

'Writing to learn' or 'learning to write': Is there a place for self-reported reviews in wine education?

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The Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC) agreed in 2012 to support an Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science initiative to develop a program to engage Asian international students to help develop their interest, knowledge and preferences for Australian wine styles. This ongoing program continues to scientifically investigate learning techniques and psychological framing

The purpose of this next phase is to understand if self-reported wine reviews can be used as an indicator of the effectiveness of wine education on novice wine drinkers. A peculiarity of these students and their compatriots back home is their usage of social media and the internet. There is growing evidence that young people in China not only participate in social media at a higher rate than other countries, but also engage more often

wines, 20 days apart, and asked to do a number of tasks related to rating their preferences, identifying the various generic and specific taste terms they could notice and writing a wine review (this was not forced) of each wine tasted. The control group received no wine education, while the two experimental groups attended three one-hour wine education classes and tastings between the blind tastings. There were functional differences in the method of education. The data analysed for this article was drawn from the before and after blind tasting sessions by comparing the control group with the two experimental groups. The focus of the analysis for this article was only the wine reviews. A total of 112 students were recruited and 103 students completed the research program.

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effects in order to optimise the wine education protocol for novice Asian wine drinkers. The September/October 2013 issue of this journal published an article on previous research from this program, which looked at the effect that different types of educational techniques (i.e., learning by region of origin or learning by grape variety) have in increasing likability, willingness to buy and perceived price point of tasted wines.

and pay more attention to product reviews (Chiu *et al.* 2012). The authors wondered if the shifting landscape might proffer another approach to train novice wine drinkers and measure the effectiveness of wine education.

Three groups of Asian international students, the majority Chinese, were recruited for this study: one control group and two experimental groups. All groups of respondents were asked to participate in a blind tasting of six red

Various descriptive statistics on the size and complexity of the reviews are reported. Leximancer software is used to content analyse the reviews and generate frequency counts of the concepts discussed (Leximancer 2007). The results are compared between sessions for each group and between groups for each session using an independent sample t-test.

Summary statistics are presented in Table 1. The slight increase in number of reviews and the drop in word count for the control group (G1) are

Table 1. Summary statistics for the three groups.

	G1 Before	G1 After	Diff (%)	G2 Before	G2 After	Diff (%)	G3 Before	G3 After	Diff (%)
No. of participants	37	35		40	36		35	32	
No. of potential reviews	222	210		240	216		210	192	
Total no. of reviews written	161	181		192	216		123	185	
Reviews (%)	73	86		80	100		59	96	
Total no. of words used	1448	1525		1762	2755		1151	2659	
Avg. no. of words (excluding blank reviews)	8.9	8.4	-6	9.2	12.8	40	9.4	14.4	54

Table 2. Comparison of frequencies of mentions between sessions - by group.

G1			G2			G3		
CONCEPTS	BEFORE	AFTER	CONCEPTS	BEFORE	AFTER	CONCEPTS	BEFORE	AFTER
Alcohol	11	0	Alcohol	0	23	Alcohol	0	20
Aroma	4	0	Bold	3	0	Bitter	11	0
Colour	0	8	Dark	0	36	Dark	4	0
Dark	0	7	Drinking	10	0	Dates	0	10
Drink	24	11	Feeling	2	0	Drink	7	21
Flavours	4	10	Food	4	0	Dry	5	0
Grape	5	0	Fruity	0	24	Fruity	13	33
Heavy	0	9	Light	0	35	Light	12	20
Left	0	5	Mouth	0	17	Long	0	17
Light	10	0	Oaky	4	0	Mouth	0	21
Mild	3	0	Purple	0	11	Smell	16	28
Smell	0	13	Rough	0	23	Sour	9	0
Sour	0	7	Smell	0	28	Spicy	9	38
Strong	13	0	Smooth	0	22	Star	0	8
Sweet	15	0	Spicy	0	46	Strong	23	21
Taste	24	31	Strong	0	17	Sweet	16	25
Time	3	0	Taste	49	63	Taste	15	82
Wine	26	26	Wine	25	39	Wine	21	36



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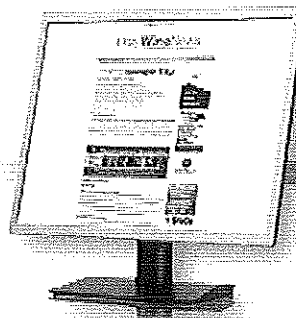
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Table 3. Concept counts and comparisons between groups and sessions.

	No. of Concepts	Count of No. of concepts		No. of Concepts	Count of No. of concepts	T-test sig.
Group 1 - Before	16	147	Group 1 - After	15	163	0.715
Group 2 - Before	16	97	Group 2 - After	16	355	0.001
Group 3 - Before	15	121	Group 3 - After	16	376	0.002
Group 1 - Before	16	147	Group 2 - Before	16	97	0.252
Group 1 - Before	16	147	Group 3 - Before	15	121	0.482
Group 2 - Before	16	97	Group 3 - Before	15	121	0.541
Group 1 - After	15	163	Group 2 - After	16	355	0.005
Group 1 - After	15	163	Group 3 - After	16	376	0.011
Group 2 - After	16	355	Group 3 - After	16	376	0.815

minimal and most likely due to random effects. However, the increased magnitude of the metrics reported in both groups that received education (G2 and G3) is notable and this is where attention should be focussed.

A qualitative analysis of the concepts elicited by the participants demonstrated that there are a few concepts mentioned across all groups and sessions. The variability among the other concepts listed is more interesting, particularly among the before and after sessions of G2 and G3. There is a notable aspect in this shift in concepts elicited. The key words related to how to taste wines that were presented to the cohort during their three wine education sessions appeared in higher frequency at the final tasting (Table 2).

Finally, the number of times each concept emerged in each of the three groups and each of the two sessions was analysed. The results were compared for each pair of before-after conditions, and across each of the three pairs of groups before and after the education sessions. Table 3 shows that the number of concepts identified in each of three sessions are fairly similar. In the control group, there was stability of the total frequency of mentions across all reported concepts, showing no statistical significant difference. The number of times each concept was mentioned in the reviews significantly increased only for the groups (G2 and G3) that received educational sessions. In G2, the number of concept mentions increased from a frequency of 97 to 355 (+265%), and from 121 to 376 (+210%) for G3.

It is also interesting to note that no significant difference was reported between groups in the first session, a result that signals that the three groups are suitable for comparison. Conversely, the results are significantly different in the second session between the control group

and the two groups who received a form of wine education. This result illustrates that education has a positive effect on the respondents' ability to craft a wine review. However, the differences in the educational delivery to each group do not have a significant impact on the frequency of concepts reported.

Despite the exploratory nature of this research, the findings are useful. This research illustrates that the effect of education can be measured through the evolution of wine reviews. Managerially, it can be expected that new or novice wine drinkers who are formally educated will be able to communicate more effectively about their wine experiences. The increased breadth in conceptual description will be useful, as these people not only communicate online with their friends and family, but through social media and review websites where strangers will have the ability to access their opinions (Chiu *et al.* 2012). Future research should be directed at the effect of social network discussions and product reviews on product choice.

This research is ongoing, and further results from this program will appear in a future issue of this journal. Hopefully, those interested in marketing wine in China might one day read positive product reviews by Australian wine ambassadors created here in Adelaide by the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, through the support of the GWRDC.

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