

TASTED OR WASTED? DRUNKENNESS AND OTHER WINE-RELATED THINGS WE MAY HAVE MISSED!

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Throughout history, the social practises of wine consumption have been as varied as the societies that produced it (Lukacs, 2012). The variability in practices is manifest within the discussions of the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ Worlds of wine (Simpson, 2011). However, despite real or perceived differences between the traditional and the modern, wine is still normatively conflated with notions of social class (Lukacs, 2012). These class notions are perpetuated when wine is produced, marketed, and sold as a luxury (Beverland, 2004, 2005) or aspirational good that cannot be properly consumed or appreciated in the absence of detailed knowledge about it (Brenner, 1995). In either case, ‘fine’ wines and ‘table’ wines are still assumed as the purview of either an upper class who can afford such extravagances; or an aspirational middle class who must be educated into understanding it (Brenner, 1995; Ness, 2018).

Much academic work in the wine business and tourism literatures unconsciously mirrors the underlying positioning of wine in the culture of the West. These cultural assumptions are made visible when wine is only ever ‘tasted’ in our research and customers never seem to suffer from the presence of alcohol in wine, regardless of how much ‘tasting’ is recorded in our surveys! Or how much of the market is bargain wine (McMillan, 2018).

Wine-drunk is a phenomenon prevalent in the practitioner media where consumers regularly engage in winery crawls, transported by dedicated wine tours, or even Uber used as “a no-frills, low-cost alternative to the traditional wine tour” (https://munchies.vice.com/en_us/article/jpab98/how-uber-is-changing-the-way-drunk-people-take-wine-tours accessed 2 January 2018). While it is unlikely that all users of these services ‘taste’ wine to the point of intoxication, there are many who do. Witness the regular reporting of cases of disruptive and violent drunken behaviours at wineries (<https://patch.com/new-york/northfork/drunken-winery-customers-shove-police-scream-obscenities-cops> accessed 6 January 2018).

So why is the wine-drunk missing from the wine business and wine tourism literature? Drunks appear in the general tourism (Josiam, Hobson, Dietrich, & Smeaton, 1998), hospitality (Monterrubio, Josiam, & Duncan, 2015), and marketing (Cismaru, Lavack, & Markewich, 2009) literatures. In wine business the earliest mention is the *mobile* or *traveling* drunk (Spawton, 1989, 1990). Yet, even from these first mentions, they were already being hidden away; first, discounted as a class of consumer that was not ‘wanted,’ (Spawton, 1989, 1990). A pattern which continues unabated.

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We see the absence of intoxication and the hidden nature of the wine-drunk in our research as a signal that we need to adopt a broader approach to understanding wine business. Whether these are locals or sojourning tourists, these 'happy,' 'tipsy,' and 'drunk' customers must be managed by winery owners and staff. So, it behooves us to pay some attention as well.

The research will be undertaken through depth-interviews with small winery owners, tasting room staff, and wine tour operators. This will allow us to understand the prevalence of over-consumption amongst winery visitors and likely point to both policy implications and avenues for future research.

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