

## Vienna 2019 Abstract Submission

### Title

APPROACHING WINE APPRECIATION HOLISTICALLY

### I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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### Keywords

taste, learning, appreciation, holistic, analytic, experiment, survey

### Research Question

Does a cross-sensory holistic approach to learning enhance consumers' tasting, and do experts, over time, begin to incorporate a cross modal approach to their tasting?

### Methods

Experiment and survey

### Results

A holistic cross sensory learning approach was found to enhance consumer taste memory (vs analytic), and wine experts reported cross modal and mindful tasting more so than enthusiasts.

### Abstract

APPROACHING WINE APPRECIATION HOLISTICALLY

Consumers today are not content with merely knowing about a product, they desire mastery. Development of expertise is thought to enhance appreciation (Clarkson, Janiszewski and Cinelli 2013) by resulting in a fluency experience that accrues from both familiarity and more reasoned analysis. Expertise can also be a social cue for when it comes to high status products. For instance, consider the case of wine. Wine enthusiasts have always been an important part of the market, but recently their enthusiasm for learning has become more obsessive. In the past decade there has been a rapid increase with the amount of wine schools, wine educational materials produced, and with curiosity and intrigue with the world of master tasters. The largest wine educational foundation—the Wine and Spirits Educational Trust (WSET)- saw its numbers increase 16% in 2013 with more than 56,000 students world-wide. Thousands paid to vicariously experience the Master Sommelier exam through the movie SOMM (Teeter 2014). The number of people sitting for the Master Sommelier exam has doubled within the last five years, and the first level of sommelier education has increased over 20% (Court of Master Sommeliers 2014). Despite those increases in learners, there is no evidence that more consumers are becoming more nuanced in their taste appreciation. In fact, 2014 saw the fewest number of Master Sommeliers confirmed despite the larger subject pool, and in 2018 the group experienced a scandal surrounding their tasting exam. The process of learning and obtaining mastery within an ambiguous product category is difficult (Hoch and Deighton 1989). Taste mastery is particularly difficult to obtain (Hoegg and Alba 2007). Constellation Brands conducts yearly studies on consumer segments and finds roughly a third of consumers find wine to be “confusing” in spite of the industry’s attempt to enhance consumer knowledge

(<http://www.cbrands.com/news-media/constellation-brands-reveals-third-phase-cutting-edge-consumer-insights-study>).

An analytic piece meal approach has been suggested to assist novices in their learning (Alba and Hutchinson 1987). As example for wine, the wine aroma wheel has specific words associated with certain grapes to help consumers classify and describe their experience (Noble et al 1987). These tools provide consumers a lexicon or consumption vocabulary in which they can assess their experience in objective and consistent ways (West, Brown and Hoch 1996). Embracing and using the lexicon is viewed as a critical component of the learning process and can lead to better memory for an otherwise ambiguous experience (LaTour and LaTour 2010).

Holistic processing has been defined in the consumer research area as “involving an orientation to the context or field as a whole, including attention to relationships between a focal object and the field, and a preference for explaining and predicting events on the basis of such relationships” (Nisbett et al. 2001, 293, cf. Monga and John 2007). Analytic processing meanwhile “involves a detachment of the object from its context, a tendency to focus on attributes of the object to assign it to categories, and a preference for using rules about the categories to explain and predict the object’s behavior” (Nisbett et al.2001, 293). Within consumer behavior, these processing styles have been linked to different cultural backgrounds, with Eastern being more holistic and Western more analytical (Monga and John 2007)

This research investigation proposes that a more holistic, cross-sensory approach may not only be more helpful for wine enthusiasts, but also better represent the manner experts approach wine tasting. Master Sommeliers highlighted the importance of visual imagery to their obtaining taste expertise in depth interviews discussed in LaTour and Deighton (2018). Such imagery allowed them to capture a more holistic impression of the wine and integrate other modalities like smell and auditory associations. Researchers have found that while trained musicians show superior sensorimotor integration, that both novices and experts perform better when imagery is evoked (Brochard, Dufour and Despres 2004). Other research (e.g., Parr et al 2004) suggests that wine experts’ perceptual skills of olfactory imaging are what differentiate experts from novice wine tasters.

While prior research has found teaching consumers to experience wine more holistically can lead to better memory of the experience (LaTour and Deighton 2018), the majority of the wine education programs focuses on analytical methods such as with the tasting grid and the wine aroma wheel. See Table 1 that differentiates these two different approaches to learning.

TABLE 1: COMPARISON OF TYPES OF LEARNING

Analytic	Holistic
Reductionist	Integrative
Rule-based	Intuitive
Non-emotional	Gut feeling
Abstract, language	Concrete
Disassociated	Embodied
Sequential, linear	Simultaneous, emergent

The purpose of the present research is to 1) identify whether regular wine consumers might benefit from a holistic approach to wine that employs cross modal learning (vs analytic); and 2) whether those with greater wine knowledge have, over time and with experience, learned to employ a more cross modal view to their wine tasting. The results of a multi-method investigation of consumer learning of wine will be presented. The findings indicate that consumers are able to embrace a more holistic mindset that enhances learning of their taste experience, and that experts are more likely to report approaching wine in a mindful manner that incorporates synesthetic processes. The implications of this work for wine education will be discussed.

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