

## **Uncorking the Potential of Wine Language for Young Wine Tourists**

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### Abstract

Effective communication with consumers underpins growth in wine knowledge that, in turn, contributes to growth in wine consumption. Indeed, tasting notes may enhance consumers' experiences of wine. Yet wine language is full of fuzzy concepts. In this chapter, we consider the language used to talk about wine, specifically the humanlike features of wine (e.g., wine is described as *honest, sexy, shy, or brooding*). We demonstrate that metaphoric language is integral to the experience of wine and influences consumer behaviour. We discuss practical implications for the cellar door experience, and for effective and ethical wine communication. We conclude that metaphoric language is a pedagogical and cultural platform for engaging younger wine tourists in the cellar door experience, which is a significant revenue source for micro, small, and medium wineries.

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## Introduction

The cellar door experience is germane to positive visitor perceptions of a winery and its wine. It underpins customer relationship development, direct sales opportunities, and learning about wine appreciation. Wine appreciation is experiential, social, cultural, and it can be educational. Wine is, after all, a definitively human phenomenon, made by people for people to experience and enjoy. Wine is quintessentially anthropomorphic—it is imbued with humanlike characteristics, motivations, intentions, or emotions (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007). Wine’s humanlike qualities engage consumers via their experience of brand in terms of its similarity and relatedness to people (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017).

“Marketers can use a variety of visual, verbal and metaphorical tools to activate knowledge of a ‘human’ schema and, thereby, enhance consumers' tendencies to perceive brands in anthropomorphic ways” (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017, p. 370).

Thus, we ask the question: Does the language used to describe and learn about wine have the qualities to invite a younger audience into wine culture? This is an important question for two reasons: 1. language is inherent to the uniquely human experience of wine in terms of how it is described to self and others (e.g., tasting notes); and, 2. effective communication with, and education of, consumers underpins growth in wine knowledge that, in turn, contributes to growth in wine consumption (Knott, 2004).

Metaphorical language is a significant and frequent feature of wine communication (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008, 2010; Lehrer, 2009). For example, Caballero (2017) highlights motion verbs in wine discourse used to communicate diverse sensory experiences as in “Bright and focused, offering delicious flavors that *glide* smoothly *through* the silky finish”, and consumer behaviour studies of metaphoric language in advertising and promotion indicate that metaphoric expressions are more persuasive than literal speech (Bosman &

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Hagendoorn, 1991; Tom & Eves, 1999). To begin this chapter, we provide a definition of metaphor from a cognitive linguistic perspective and give a brief overview of conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) espoused by Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2008). We narrow the discussion to the genre of wine reviews (i.e., tasting notes) as a means to demonstrate how personifying language (i.e., WINE IS A PERSON) is embedded in wine communication. We reveal metaphor's role in storying the wine experience in terms of description, evaluation and judgement. This process involves a source-path-goal scenario (i.e., WINE IS A JOURNEY). We address the significance and influence of the metaphoric language used to talk about and, moreover, learn about wine (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008) to posit metaphor as an educational “corkscrew” to open up wine to consumers. We conclude with the consideration of future research aimed at identifying the salience of metaphoric language to younger, novice wine consumers. Furthermore, we present practical implications that may open the way for effective and ethical wine communication with the young consumer in mind.

### **Conceptual Metaphor Theory**

Interest in metaphoric thought blossomed because of the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) published in *Metaphors We Live By* (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2008). In CMT, metaphorical language is more than a rhetorical flourish or poetic device. Instead, CMT holds that metaphor is part of people's everyday language, thought, and action, and a linguistic device that helps people explain abstract (or less tangible) concepts. More significantly, CMT posits metaphorical structures between a target and a source domain of knowledge. That is, people come to understand one thing in terms of another (e.g., this wine is round—the mouthfeel given as shape; a palate full of nervous energy—an appraisal in terms of personality).

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Although most metaphorical language used for wine follows conventions (e.g., *bouquet*, *palate*, and *finish* found in wine discourse), current debate advances the notion of the *deliberate metaphor* (Steen, 2017). Deliberate metaphor is the conscious use of metaphor to produce new or revitalise old information. Thus, deliberate metaphor restructures what people know and how they experience. Deliberate metaphors (e.g., with *a peacock's tail display* of blackberry fruit) contrast with conventional metaphors (*showing* an assortment of blackberry fruit) which generally pass unnoticed in peoples' everyday conversations. Given the ubiquitous presence of metaphor in wine discourse (Aitchison 1987; Bruce 2000; Gluck 2003), it is important to explore the presence and application of conventional and deliberate metaphors to better understand and inform consumers' experiences and behaviours.

### **CMT: Target and Source Domains**

The language domain of wine has been examined to identify the form, function, and effect of metaphorical frames (Amararitei, 2002; Caballero & Suarez-Toste, 2010). Current literature demonstrates conceptualisations of the TARGET domain of WINE arise from the ontological SOURCE domains of “diverse living organisms (plants, animals or human beings), manufactured entities (cloth, musical pieces, or buildings), and three-dimensional, geometrical bodies” (Caballero & Suarez-Toste, 2010, p. 7). The SOURCE domain of LIVING ENTITIES or WINES ARE DISCRETE LIVING ORGANISMS was found to be the most comprehensive and complex (Amararitei, 2002; Caballero, 2007; 2010; Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008; Coutier, 1994). As a recurring feature, the conceptualisation of wine as a HUMAN BEING or PERSON was significant (Alousque, 2012; Amoraritei, 2002; Bratož, 2013; Caballero, 2007; Coutier, 1994; Lehrer, 2009; Planelles Iváñez, 2011; Suárez-Toste, 2007). Hence, we consider wine through the lens of anthropomorphism (also referred to as

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personification) where wine entails human actions and associations which may influence consumers experience of brand (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017).

### **An Anthropomorphic Frame for Wine Consumption Practices**

Peoples' consumption practices require the processing of sensory information. This sensory information may be unknown to a novice consumer. A figurative frame captures information to make an unknown, abstract and/or complex issue more concrete and comprehensible (Burgers, Konijn, & Steen, 2016). Such framing utilises metaphorical language, a key feature identified in wine discourse (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008), to personify and story the wine experience. However, people commonly make this new information fit with their personal view of the world—as in their own figurative frames. If the information is contradictory to their personal narrative then they endeavour to fit the new information with their existing frame, or alternatively, they simply ignore what does not fit.

Although there is a diversity of figurative frames used in the genre of wine reviews (Caballero & Suarez-Toste, 2010), anthropomorphic metaphorical language has been consistently used to convey meaning and facilitate understanding of wine components and characteristics. For instance, a wine has a voice: *announce, sing, whisper, or suggest*; wine has psychological features: *confident, honest, mellow, or brooding*; wine has physical attributes: *heart, nerve, and backbone*; and, wine has aesthetic properties: *gorgeous, luscious, and youthful* (Creed, 2016). In doing so, sensory perceptions and associated imagery becomes more salient. However, responses to an existing figurative frame may be more effective for wine consumers with existing wine knowledge. Therefore, knowledge of what is and what is not effective for communicating with consumers is an important area of research and development. This R&D may focus on the proactive capability of figurative frames in wine

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communication that are directed at the young wine tourist. When seen as a resource, metaphor analysis has the power to uncork the potential of wine language at the cellar door.

### **Metaphor as the Metaphorical Corkscrew to Open Wine to the Consumer**

Wine tasting notes and wine reviews are an important feature of the cellar door experience and consideration of whether to purchase a wine. Critically, wine reviews are as much about conveying wine as an aesthetic product and cultural experience as they are about education with the goal of acculturation. The genre of wine reviews is an established institutional framework that is used to structure wine tasting and communication and metaphorical language is a significant feature of the discourse (Caballero & Suárez-Toste, 2008). Wine reviews are a unique sensory and affective text that is discursively, institutionally, and rhetorically situated.

To summarise, a wine review usually includes a technical introduction listing the wine name, location of grapes when harvested, the type of grape or grapes used and the vintage year, for instance. Next, the description and evaluation of wine components and sensations such as colour, condition of the wine, aroma and flavour characteristics, mouth feel and possibly some emotion the tasting elicits. The appraisal ends with the wine reviewer's identification and often a numerical rating of the wine. This following wine review from Australian wine writer and judge James Halliday exemplifies the genre:

Petaluma Hanlin Hill <sup>Wine name</sup> Riesling <sup>Type of grape used</sup> 2012 <sup>Vintage year</sup>  
 Bright straw-green <sup>Colour</sup>; a distinguished riesling with a long pedigree courtesy of  
 fully mature estate vines <sup>Condition of the wine</sup>; the lemon blossom of the bouquet  
 fragrance <sup>Olfactory sensations</sup> leads into a mouthwatering palate where the initial impact  
 is of lime and lemon fruit before a burst of minerally acidity takes hold <sup>Gustatory and  
 haptic sensations</sup>, but releases its grip on the aftertaste allowing the fruit the last  
 say <sup>Finish/aftertaste</sup>. Score: 96; James Halliday, *Wine Companion*

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It is noteworthy to point out that a genre is not rigid but is, instead, a dynamic and evolving socio-cognitive schema that reflects and responds to social change (Bazerman, 1988). When conceived of as a psychological schema, genre can be “acquired, trained, monitored, improved, and transformed by individual language users” (Steen, 2011, p. 24). As such, the language used in wine reviews or tasting notes, by cellar door staff, or on winery websites has the power to transform and translate a person’s sensory and affective responses to a wine through figurative framing.

Caballero and Suárez-Toste (2008) state that wine and metaphor is intrinsically linked and an understanding of metaphor in communication is a necessary competence in wine education. Their observations demonstrate that metaphor is embedded in descriptions and judgements of physical sensations including vision, smell, or touch and are mapped to equally physical domains of knowledge with associations to objects or entities. They argue that “wine literacy is intrinsically cross-modal and, accordingly, requires procedures where first-hand experience (i.e., wine tasting) is inextricably linked to awareness and learning of the metaphors used to translate it into words” (p. 252). Accordingly, figurative language frames are especially likely to be used when people write and speak about objects, states, events and in doing so, they often rely on metaphor (Epley, Waytz, & Cacioppo, 2007).

Here we present three wine reviews in which the same wine, the Rockford Shiraz Basket Press 2010, is reviewed by two different critics and by an online wine merchant. What each review has in common is a figurative journey (i.e., WINE IS A JOURNEY) through the tasting experience with the second and third review incorporating elements of personification (i.e., WINE IS A PERSON). Firstly, a wine review from Australian critic James Halliday:

- (1) Deep garnet with a purple hue; this benchmark wine from an iconic producer is laden with vibrant purple and black fruits, floral notes, earthy complexity and well executed

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oak handling; the palate is juicy, direct and layered, with fine-grained tannins providing an armchair ride for the vibrant and plush fruit that is on board. This will age tremendously well, but many will enjoy it without giving it that chance. Score: 96.

Australian Wine Companion 2014 Edition ([www.winecompanion.com.au](http://www.winecompanion.com.au))

Next, a comparable review of the same wine product by another Australian critic, Campbell Mattinson:

- (2) Coal, aniseed, chocolate, vanilla, black fruit, very ripe year Rockford smells plus a little lift. It's rich, fleshy and very ripe, perhaps veering towards porty (like 2002), though finds fair balance. There's a little alcohol warmth, a lovely set of ripe silty tannin and some fresher raspberry fruit peeking out from behind the dark clouds. Unevolved and a little grunting as a youngster, but has good long term potential. Noted some herbal flavour in the after-taste. ([www.winefront.com.au](http://www.winefront.com.au))

Finally, the review provided by the wine.com.au:

- (3) Robert O'Callaghan is one of the most prominent winemakers in the country, and his Rockford Basket Press Shiraz is a classic example of a handmade wine from 60 -140-year-old vines. The wine shows incredible power and depth but is in complete control finishing with precision and balance. The palate is laden with juicy black fruits, spice, and earthy notes balanced with cashmere like tannins. This wine is a keeper. ([www.wine.com.au/rockford-basket-press-shiraz-2010](http://www.wine.com.au/rockford-basket-press-shiraz-2010))

Table 1 presents the mapping for the three reviews. All three reviewers evoke the journey metaphor through the act of vehicular attributes and animate motion when portraying the gustatory and haptic sensations (GH) of the wine: *an armchair ride* for the vibrant and plush fruit that is *on board*; perhaps *veering* towards porty; and, in complete *control*. Halliday used a deliberate metaphor to frame the journey (i.e., ride) using a standard artefact (i.e., an

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armchair). Mattinson and the wine producer use anthropomorphic metaphor in a more conventional (*control*, *veering*) as well as deliberate ways (*peeking out*, *grunting*). For example, the wine is embodied with human-like powers of animate actions to *control* GH in the online wine website review and actions of *veering*, *peeking out*, and *grunting* in the Mattinson review.

Table 1.

*Mappings of WINE IS A PERSON and WINE IS A JOURNEY*

| Wine Review | WINE IS A PERSON   | WINE IS A JOURNEY  |
|-------------|--|--|
| 1           | GH → fine-grained tannins <i>providing</i>   | GH → an <i>armchair ride</i><br>GH → fruit that is <i>on board</i> |
| 2           | GH → <i>fleshy</i><br>GH → <i>finds</i> balance<br>GH → fruit <i>peeking out</i><br>GH → <i>grunting</i> as a <i>youngster</i> | GH → <i>veering</i> towards  |
| 3           | GH → The wine <i>shows</i><br>GH → incredible <i>power</i><br>GH → in <i>control</i>   | F/A → <i>finishing</i> with precision                              |

*Note:* GH = Gustatory and haptic sensations; F/A = Finish/Aftertaste

Schemas regulate people's actions in situated contexts of use and are very effective in facilitating communication (Steen, 2011). As with personification, sensory schemas constrain and motivate patterns of thinking or experiencing about a target domain (e.g., wine) that renders the environment relatively predictable. In other words, schemas are organised knowledge about objects, people, and situations and they allow us to anticipate potential encounters thereby increasing the speed and efficiency of perception. Therefore, salience of metaphor and metaphor comprehension is important in wine acculturation.

But what is the difference in using a metaphor or listing a string of descriptors?

Firstly, a metaphor is economic; it can convey a flexible range of information rather than separate specifications. Secondly, metaphor in the typical 'A is B' format espoused by Lakoff

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and Johnson (1980) is a noun; nouns represent objects or entities (e.g., armchair, control, depth, notes) that take the form of an ontological metaphor. Thirdly, descriptors of sensory and affective perceptions take the form of adjectives (e.g., deep, fleshy, plush) as such allow for variation in terms of alignment, judgements, and emphasis. Fourthly, metaphors of motion are commonly personified in human action verbs (e.g., giving, peeking, providing, veering). For these reasons, metaphors facilitate the conveyance of knowledge, information, affect, and attributes in contrast to semantically similar parts of speech (e.g., noun, adjective, verb).

### **Communication at the Cellar Door**

Ongoing interaction between wine producer and consumer is an important part of knowledge building and the wine industry is confident of the importance of cellar door visitation in this process. There are several reasons: cellar door sales are a significant revenue source for micro, small, and medium wineries (Dodd, 2000), cellar door experiences are argued to be an essential ingredient for the consumer to develop a bond with the wine brand (Fountain, Fish, & Charters, 2008), and visitation has been shown to influence future purchases through brand loyalty (Mitchell & Hall, 2006; O'Neill & Charters, 2000). An understanding of consumer expectations and experiences by the winery is essential for the creation of a valuable cellar door experience (Fountain & Charters, 2006) given perceived value (i.e., service quality, technical quality, price, and social value) has been identified as a mediating variable (Gill, Byslma, & Ouschan, 2007). Perceived value may in turn influence consumption behaviour.

Advocates of generational marketing (Walker, 2003) suggest life style differences as determinants of consumption behaviour whereas life cycle marketing proponents (Wells & Gubar, 1966) propose more adaptive behaviour results as the consumer ages. Variation in consumption behaviour across different generations and ages of wine drinkers has been

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reported (Bruwer, Lockshin, & Saliba, 2015; Teagle, Mueller, & Lockshin, 2010; Scalera, 2002) and perceptions of quality of service appear more important to the younger than the older wine consumer when visiting cellar doors (Dodd & Bigotte, 1997). Nevertheless, Macle (2008) and Thach and Olsen (2006) point out that the traditional wine culture is not being adopted by younger generations who are leading and initiating new ways of interacting with wine as a cultural object.

In addition, Parr, Ballester, Peyron, Grose, and Valentin (2015) noted that the culture of the wine taster posed a relevant influence on wine language arising from domain-specific learning, expertise, and experiential history. Language, in turn, affected peoples' perceptions and judgements of wine. Quality communication and information such as wine reviews or tasting notes have been demonstrated to influence consumers' preferences, emotions, and willingness to purchase (Danner, Johnson, Ristic, Meiselman, & Bastian, 2017). Indeed, wine consumers experience more of the intrinsic characteristics of a wine after they receive product information (Henley, Fowler, Yuan, Stout, & Goh, 2011). Hence, an effective cellar door experience—either virtual via social media or direct via visitation to a tasting room—can be a change initiator for consumption practices, according to Bruwer, Lockshin, and Saliba (2015), evidenced in wine purchases and brand loyalty coupled with awareness and consumption of regional products.

A recent study of cellar door visitation (Bruwer, Lockshin, & Saliba, 2015) found that 39% of people are in the Millennial/Generation-Y age segment (18-34 years) whereas 42% are Baby Boomers and Traditionalists (45 years plus). A key area of generational difference is the level of proficiency in interactive media engagement and communication using mobile devices. Millennials (born in the mid-70s to early 1990s) and post-millennials (mid-1990s to the mid-2000s) are active users of Web 2.0 and they engage differently from other

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generations of users with smartphones being used for social media interaction by more than 90% (Sensis Social Media Report, 2016). Although 87% of Australians access the internet daily, younger users (i.e., 18 to 29 year olds) are more active on visual platforms including Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat whereas older users (i.e., 40 to 49 year olds) favour LinkedIn and Google+ (Sensis Social Media Report, 2016). For example, younger age groups are using mobile device apps such as YouTube as performances spaces in user generated contexts (Blythe & Cairns, 2010). For the younger wine tourist, open and active communication is the interface between relationship building and brand loyalty (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017).

The assumption that the cellar door is solely situated at the winery itself is limiting. To broaden the opportunities of wine tourism, the cellar door can also be taken as an urban extension via special events and festivals or a virtual cellar door in your pocket via social media and winery website. This broader conception of cellar door offers attractive alternatives for young people, opportunities to learn about wine and to develop bonds that influence purchasing decisions, and converge the rural with the urbane to motivate younger wine tourists to visit regional areas in the future. Holt (1995) argued that the way in which “consumers experience consumption objects is structured by the interpretive framework(s) that they apply to engage the object” (p. 3). Therefore, as people experience wine, they are involved in a taxonomy of consumption practices (Holt, 1995) that involve objects, sensorimotor perceptions, and interpersonal actions stimulating behaviours.

Beyond the cellar door, people consume their wines with one another as a social act. Within their wider social groups and relationships, people form and use impressions of themselves and others in terms of other important domains, such as health, work and career, and lifestyle. Thus, we now turn to an important topic that the wine industry must address if

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it is to sustain a brand that evokes personalised experiences of an attractive healthy image and healthy lifestyle.

### **Metaphors of Healthy Lifestyle and Moderate Consumption**

Discourse about the health and community implications of alcohol consumption should be considered, particularly given that proliferating sales outlets (Foster et al., 2017), online social identity (Pegg, O'Donnell, Lala, & Barber, 2017), and alcohol advertising (Lobstein, Landon, Thornton, & Jernigan, 2017; Siegel et al., 2016) are associated with increased alcohol consumption. Survey research (Chen, Grube, Bersamin, Waiters, & Keefe, 2005) and experimental research (Stautz, Frings, Albery, Moss, & Marteau, 2017) show that alcohol-promoting advertisements foster positive feelings about alcohol, increase its consumption in heavy drinkers, whereas alcohol-warning messages that generate negative feelings reduce consumption. For example, an Australian government campaign “What’s your relationship with alcohol?” (The State of Queensland, 2017) presents realistic images and experiences that people may have had in relation to their own or peers’ excessive alcohol consumption (e.g., fighting, vomiting). The “What’s your relationship with alcohol?” may reduce inappropriate levels of consumption because it may generate negative feelings within consumers.

Patients’ metaphorical language use has been studied in healthcare settings to promote awareness of its empowering and disempowering functions so that health practitioners’ and patients’ talk about the experience of cancer is more effective (Semino, Demjén, & Demmen, 2016; Semino, Demjen, et al., 2016). By changing the language of cancer diagnosis and treatment away from war and violence (e.g., battle to survive) to less emotionally charged language of a cancer journey, practitioners’ and patients’ attitudes, behaviours, and levels of

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emotional distress can be changed. The results of this work demonstrate the potential of metaphorical language to generate a positive culture about wine and health-related behaviour.

In addition to public health campaigns about inappropriate consumption of alcohol, individuals are exposed to a barrage of other health-related messages presented across multiple media outlets to consumers. Amidst a wall of information about diet, for example, consumers may adjudge their food consumption on the basis of what feels healthy for their bodies, rather than the information per se (Kristensen, Askegaard, & Jeppesen, 2013). Situating moderate consumption of wine as a positive emotional and embodied experience of being “good for you” may provide an alternative avenue for understanding the interests and experiences of younger consumers who are conscious of their health and healthy image. Similarly, utilising the meaningfulness of strategies that moderate consumption (Bartram, Elliott, Hanson-Easey, & Crabb, 2017) may enhance the connection to healthiness. Thus, utilising metaphoric language about healthiness may combine well with messages that imply healthy image benefits of moderate wine consumption, sexuality, and relationships (i.e., it is sexy to be healthy therefore drink with care).

We advocate for an educational acculturative perspective whereby young and novice wine consumers learn about wine via positive schema and metaphoric language. As a flipside to the negative affective responses of public health campaigns, such as “What is Your Relationship with Alcohol?”, it is plausible to develop a campaign that delimits the consumption of wine to attractive and healthy images that foster positive affective responses. This educative acculturative perspective goes beyond mere statements on labels (e.g., referring to moderate drinking and not driving if intoxicated). Instead, it calls for an image of wine that is socially accepted in valorised relational activities (e.g., eating meals as a family, romantic encounters) and images that engender respect for the moderate and “in control”

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drinker as sophisticated, perhaps sexy, or even *cool*. The latter being a temperature metaphor that signals [de]tachment (cool) to excessive drinking in contrast to [at]tachment (hot). Thus, we suggest that the regeneration of the wine industry can be influenced by personalised branding (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017) that is communicating and experienced in metaphorical language that speaks to a culture of healthy consumption for young wine tourists.

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