

Tasting and Touring: Chinese Consumers' Experiences with Australian Wine and Winery Tour: A Case Study of Sirromet Wines, Queensland

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Abstract : The study hinges on consumer taste, food industry (wine production) and cultural consumption (vineyard tourism) which are related to the Chinese market, consumers, and visitors traveling to Australian vineyards. The research topic can be summed up as: the economic importance of the Chinese market on Australian wine production; the economic importance of the Chinese market have an impact on how Australian wine is produced or packaged; the impact of mass Chinese wine tourism on Australian vineyards; the gendered and cultured experience of wine tourism for Chinese visitors. This study aims to apply the theories of Pierre Bourdieu into the research in food industry and cultural consumption; investigate Chinese experiences with Australian wine products and vineyard tours; to explore the cultural, gendered and class influences on their experiences. The academic background covers the concepts of habitus, taste, capital proposed by Pierre Bourdieu along with long-lasting concepts within China's cultural context including mianzi (face, dignity/honor/hierarchy) and guanxi (connections/social network), in order to develop new perspectives to study the tastes of Chinese tourists coming to Australia for wine experiences. The documents cited from Australian government or industries will be interpreted, and the analysis of data will constitute the economic background for this current study. The study applies qualitative research and draws from the fieldwork, choosing ethnographic observation, interviews, personal experiences and discursive analysis of government documents and tourism documents. The expected sample size includes three tourism professionals, two or three local Australian wine producers, and 20 to 30 Chinese wine consumers and visitors travelling to Australian vineyards. An embodied ethnography will be used to observe the Chinese participants' feelings, thoughts, and experiences of their engagement with Australian wine and vineyards. The researcher will interview with Chinese consumers, tourism professionals, and Australian winemakers to collect primary data. Note-taking, picture-taking, and audio-recording will be adopted with informants' permissions. Personal or group interview will be last for 30 and 60 minutes respectively. Personal experiences of the researcher have been analyzed to respond to some research questions, and have accumulated part of primary data (e.g., photos and stories) to discover how 'mianzi' and 'guanxi' influence Australian wine and tourism industries to meet the demands of Chinese consumers. At current stage, the secondary data from analysis of official and industrial documents has proved the economic importance of Chinese market is influencing Australian wine and tourism industries. And my own experiences related to this study, in some sense, has proved the Chinese cultural concepts (mianzi and guanxi) are influencing the Australian wine production and package along with vineyard tours. Future fieldwork will discover more in this research realm, contribute more to knowledge.

Keywords : habitus, taste, capital, mianzi, guanxi

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