermore criticizes the current situation of sommelier educations. They need to get better, more thorough, and more time-consuming. Good education is not everything, however, as good sommeliers need to be passionate about their job and wine in general, otherwise guests will notice negatively. (vs. IV 5, p. 9, lines 28-35; p. 10, lines 1-16)

Mr. Fözö, Mr. Kajdocsi, Mr. Xie Hong and Mr. Ernecker, and Mr. Rottensteiner all highlight a positive future for sommelier in the workforce. On the one hand wine as is gaining importance the profession sommelier is rising, too, as it brings monetary value to both sommelier and business. On the other hand the wine industry rose significantly especially in Austria over the last decades and guests started expecting more qualitative and healthy products. Therefore a sommelier's assistance is valuable and he

will remain necessary in future nevertheless. However, it is clearly an economical decision whether to employ one or not and it is increasingly dependent on the business concept. A restaurant also needs an adequate customer base which expects and appreciates a sommelier's services. . (vs. IV 2, p. 7, lines 8-14; 23-28; IV 3, p. 7, lines 18-26; IV 6, p. 7, lines 29-33; p. 8, lines 1-2; 10-19; IV 7, p. 9, lines 16-30)

Mr. Messeritsch also forecasts a positive future for sommeliers on the labor market, as long as they are well educated, motivated, and show flexibility. He refers to the common problem of the extraordinary amount working hours and working on public holidays, day or night. He sees unwillingness of younger generation to bring this sacrifice. Nevertheless, he is convinced that demand is given by hotel restaurants, but also smaller, individual restaurants, and more coming in trendy, modern businesses. (vs. IV 4, p. 7, lines 20-29; p. 8, lines 4-7) Mr. Leber limits the demand on the market to larger hotels, with one or more F&B outlets with individual wine lists. He sees such operations mainly in the 5 star luxury segment, and adds gourmet restaurants as traditional employers of sommeliers. Especially at 5 star hotels in combination with gourmet restaurants offering guests a sommelier as advisor appears mandatory, as guests demand it. However, Mr. Leber argues that this profession will increase in demand and popularity, also in other fields than wine. In this industry will always be sufficient jobs. Nevertheless, sommeliers need to continue training and increase their knowledge in order to remain attractive labor forces. (vs. IV 8, p. 9, lines 22-29; p. 10, lines 2-6; 8-22)

9. Conclusion

In conclusion the role of a sommelier changed over the last decades. His area of responsibilities widened significantly. On the one hand he is not longer only handling wine, but also other products, such as spirits or cheese. On the other hand his duties diversified essentially. Traditionally sommeliers mainly served and advised guests regarding wine. Nowadays, however, the sommelier has more tasks to accomplish, as for example purchasing stock, managing the inventory, creating the wine list, and training this colleagues.

The thesis's aim was to assess a sommelier's value and finding arguments against employing one. His value was backed up by both literature review and the interviews' results. His contribution is well appreciated in the restaurant industry and numerous advantages of employing one were stated. As mentioned above sommeliers are capable of increasing business's efficiency, saving operating costs, generating revenues, and improving the social network with both winemakers and guests. However, it could not be assessed clearly how valuable each duties and responsibilities are in monetary terms.

It is argued that a good sommelier is self financing. Nevertheless the sommelier is seen as cost factor, because he earns a salary as labor force, which is often relatively higher due to his expertise and skills. Hence it is a critical question if sommeliers are capable of covering these extra costs by selling and handling wine more effectively. Besides that the discussion arose whether a sommelier is necessary overall, especially as many restaurants could earn a good reputation regarding wine offer even without one. This possibility was demonstrated by both literature review and conducted interviews. It was argued that it mainly depends on the businesses' structure, concept and customer base - ultimately the guests' expectations. Furthermore, a sommelier can have a negative impact on businesses by performing badly or lacking social skills. This can happen in form of an exaggerated purchase that realistically cannot be sold off anymore and resulting in a financial loss, or by negative guest contact jeopardizing goodwill and loyalty of guests. Unprofessional consultations and intrusive behavior towards guests were mentioned as undesired traits of sommeliers.

Overall sommeliers are perceived as experts in the field of wine generating value and revenue for restaurants. All interviewees, with or without sommeliers in their operations, detected essential advantages of employing one and therefore demand exists. However, even though this value is acknowledged some decide against working with such experts as it is a further cost factor to the business which cannot be afforded by all restaurants.

Sommeliers' future in the workforce was assessed diversely with positive and negative scenarios. Overall the trend appears to go towards large, luxurious operations which still will afford employing a sommelier as it is somehow mandatory due to guests' expectations. Restaurants that cannot afford it will think about combining positions, like employing a restaurant manager with a sommelier education, and/or training their staff to attain sufficient proficiency regarding wine handling and service to compensate the absence of a sommelier. As wine consumption and wine in general are rising in popularity it will be important to focus more on this topic either way.

Future studies could analyze sommeliers' impacts on restaurants revenues more in detail and compare them to restaurants without one.

In the end sommeliers experienced an evolution of their profession and therefore need to adapt to changes and reposition themselves on the job market.

10. Limitations

By conducting this research various problems were found and encountered which limit the outcome and results. Explicit literature on sommeliers and related topics is rare and difficult to find. The majority of used literature is made up by journals and articles. None of them focused solely on the financial aspects such as costs of employing a sommelier versus increased sales. Thus an essential element was missing to support the following qualitative research.

Regarding the primary research various limitations need to be acknowledged, as well. It was a challenge finding enough suitable interview partners who are willed to contribute to this research. Furthermore the sample was made up by eight restaurants, half with sommelier and the other half without one. All of the interviewees are experts in their field. As the sample was relatively small in size these findings cannot be generalized to the broader industry based on this study alone. Hence future studies should be conducted with a larger and more representative sample in order to get stronger results.

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12. List of abbreviations

Approx.	Approximately
e.g.	Example given
F&B	Food and Beverages
FIFO	First in first out
IV	Interview
MICE	Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions
p.	Page
Pax.	Persons approximately
PR	Public Relations
Vs.	Versus, comparing to