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Title

Sensory Perceptions and Embodiment in Wine Consumption

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Keywords

Embodiment, sensory perceptions, conceptual metaphor, conceptual blending, wine consumption, Wine Speak

Research Question

In this paper, we investigate the complex multi-sensory responses required to experience and evaluate wine.

Methods

Through interviews, observations, and wine tastings with novices and experts, along with metaphor and blending analysis, we interpret "taste" not only in terms of flavor but also culture capital.

Results

Embodiment processes in wine consumption can be understood at the conscious level using Merleau-Ponty's concept of perception. At the unconscious level, we use conceptual metaphor/blending to elaborate on embodiment.

Abstract

Purpose: In this paper, we investigate the complex multi-sensory responses required to experience and evaluate wine. We suggest that wine tasting be recognized as an aesthetic experience that allows individuals to enlarge their understanding of wine and experience pleasure.

Method: Through interviews, observations, and wine tastings with novices and experts, along with metaphor and blending analysis, we interpret similarities and differences, with the concept of taste referring not only to flavor but also to cultural capital.

Findings: Embodiment processes in wine consumption can be understood at the conscious level using Merleau-

Ponty's concept of perception and virtual enactments. We argue that while the structure of perception is given by imagination, fanciful imaginings—in particular, those used by experts—to identify the wine in blind tastings can also be understood through the foreground/background effect. The perceiver and imaginer are the same; what links them is the imagining body. At the unconscious level, we use conceptual metaphor and conceptual blending processes to elaborate on embodiment to understand the taste regime processes associated with wine. The image schemas provide a detailed understanding of how the logic of the body affects our thinking; conceptual blending provides additional input. As one wine expert, John, observed, "I think of wine tasting [as] a process: entry [the container schema], attack [the intensity schema], and finish [balance schema]. Entry deals with assessments of whether the wine is sweet or dry, tannic or not, has chemical aromas, bitterness and so on. The attack deals with the body and the structure of the wine: Is it balanced? What is the texture? How does it feel in the mouth? Exit deals with what the finish is like: Is it long, medium, or short? Is it intriguing because of the complexity of the wine? What is the aging potential of this wine?" Our participant uses the path schema: There is a starting point, a direction, and an endpoint that Lakoff and Johnson term the source-path-goal schema.

Individuals continually create blends and live in blends that are culture-specific (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). The blended space is a living entity, engaged in attack and contributing to a positive or negative outcome. For examples of conceptual blending, we turn to the central ethos of one renowned winery in the Okanagan Valley -the Cedar Creek Estate Winery.

Our Wine is Our Word

The commitment by Cedar Creek implicit in the tagline "Our Wine is Our Word"

[<https://www.cedarcreek.bc.ca/our-story/our-history/>] is a solemn promise that consumers will receive the highest quality of a wine. "Our wine" encompasses wine and all the processes of making wine, such as viticulture and quality definitions, with 'is' as the internal connection. The second input space features "our word" – a frame of a reliable and truthful individual with whom a relationship built on trust can be forged. Two causally related actions are implied, with one preceding the other: all actions are taken to seek truth in wine-- i.e., the creation of quality wines--precede "This is our promise." The phrase 'the word' is laden with a multitude of weighty connotations: Our word, as the phrase goes, is our bond. The use of 'our word' incorporates biblical references ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1), even as it also serves as a memorable marketing tagline. The generic space includes an agent, quality control, actions and results that provide a basis for cross-space mapping between the two input spaces and the selective projection from the input spaces into the blended space. In this case, wine corresponds to human beings, the high quality of a wine to a sincere human being, such that wine stands for a human being. The three principles of conceptual integration are composition, completion, and elaboration are used to create meaning (Fauconnier and Turner 2002). By cross mapping selective elements into the blended space—an authentic high-quality wine equals a sincere and dependable human serving as the first step of conceptual integration-- "composition" is completed. To keep one's word—and to create a quality wine--takes time and effort. Thus, the second step of "completion" is over because the focus is on building relationships over time, which equals creating quality wine over time. Elaboration, which is the third step of conceptual integration, happens when the wine speaks for the human – it "is our word." The wine speaks for itself and for the winemaker.

On the company website, the company further states that "We seek truth in wine."

[<https://www.cedarcreek.bc.ca/our-story/our-history/>] The statement is a twist on the ancient Latin phrase *In vino veritas* ("In wine, truth"), which avers that an inebriated person, free of inhibition, will be truthful. In Cedar Creek's version, the winery seeks to be truthful deliberately rather than from sloppy carelessness. Seeking truth in wine, by implication, precipitates a greater understanding of the components and processes involved in making a great wine--starting with an understanding of terroir and use-appropriate and site-specific viticulture practices. The meanings of making wine are cross-mapped with the object of seeking "truth". The input spaces and meanings are bounded by conceptual frameworks--the semantic relations among concepts. In the first input-space are wine and the making of wine, including processes that start in the vineyard. In the second input-space, the frame is "truth" and the attributes of truth, such as 'truth will always win'. The generic space outlines structural elements shared by input spaces – in this case, processes that lead to truth, on a path that is difficult. Such structural similarities allow cross-mapping to occur. Ultimately, these relations generate new meanings in the blended spaces that emerge in the process of conceptual integration. In the end, the outcome could be that the wine produced will be splendid (Cedar Creek has won international acclaim for its wines) just as truth is victorious.

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