Panel debate:

From Terroir to TikTok: Navigating the Gen Z Shift in the Norwegian Wine Market

1. Market Intelligence: The Genesis of the BLIC Framework

Sixteen years ago, Sebastian Bredal MW submitted a dissertation on how Norwegian consumers select wine. Today, he notes that the 200-million-year-old Kimmeridgian soil of Champagne remains more relevant than that 16-year-old data.

The market has moved with violent speed. We are currently witnessing the obsolescence of the WSET quality pyramid for the under-30 consumer. This is not a peripheral shift; it is a full-scale reconfiguration of the Norwegian trade, driven by a generation practicing "hyper-moderation."

The stakes are quantified by the 2019 ESPAD report: a staggering **86% of 15-to-16-year-olds report they have not been intoxicated in the last 30 days.** This is the highest level of non-intoxication since 1995.

To navigate this, the panel established three anchors of market reality:

- **Gerard Higgins (Market Intelligence, Anora):** The structural anchor, providing granular data on the Vinmonopolet off-trade environment and the reality of the monopoly shelf.
- **Jimmy Örnewald (Restaurateur, Stranden 30/Jimmys):** The "truth-teller" from the on-trade floor, revealing the gap between what consumers claim they buy and their actual spending behavior.
- **Thea Engvik (Author, Chef, & Influencer):** The cultural translator, bridging the divide between traditional wine lore and the psychological motivations of a digitally native generation.

The core of their analysis evolved the industry's quality assessment framework BLIC (Balance, Length, Intensity, Complexity)—a radical reimagining of value.

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2. The New BLIC: Redefining Quality for a New Generation

Traditional wine metrics are failing because they assume the consumer possesses the technical "tools" to evaluate them. Thea Engvik noted that in a recent survey of her peers, only **2 out of 12 individuals even owned a kitchen scale.** If they cannot measure ingredients for a recipe, they certainly will not measure the structural components of a wine. For Gen Z, complexity is not an asset; it is a handicap—a barrier to entry that creates friction.

The following table contrasts the traditional WSET perspective with the emerging **Gen Z "BLIC" Interpretation**:

Metric	Traditional WSET Definition	The Gen Z "BLICK" Interpretation
Balance	Harmony of acidity, sugar, alcohol, and tannins.	**Balanced Life Cycle:** Alignment with "healthy habits" and the No/Low alcohol trend.

Length	Persistence of flavor on the palate.	**Length of Attention:** The critical 6–7 second window (shrinking to 3) to secure interest.
Intensity	Concentration of flavor and structure.	**Intensity of Experience:** The emotional "vibe," the social "hook," and the situational impact.
Complexity	Multiple layers of primary, secondary, and tertiary aromas.	**Complexity as a Handicap:** Viewed as intimidating "homework" rather than a mark of prestige.

The "So What?" Layer: Producers must pivot from "Appellation First" to "Accessibility First." If your product is perceived as "mid"—Gen Z slang—it is invisible. Success in the Norwegian market now requires moving beyond the "wine vortex" of technical data and prioritizing the situational utility of the bottle.

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3. The 6-Second Battle: Competing in the Attention Economy

In the attention economy, your competitor is not a neighboring vineyard; it is TikTok, video games, and energy drinks. You have six seconds of attention, and arguably only three to land the "hook."

Tactical Mandates for the "Hook":

- **Vibe over Vintage:** Thea's content proves this. A post titled "The Perfect Friday Night with Friends" or "The Friday Taco Wine" garners hundreds of thousands of views. Conversely, a technical video on "What Chianti Should Taste Like" fails to gain traction.
- **The Pedigree Trap:** Leading with 200 years of family history is a strategic failure. Heritage is "second-stage" storytelling. It only matters *after* you have proven the wine's function in the consumer's life.
- **Radical Brevity:** Whether it is a digital ad or a back-label in Vinmonopolet, you must explain what the wine *does for the consumer* before explaining how it was made.

The "So What?" Layer: This collapse of attention forces a total overhaul of the "romance copy" on back labels. Consumers are looking for a reason to buy, not a history lesson. If you cannot communicate the "vibe" in the time it takes to scroll, you have already lost the sale.

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4. Safety, Authenticity, and "Horizontal Hospitality"

Gen Z are "risk-averse safety seekers." They have grown up with high inflation and digital transparency, making them immune to traditional marketing "tricks." They are not "dumb"—they are the same generation that has mastered the chemistry of skin care, discussing complex ingredients like niacinamide to achieve "glass skin." They can handle technicality, but only when the **utility** is proven first.

The Pillars of Engagement:

- **Horizontal Hospitality:** This is "eye-to-eye" service. It removes the "top-down" sommelier hierarchy and the "fear of the test." It meets the consumer where they are, making the experience frictionless and welcoming.
- **The Safety Hook & Honest Pricing:** Jimmy highlighted the need for transparency. Using "honest numbers" (e.g., 1,100 NOK) rather than psychological pricing (1,099 NOK) builds the trust this generation craves.
- **Predictability as Premium:** A "safe investment" (a wine with a predictable flavor profile) is more attractive than a "prestige investment" (an expensive, complex label that requires an exam to understand).

The "So What?" Layer: To win this generation, you must provide security. They are looking for authenticity they can "sniff out" from a distance. If they don't feel safe, they won't spend.

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5. Strategic Mandates for Norwegian Importers and Producers

The Norwegian market is currently in a state of value-driven premiumization. While volumes are under pressure, Gerard Higgins reports a **1% value growth** in the market. The strategy is no longer about selling more; it is about protecting the value of the category.

High-Value Mandates:

- **Aggressively Capture No/Low:** With **54% of wholesalers** expecting growth in the non-alcoholic segment, and new monopoly tenders focused on quality alcohol-free options, this is a mandatory entry point.
- **Do Not Look Down on the Spritz:** Categories like flavored wines and spritzes are "Master Brand" recruiters. Do not look down your nose at Aperol's success; learn from it. These are the entry points that build your ecosystem.
- **Execute "Sommelier's Task":** In the on-trade, technical data is irrelevant. After 15 years on the floor, Jimmy realized nobody cares about the specs. The task is to find the **one personal story**—the visit, the personality, the anecdote—that resonates at the table.
- **Function-First Marketing:** Transition back-label copy and shelf-talkers from "terroir/soil" to "occasion/pairing."

The "So What?" Layer: Maintaining a defensive posture rooted in traditional complexity is a failing strategy against the rise of beer, spirits, and functional beverages. Wine must "earn its place" in the glass by being culturally relevant and frictionless.

Conclusion: Tomorrow morning, you will stand before 1500 consumers. They do not want to be tested; they want to be included. If you lead with soil types, you are speaking a dead language. Lead with the vibe, secure the safety of the investment, and use your heritage only to deepen a connection that has already been won through relevance.