

Editorial

Vines in a Space Lab: Drawing New Fascinating Scenarios in the Wine Sector

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Editorial

Nowadays a significant and rapid expansion of wine production and consumption in 'Third World' developing countries has to be highlighted in order to describe the new wine geography. The dichotomous Old/New distinction requires new insights from a rethinking and re-examining around the global wine industry. Changing geography of wine production derives to a large extent, by the rapid expansion of both local wealthy elites and burgeoning middle classes in countries such as China and India [1]. Recently, International Wine and Spirit Research has forecasted China can become the world's sixth largest wine producer by next years.

This has resulted in new flows of investment both from established wine regions to these new sites of production. The development of this sector can be highly useful for valorisation of the rural areas often marginalized and not valorised in these 'Third World' developing countries. Indeed, the wine culture sure can promote the opportunity to catalyze a range of receptive cultural, economic activities and not only, enhancing the local economy. Restructuring in the wine industry means increased economic and social differentiation of rural space [2]. On the other hand, consumption in China has to be investigated in a new context where demand for luxury and branded products are increasing thanks to a revolution in values [3]: then, country-of-origin effects and ethnocentrism significantly affect the formation of purchase behaviour toward wine as a gift [4]. Today, the sole wine producer in Chinese Xiaojin region produces eight wines, ranging from Merlot to Cabernet Sauvignon that are sold for gift giving or for special banquets or meetings.

So the role of China in global competitive strategies is more and more becoming crucial. International wine suppliers lust being huge the potential market in a country of over 1.300,000,000 people [5]. Chinese society is becoming a consumer society and Chinese consumers are moving towards new suppliers and product differentiation, opening up new business opportunities [3].

Among these ones, it is the individuation of a new destination that is the space. Afterwards, the China's newest space laboratory, Tiangong-2, blasted off last September, with a selection of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir vines. The base idea is wine in space can generate mutations in the vines that may make them more suitable for the harsh climate in some of the China's emerging vineyard regions, as the Tibetan plateau. In fact, climate is one of the

main factors controlling wine grape production [6-9]. Understanding the role of the China market in the wine market global perspectives at the light of new developments and challenges 'launched' by the Chinese wine sector is a fascinating path. Could this spatial vines and wine provide new insights in the wine industry and in the new consumer preferences?

This question open a complex debate on the role of emerging countries for drawing new scenarios in the wine sector that it has always been the prerogative by Old Countries (such as France, Italy and so on).

The Framework

The wine industry is becoming more and more globalized in considering consumer demand, capital investment, higher volumes of trade, greater levels of multinational ownership, and evolution of new networks of production and consumption [2]. Nowadays the agricultural production and the agro-food processing is characterized by different products, different varieties, history of local production, so composing a valuable food and wine culture, not reproducible anywhere else. Furthermore, as improved winemaking knowledge contributed to the better vintages climate change will likely always have a significant role in quality variations in a not-uniform way across all varieties and regions [10].

In this highly variable context, the China market drawn a new path in the wine sector: in 2012 Chinese local authorities planed to convert Xiaojin county into the Bordeaux of China, until to reach 6,700 hectares of vines in Aba, that is a mountainous region and fertile land. This area, known over the world for its panda population, thank to its high altitude, sunshine, sandy soil and low precipitation offers ideal conditions for growing grapes. After this first step in escalating global wine market, the Chinese vintners have defined a new destination: the space.

In September 2016, within China's manned space programme, the Tiangong-2 space lab launched in the space a selection of Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot and Pinot Noir vines: the base idea is genetic mutations in the young vines may improve and adapt them to the cruel climate in the emerging vineyard regions. Indeed the challenges of Chinese wine producers are related to overcome sub-zero temperatures (about -25°C) and unfavourable soil of some regions at the heart of China's nascent wine industry. The study forecasts an analysis compared to a control group. The main objective is to experiment vines' resistance to drought, cold weather and some viruses.

The vines derive from an East region nursery, which has been importing vines from France, and is located in one of China's most renowned quality wine regions. A recent study reveals that gravity isn't essential for plant root orientation. How the wine flavour can

change with zero-gravity conditions vines? The possible scenarios that lie ahead are very fascinating. New 'spaces' of production and genetic experimentation stand out: the key element is investigating the changing of classic values in the production and consumption processes.

Conclusions

Wine is an experience good: consumers often base their purchasing choice on expert opinion regarding quality and maturation prospects [11]. The purpose of this editorial is to highlight how, in the future, consumer characteristics, buying behaviour, and factors that influence the wine market and industry can vary. If a spatial vine will contribute to create a new tasteful wine that will become the core of the wine consumption processes for the extraordinary characteristics, a new no-traditional label based era stands out.

The challenges for the Chinese markets will be as follows: to penetrate old, new and emerging market to establish presence and capture market share; to create competitive advantage by means of 'spatial' characteristics; to promote and build brand loyalty. Then, the wine sector can follow new production processes and so defining the future traits of consumer behaviour in relation to new wine product deriving from an emerging market.

Generally consumer education, wine-related activities, channels of communication, taste, country of origin, quality, and price rank are important factors influencing in particular the buying and consumption behaviour of Chinese consumers and not only; but marketing strategies over the world can educate wine consumers in ways that reflect their needs and expectations according to demographic characteristics [12].

Further implications are related to climate change challenges due to the geography of wine production worldwide deriving largely from the dependence on climates [13]: the production of regions producing high-quality grapes at the margins of their climatic limits will become progressively more difficult [10] so these new scenarios can improve the global wine industry strengthening the competitiveness.

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