

Embracing opportunities at the nexus of wine and hospitality

This special issue, “Embracing Opportunities at the Nexus of Wine and Hospitality,” of the *International Journal of Wine Business Research* highlights the intersection of wine and hospitality. The purpose of this issue was to advance and embrace the inherent possibilities emerging from scientific study of wine in the context of the hospitality industry. In a recent review of existing wine research (representing 22 wine business, hospitality and tourism journals and 739 refereed articles over a 26-year period from 1990 to 2015), [Bonn et al. \(2017\)](#) concluded:

Perhaps no other topic involving wine research is more overdue for focus than that of hospitality. Until this point, hospitality and wine research has been subjugated to topics related to wine menus, service training, and wine judging. The time has come where hospitality must begin to embrace opportunities associated with wine research and consumer behavior. Studies involving wine and food pairings, wine dinners, consumer spending patterns influenced by menu choices and menu design paired with wine suggestions, wine bars [. . .] should all be analyzed as future research topics (p. 29).

For the purpose of differentiating this special issue topic, we defined the concept of hospitality as spaces where onsite wine consumption was a greater consumer motivation than wine purchase for home or gift use. We also distinguished hospitality spaces from traditional winery tasting rooms (cellar door experiences). The focus was on restaurants, bars, hotels and other non-winery retail properties serving wine to consumers on the premises.

There are seven papers in this special issue. Several of these looked at aspects of wine distribution and consumption in restaurants. In a viewpoint paper by Velikova, Canziani and Williams, challenges and opportunities are described for wineries seeking to distribute their wine to restaurants, with a special focus on relationship building between smaller wineries and dining establishments. In addition to discussing factors critical to these relationships, the authors offered practical strategies to develop mutually beneficial partnerships while fulfilling the objectives and missions of both winery and restaurant.

In the article by Bruwer, Cohen and Kelley, the function of an individual’s level of wine involvement was explored in the context of group dining in the US market. This study has added an important sociological element to the existing wine business literature, as this is the first paper to deconstruct dining groups (dining parties) by looking at the level of wine involvement of individual party members. This paper suggests that a person’s wine involvement was associated with dining group composition, group dynamics and individual member role behaviors. The authors also developed wine-involvement diner profile descriptions that could be helpful for restaurants when creating strategies for selling wine. The implications are many for future research, as diners’ involvement with other menu items may also impact the success of food-wine pairings. Additionally, inter-group dynamics are a fertile arena for further exploration.

Up next is Brain’s study of wine training for restaurant staff in South Africa. The study was designed in part to verify the concrete business benefits of furnishing restaurant staff with greater formal wine knowledge and skills. Wine training for personnel selling wine seems to be a logical step for restaurants, as many restaurants cannot afford highly trained (and paid) sommeliers. Using a quasi-experimental research design, the author applied a wine training intervention and monitored wine sales over three sequential phases of the



study. Comparison of the control group versus the experimental group suggested that wine sales did increase when formal wine training was provided to staff. This work is of practical significance in that it underscores a continued need for the hospitality and the wine fields to join their efforts in getting restaurant staff equipped to deliver wine to the customer in a professional and meaningful way. As noted in the first viewpoint paper, wineries may want to support or subsidize wine training for restaurants they plan to partner with in selling their wine. Brain's findings give them the impetus to do so.

Moving further into the consumer behavior realm, insights into the interplay among hospitality settings, consumer traits and wine attributes are offered in the next two papers, starting with a focused study by Capitello, Bazzani and Begalli investigating Italian rosé wine consumption in two out-of-home consumption environments. This research examined the effect of consumption context on individuals' preference formation. By incorporating personality traits in the model, the authors explored how personality may affect wine consumption context choices. Three profiles of rosé wine drinkers are offered, and differences between consumers who prefer to drink rosé in different hospitality consumption situations are highlighted.

Similarly, the next paper by Duhan, Rinaldo, Velikova, Dodd and Trela also viewed wine consumption through the prism of various hospitality situations, but their approach was rooted in the people-product-situation framework. Three empirical studies described in the paper tested the theoretical propositions of the framework in the wine consumption context. Findings from this paper suggest that the level of consumers' expertise with wine (experts versus novices) affects how sensitive they are to the perceived appropriateness of different wine closures in different consumption situations. Furthermore, the authors suggested and tested the robustness of the three-dimensional structure of wine hospitality situations – food, friends and formality.

In the final two papers, ground-breaking work was shared on consumer opinions of wine service in unique hospitality settings such as hotels and in the retail category of the German wine bar and shop. The paper by Hsieh, Lee and Yin concentrated on hotels in New York City, a prime lodging hotspot. The research team explored vital questions such as the importance of wine as an attractor for hotel guests by categorizing online consumer reviews captured from the TripAdvisor travel media site using wine-related content search keywords. They were able to discriminate among consumer reports of positive, negative and neutral hotel experiences, granting additional perspectives on how wine products and services impact the perceived quality of a hotel stay. Their findings and recommendations clearly strengthen the lodging sector's use of wine as a means to enhance hotel guest experience and to generate additional revenue.

Looking at the German wine bar and shop sector, Dressler and Paunovic considered the integration of sales and service in this dual role retail/hospitality venue to test the theoretical notion of blurred division between product and service offerings. Their methodology extracted a set of complementary bar and shop designs with different mixes of product and services. This paper adds value in that it reinforces the role of augmented wine experiences to attract visitors to wine bar and shop locations, including the use of stimulating architectural design features. Two interesting avenues arise from their research. First, we need to take a closer look at the notion of hybrid designs in constructing outlets for the sale and consumption of wine beyond the winery tasting room. Second, in the right setting, the wine bar and shop can foster collaboration among wineries, wine experts, catering/food and entertainment industries, each bringing singular competencies to create expanded wine-related experiences.

To sum up, the call-for-papers for this special issue “Embracing Opportunities at the Nexus of Wine and Hospitality” proposed a three-pronged approach to the role of wine in the hospitality sector. It invited papers that would address wine from perspectives of the hospitality service operation, the hospitality consumer viewpoint or the wine product itself as it is offered or presented by the hospitality establishment. The contributing authors rose to this challenge; there is a solid mix of papers that explore these research foci.

We are confident that this special issue has led to greater insights into wine service and wine products in the hospitality sector. One such insight is that of strategic partnerships that can be developed between hospitality companies and wine purveyors, especially smaller wineries.

Training emerged as a critical success factor given evidence of increased revenues for restaurants employed trained wine servers. We have seen concepts in consumer behavior such as wine involvement, wine expertise and experiential consumption applied in unique ways and to new settings. New trends have been identified with respect to consumer preferences and social norms in special cultural contexts. This special issue has also shed light on consumer beliefs and behaviors regarding wine consumption and purchase that are uniquely linked to alternate hospitality spaces such as hotels and wine bar and shops.

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Reference

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