

Gugulethu: introducing wine to black consumers



By [Rose Setshoge](#)

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The two-day annual [Gugulethu Wine Festival](#) happened for the first time last weekend, with the objective being to tap into black consumers in Cape Town. The overall occasion was impressive but there is definitely potential to grow. Organisers and exhibitors have a few more lessons to learn, if this [festival](#) is to stay worthwhile in coming years.

Held 27-28 May 2011 on the rooftop of Gugulethu Square where the locals shop for their daily provisions, the before-sunset landscape of Devil's Peak attached to Table Mountain was incredible. The crowd flocked in pairs, wine glasses in one hand and show guides in the other, dressed to match the occasion. The overall audience was made up of predominantly black, a mixture of young (24-35) and old (36+) hence the right audience came to the party.

Brands such as Asara, Groot Constantia and Paul Cluver were enthusiastically establishing new relationships while others such as Robertson Winery, Four Cousins and Zonnebloem were there for maintenance purposes.

From both marketer and consumer perspectives, the following are some of important lessons that can be incorporated in the future planning:

1. Swirl, smell, taste and spit

It has already been established that the market within this geographic area is untapped, considering that it is the wine capital, hence attracting this crowd must be done with a strategy.

One has to consider that these "untapped" consumers are divided. The older generation has always been drinking wine but not the "right way" ie the culture of mixing reds with soft drinks has been established, while the younger is in the process of acquiring the taste. So, the overall strategy should be one of tutoring.

2. Winemakers should be at the tasting stands

Wine is complex and totally a waste of effort if a marketing manager at a stand cannot answer a simple wine-related question such as "When I smell this wine, what is there to establish?"

Brand-marketing efforts need to be backed by winemakers' expertise as the idea is to educate consumers and give them a comprehensive reason to buy the brand.

One or two brands did it right. Groot Constantia had a white winemaker who was probably in his 70's and spoke wine,

a language that most people don't understand. By his side was a young black student winemaker in his mid-20's and spoke youth and even explained a lot in Xhosa.

3. Workshops to engage consumers

There was a massive gap as far as workshops were concerned. Again, potential consumers would not just go for drinks but to obtain knowledge and that way the tapping happens.

Nederburg held a workshop about matching food and wine, which was well-organised, but could only accommodate a few consumers at a time.

Interactive workshops, covering topics such as "wine for dummies", "winemaking process", "how to shop for wine" etc, would create an unforgettable experience and the event would serve its purpose.

4. Brand appearance is totally important

If a brand wants to appeal to this audience, presentation should be on top of the list.

It was a bit disappointing that some brands did not create an atmosphere around their exhibition stands to attract the audience, such as setting up stands creatively, putting up banners and handing out leaflets about their general wines.

There is no doubt that the event will grow and will attract an even larger audience, including the already tapped. Looking forward to the next Gugulethu Wine Festival!

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ABOUT ROSE SETSHOGE

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