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Sustaining Research on Wine Related Topics: A Wine Marketing Manuscript about Writing Wine Marketing Manuscripts

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Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of the manuscript is to explore the benefits of collaboration in wine business research.

Design/methodology/approach: This topic is approached using a case study from a group of scholars who successfully integrated their research backgrounds into wine business research. The overview examines the mechanisms and attributes that helped lead to success.

Findings: A number of factors were considered that made the collaboration successful. These include the size of the group, establishment of a communicator, willingness to listen and respect others ideas, dedicated working sessions, setting specific goals, the use of diagrams to represent proposed ideas, and diversity of team members career paths.

Practical implications: Collaboration in wine marketing research holds considerable promise and seems to be growing. Working with other faculty members from a range of disciplines offers potential opportunities to examine issues impacting the wine industry in much more meaningful ways than the single discipline approach. Examination of attributes that are important to successful collaboration is useful for faculty considering ways to expand their research.

Key words: Collaboration, Wine research

1. INTRODUCTION

For many faculty conducting research and preparing manuscripts is a solitary endeavor. To paraphrase George Thorogood (1985), “when I write (drink) alone, I prefer to be by myself”. However, the reality of the academic world is that in many cases, rather than working alone, groups of faculty members from different countries, disciplines, and backgrounds are increasingly collaborating on projects. The current paper is an overview of the process and benefits of such collaboration based on the experiences of one group in a relatively new wine producing region.

Wine is a complicated product in a sense that there is a strong emphasis on combining a number of different aspects to produce a quality product. Even terms such as *winegrower* or *vigneron* typically are used within the industry to reflect the idea of multiple people, disciplines and skills being involved in the production of wine. Other terms used in the wine industry, such as *terroir*, also imply a multitude of factors and influences as being important rather than just a narrow focus on one component in the production of wine.

However, sometimes research concerning wine is approached from one discipline or even single topic focus. This single author and discipline approach clearly has some strength in providing depth, but the narrow focus may also mean that a particular topic is looked on only from a specific viewpoint. In most cases, scholars who conduct wine research are specialists in a wide a range of base disciplines, such as marketing, hospitality, tourism, social psychology, geography, etc. Researchers then are applying theories and concepts of these disciplines to wine research.

This approach was probably inevitable in much of the early wine business research where pioneering researchers tended to conduct studies in their own area that would pave the way for further research. Authors such as Lockshin, Spawton, and Dodd conducted marketing and tourism studies during the late 1980s and early 1990s tended to focus on their area of expertise (e.g., Dodd, 1995; Dodd and Gustafson, 1997; Lockshin, Spawton, and Macintosh, 1997; Macintosh, Lockshin, and Spawton, 1997; Spawton, 1986, 1991).

However, more recently, a number of teams of researchers from different backgrounds seem to be interested in working together. The research they conduct is sometimes across cultures, as well as academic areas. A notable example of such collaboration is a recent study designed to be a cross-cultural examination of young peoples’ views on sparkling wine and champagne. The project brought together nine researchers with different backgrounds across five Anglophone countries, comprising Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the USA (Charters, Fountain, Kolyesnikova, Ritchie, Thach, Dodd, Fish, Herbst, and Terblanche, 2011).

For the purposes of the current paper, an overview of authorship in the International Journal of Wine Business Research within the three-year period (2007-2009) was conducted. Table 1 indicates that published articles with multiple authors by far exceed the number of articles with single authors. In addition, collaboration seems to expand through multiple countries and multiple institutions.

Table 1. Overview of Authorship of Articles Published in the International Journal of Wine Business Research (2007-2009)

Year of Publication	Number of articles with single authors	Number of articles with multiple authors	Number of countries	Number of authors	Number of Institutions	Average number of authors in an article
2007	3	18	25	51	32	2.43
2008	3	18	28	49	32	2.33
2009	6	15	25	47	32	2.24

Part of the reason for these collaborations may be the maturation of the area of research which has increased the number of researchers involved in wine marketing and tourism research. Collaborations may also reflect the broadening and deepening of research into the topics being studied.

There may also be some disadvantages to the collaborative approach. These disadvantages may include problems with differing and potentially difficult personalities of the researchers, difficulties in dividing workload, an expanded timeframe needed to get contributions from various individuals, and issues related to authorship order. These potentially negative aspects of collaboration can negatively impact a research project if not managed appropriately and is the reason that some authors prefer to work alone despite the advantages that multiple authorship can bring. Although these disadvantages need to be acknowledged and are mentioned briefly here this is not the main purpose of the paper.

The purpose of this discussion is to explore the benefits of collaboration in wine business research. This topic is approached using a case study from a group of scholars who successfully integrated their research backgrounds into wine business research. The overview will also examine the mechanisms and attributes of a team that helped lead to success. Although each research team is different, it is suggested that collaborating groups should consider some of the issues that are identified as leading to success.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Hafernik, Messerschmitt, and Vandrick (1997) noted that collaborative research has increased substantially over the past 100 years. This has been reflected in the number of journal articles that are being co-authored and in the number of Nobel prizes awarded to teams rather than individuals. The authors also noted that a greater tradition of collaborative projects may be partly attributed to the complexity of research projects, as well as the methods involved to obtain results.

Although the act of writing is generally a solitary act, the processes of research including the development of ideas on topics, collecting and analyzing data, and examining conclusions are often done in team environment. Collaborating with others is often a way to break out of the isolated roles that often go along with research and writing and help develop a community of researchers (Furman, 2007).

Collaboration helps develop both the range of research skills that can be applied to a project, as well as enable substantial efficiencies in the completion of that research. Efficiency in

particular is an important reason to conduct research and writing collaboration (Furman, 2007). For instance, if one member of a research team is familiar with a certain theory or area of literature, that person can apply his/her area of expertise to the project in a relatively short amount of time. A lone researcher whose background is not related to the topic of investigation may have had to spend several weeks or months researching the topic, requesting and reading through a large number of articles and generally doing a lot of work to just become familiar with the area. Expertise in research methodology or statistical techniques by a member of a collaborative group is another example of an opportunity for efficient use of time and focus on areas of strengths by the team members.

There are a variety of forms of collaboration. Hafernik et al. (1997) suggest that there are two broad categories - hierarchical and equal. A hierarchical category typically implies mentorships, and these can be formal or informal relationships that are developed between a mentor and a mentee. Junior faculty in particular can benefit from such collaboration as they begin their academic careers and have a much better chance of success with the support of colleagues (Berger, 1990). In particular, collaboration efforts can also help new faculty who may lack confidence in their research and writing skills (Hafernik et al., 1997). These mentorship relationships can also provide a number of benefits for senior faculty including working with younger graduate students or new professors who may be more familiar with new approaches, technology, or the latest literature.

With this background, we decided to examine a collaborative effort that had taken place over more than 15 years and assess how this collaboration had developed, what outcomes occurred, and address some of the critical aspects that seem to make it successful. In particular, the assessment is based specifically over the period of the past five years when the collaboration became more focused.

3. CASE STUDY

3.1. Background

During the late 1980s, funding was provided to establish the Texas Wine Marketing Research Institute at Texas Tech University (Lubbock, Texas, USA). The mission of the Institute was to help assist with the development of the emerging Texas wine industry. State funding was provided to the Hospitality Management Department which is housed in the College of Human Sciences to provide economic and marketing research information to the burgeoning industry. Shortly after the establishment of the Institute, Marketing faculty from the College of Business at Texas Tech University started becoming involved in a number of wine-related studies. The two departments worked on and off together over the next decade and a few joint publications were produced. In 2005, however, a more deliberate attempt was made to work together on a regular basis. Two faculty members from the Hospitality department (also associated with the Texas Wine Marketing Research Institute) and three members of the Marketing department were involved in this more focused effort. The reason for this more focused effort was to improve the quality and scope of the research currently being conducted at Texas Tech and to make a wider contribution to the literature related to wine marketing.

3.2. Why Collaborate?

The group found that the issues that they began looking at were often complex with a number of different aspects to them. In many cases, one discipline or area could not provide a well-

rounded approach to examining the particular issues. For example, wine marketing issues cut across areas such as tourism and hospitality that marketing faculty may not have the background to tackle effectively. On the other hand, hospitality and tourism faculty often do not have the depth of knowledge concerning specific areas of marketing expertise in areas such as brand management, consumer behavior, strategy, etc. which often needs to be directed to a particular wine related issue. Expertise in those areas can substantially enrich wine studies. This blend of more applied and product focus from the hospitality faculty and the strong theory rich work from the marketing faculty help provide the depth to study real world problems from a variety of approaches and angles.

3.3. What has made it work?

A number of factors made this collaboration successful. Although these factors may not relate to every collaborative effort, they are aspects that different groups should consider when working together. These include the size of the group, establishment of a communicator, willingness to listen and respect others ideas, dedicated working sessions, setting specific goals, the use of diagrams to represent proposed ideas, and diversity of team members career paths.

3.3.1. *Size of the group*

The size of the group is important. At various times, the group of wine researchers at Texas Tech University has been tempted to add others and use their expertise. However, this has been resisted because of the concern that management of the group would become unwieldy. Trying to organize meetings, obtain feedback and handle other forms of communication became increasingly difficult with a larger group. Thus, we have stayed with a group of five.

3.3.2. *Establishment of a communicator*

Having a “champion” person to be the leader, communicator, and organizer of the group is critical. Without this person constantly bringing everyone together and outlining tasks, deadlines and planning, it is unlikely that much would be accomplished. The individual needs to keep the group focused on producing specific outcomes and to serve as a coordinator for the various submissions of conference papers and manuscripts. The group was fortunate in that an individual with very strong organizational skills has taken on the task.

3.3.3. *Willingness to listen and respect ideas*

The willingness of group members to listen to new ideas and really understand and respect each other is important. Although hospitality and marketing have many things in common, there are different perspectives, different vocabulary and approaches to these problems. Each faculty member makes sure they listen and understand the different perspective and ideas that are being introduced no matter how skeptical they may be. Over time it did become easier to understand each faculty member’s ideas and way of thinking which improved communication and the free flow of ideas.

3.3.4. *Working sessions, specific goals, the use of diagrams*

Meeting times are always dedicated to achieving specific goals. In most cases, they start off as brainstorming sessions to develop ideas for research projects that could be presented at

conferences. Team members also exchange wine-related articles via email communication. Sometimes these articles would spark an idea for a research project. Ideas would be generated, discussed, and narrowed down to a handful of potential projects. From there, one individual (“the champion”) would typically take the lead at developing the conceptual framework and the methodology. Others would start adding sections to the paper or helping with data analysis. Following the conference presentations, additional sessions would sometimes be held to discuss the development of full manuscripts that could be submitted to journals. A lot of work is also done through e-mail with various group members adding to the initial draft. The use of diagrams to represent the ideas of various faculty members is seen as an important tool to help everyone understand what is being suggested. Models help keep the group on the same page as far as the items being discussed and help make sure that areas aren’t missed with the many authors involved in writing different parts.

3.3.5. Diversity of team members career path

Faculty members were at different career stages and involved in different aspects of college life. Currently, four of the faculty members are Full Professors and two of those have significant administrative responsibilities. The other faculty member is an untenured Assistant Professor. Having people at different stages in their careers and with different responsibilities helped provide diversity of thought as well as a different focus. However, there are challenges with this as in some cases there can be a problem as the priorities and commitments individuals have with respect to their positions may be different. For instance, an untenured faculty member may have a little more urgency about getting a paper published within a certain timeframe than a faculty member who has tenure and is involved with a number of other activities

3.4. Results of Collaboration

Since the group has started meeting regularly since 2005 a number of presentations have been developed and several refereed articles published. Most of the focus has been through wine conferences, such as the Academy of Wine Business Conferences and wine journals, such as the International Journal of Wine Business Research. However, publications have also been developed for marketing and hospitality journals with wine used as a product being researched. To date, the collaboration outcomes include 8 published refereed articles, 13 academic conference presentations (including the current conference), and numerous industry presentations. This collaborative effort has become the focus of much of the research produced by the faculty members and an enjoyable way of working with colleagues from across colleges. One of the main benefits for wine research is that it has provided much greater depth to the research on wine by including expertise from a number of areas of specialization. Wine marketing involves issues related to production, distribution, retail outlets, and consumer behavior, just to mention a few. Wine is a complex product and by engaging with a number of faculty with experiences in consumer behavior, methodology, strategy, wine marketing and wine tourism, unique projects have developed and greater insight achieved.

4. CONCLUSION

Collaboration in wine marketing research holds considerable promise and seems to be growing. Working with other faculty members from a range of disciplines offers potential opportunities to examine issues impacting the wine industry in much more meaningful ways

than the single discipline approach. Further research that examines some of the attributes that are important to successful collaboration or provides models to help collaborative efforts would be useful for faculty considering ways to expand their research.

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