Are Central Coast (California) Wineries Prepared for an Unexpected Crisis or Disaster?

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Abstract

◦Purpose – This paper examines the perception of winery personnel in a major wine region of the U.S. on their winery's level of preparedness for an unexpected crisis or disaster and ability to recover should such an event occur. This paper developed out of a project in an undergraduate capstone Senior Project course.

◦Design/methodology/approach – We administered a survey instrument in in-person interviews with winery personnel and employed ANOVA analysis to analyze and interpret the results.

◦Findings – While we are still in the process of interviewing winery personnel, employee level (owner or senior manager, manager, staff) seems to have the largest effect on the perception of winery preparedness. Although the employee level differences remain, employees across the board indicate a higher perception of preparedness for changing COVID pandemic conditions than for other crises or disaster or for questions about an unspecified crisis or disaster.

◦Practical implications – This study has the potential to identify areas in which wineries would benefit from developing better plans to prepare for or address a crisis or disaster and for offering better training for the winery personnel.

Key words: crisis, disaster, preparedness, resilience

1. INTRODUCTION PROVIDING A BRIEF BACKGROUND TO THE NATURE OF THE PROBLEM/CASE STUDY

Wine regions around the world have been hit with sudden, unexpected crises and disasters—e.g., wildfires in multiple wine regions of Portugal, Spain, Australia, and the United States, earthquakes in Napa Valley, New Zealand, and Chile, and volcano eruptions in the Canary Islands. The COVID pandemic affected every wine region—that have collectively resulted in billions of dollars of losses.

This paper examines the perception of winery personnel in a major wine region of the U.S. on their winery's level of preparedness for an unexpected crisis or disaster and ability to recover should such an event occur. This paper developed out of a project in an undergraduate capstone Senior Project course.

2. PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

Disaster preparedness for organizations has been studied from numerous perspectives and using both theoretical and empirical approaches. For example, Pearson and Clair (1998) offers a comprehensive theoretical treatment of crisis management, and Nathan (2000) examines the paradoxical nature of a crisis as creating both threats and opportunities. Penrose (2000) studied the role of perception in crisis planning, and Fowler, et al., (2007) develop a scale to measure perception of organizational preparedness.

Research in this area focused on the wine industry is much more limited. Gilinsky, et al., (2020-a) conducted an exploratory investigation into strategic resilience in the wine industry, developing and comparing multiple case studies via content analysis using four bonded wineries in Napa and Sonoma counties to develop four conceptual constructs of organizational resilience. Gilinsky, et al., (2020-b) conducted an online survey of the perceptions of winery personnel based on the survey instrument in the Fowler et al. (2007) study and used factor analysis to distinguish between preparedness and resilience, similar to what McEntire, et al., (2002) refer to as disaster-resistant and disaster-resilient communities. This study is a replication and extension of the survey in Gilinsky, et al. (2020-b).

3. A CLEAR FORMULATION OF THE MAIN PROBLEM(S) TO BE INVESTIGATED

This paper examines the perception of winery personnel in a major wine region of the U.S. on their winery's level of preparedness for an unexpected crisis or disaster and ability to recover should such an event occur. We investigate differences in the characteristics of the winery and the level of the winery personnel to identify factors that affect the perceived level of preparedness.

4. ENVISAGED RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

We administered a survey instrument in in-person interviews with winery personnel and employed ANOVA analysis to analyze and interpret the results.

5. PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

We are still in the process of interviewing winery personnel. Based on the results from the initial 53 respondents from 18 different wineries, employee level (owner or senior manager, manager, staff) seems to have the largest effect on the perception of winery preparedness. Most other factors, such as the size, age, or ownership structure of the winery, have not produced statistically significant results, but we believe that the small sample size to date has influenced these results. Although the employee level differences remain, employees across the board indicate a higher perception of preparedness for changing COVID pandemic conditions than for other crises or disaster or for questions about an unspecified crisis or disaster.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS OR RECOMMENDATIONS

We believe our paper has to potential to identify areas in which wineries would benefit from developing better plans to prepare for or address a crisis or disaster and for offering better training for the winery personnel.

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