

## **Environmental Effects on Entrepreneurial Thinking in the Northern California Wine Industry**

James A. Downing  
California State University, Chico, U.S.A  
[jdowning2@csuchico.edu](mailto:jdowning2@csuchico.edu)

### **ABSTRACT**

The U.S. wine industry is an established agricultural sector which has seen volatility and growth over the last 15 years. While a well-studied industry, there is little research to observe management perceptions of entrepreneurship and contextual factors. This study uses survey data of Northern California wineries collected in 1999 and 2015 to understand the industry-specific systems of entrepreneurship. We collected data on winery operational environments, business characteristics, and the perceived concerned contextual factors. We hypothesize the age and size of wineries will vary by perceived environmental factors and entrepreneurial thinking. We find counter-intuitive perceptions with the larger and older wineries being more focused on entrepreneurial thinking than smaller and younger ‘entrepreneurial’ firms. We also find the concerns of industry contextual factors are shared by all industry players regardless of age, size and strategy. Additionally, we identify a wine industry shift in the primary business concerns from market concerns in 1999 to more macro-economic concerns in 2015. This industry shift is consistent with the emerging entrepreneurship literature research stream on environmental context. The study findings provide insight into the current entrepreneurship literature of established industries and the need for contextual research. The practical findings provide wine industry participants insight in the priorities for development of strategies regardless of size and age.