

Social Sustainability in the Global Wine Industry

Sharon L. Forbes · Tracy-Anne De Silva ·
Armand Gilinsky Jr.
Editors

Social Sustainability in the Global Wine Industry

Concepts and Cases

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PREFACE

OVERVIEW OF THE GLOBAL WINE INDUSTRY

The product of wine has existed for thousands of years, with evidence dating it back to the Neolithic Age (Phillips, 2017). Whilst today the wine industry is synonymous with nations such as France, Italy and Spain, the earliest wine-producing areas were in China and the Middle East. Over time, wine production has spread around the globe.

The nations that have a history of producing wines for many centuries are often referred to as Old World wine nations: examples include France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany and the re-emergence of China. Wines from these nations were commonly based on the concept of terroir or place. Wines were typically introduced into other nations by early settlers; these nations have a much shorter history of wine production and are called New World wine nations. Examples of New World nations include Australia, New Zealand, the USA, Chile and Argentina. The wine industries in New World nations were based on innovation, branding and marketing. Today, the differences between Old World and New World wines are less distinct. Old World wine producers have realised the importance of branding and marketing, whilst those in the New World have recognised the significance of place.

Statistics provide an overview of the size and nature of the global wine industry (OIV, 2019):

- The total world area under grapevines in 2018 reached 7.4 mha. There has been a fall in vineyard area since 2014, particularly in Turkey, Iran, the USA and Portugal.
- World wine production was estimated at 292.3 mhl in 2018. The top ten wine-producing nations, by volume, are Italy, France, Spain, the USA, Argentina, Chile, Australia, Germany, South Africa and Mainland China.
- Consumption of wine had grown since 2014, but suffered a fall in 2018. This was primarily due to a decrease in consumption in China and the UK. The top ten consuming nations, by volume, are the USA, France, Italy, Germany, China, the UK, Russia, Spain, Argentina and Australia.
- Spain, Italy and France are the dominant wine-exporting nations; together these nations account for around 50% of the world market in terms of volume.
- In terms of wine importing, five nations account for more than half of the total imports, namely Germany, the UK, the USA, France and China.

SUSTAINABILITY

Although sustainability is not an easy concept to define because a plethora of various definitions appear in the literature (Szolnoki, 2013), it is widely thought to consist of economic, environmental and social dimensions. In other words, sustainable products are those that are derived from production practices that are ecologically, socially and economically viable. In a business context, sustainability is about operating in a way that does not harm future generations. In research with 55 wineries across seven nations, Szolnoki (2013) reported that each interviewee had a different understanding of sustainability in the wine industry, although it was mainly associated with the environmental dimension; this illustrates the lack of a single, consistent definition of the concept among wine industry practitioners.

The concept of sustainability is an important one for the global wine industry for several reasons. Firstly, as wine is an agricultural product it is subject to the same environmental scrutiny as other forms of agriculture. Environmental concerns focus on the use of agrichemicals, loss of natural habitats, water pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and wastes (see Broome & Warner, 2008; Gabzdylóva et al., 2009; Marshall et al., 2005).

Secondly, wine is a luxury product. Carcano (2013) notes that luxury products are associated with exceptional workmanship and being crafted by the hands of skilled artisans. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) actions towards sustainability seem to be a trend in the luxury setting during the most recent decade. If, like other producers and marketers of luxury products, wine businesses enhance and communicate such efforts to potential consumers, they could attract individuals that are concerned about the environment and the welfare of society (Stathopoulou & Balabanis, 2019).

Several authors have noted that sustainability in the wine industry is of growing interest in academic literature and among industry practitioners (Casini et al. 2010; Klohr et al. 2013). Most sustainability research in the wine industry has focused on the environmental dimension and on the wine regions in California, Australia and New Zealand (Casini et al., 2010; Forbes & De Silva, 2012; Marshall et al., 2005). One exception is a sustainability book that focuses on four winery case studies; some of these cases include a focus on social sustainability and not solely the environmental dimension (Gilinsky, 2015). Consumer studies have primarily focused on attitudes towards environmentally friendly wines or behaviour with regard to organic wines (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). In terms of industry focus, Klohr et al. (2013) report that many of the sustainability programmes that have been developed in specific wine regions or wine-producing nations have focused chiefly on the environmental dimension.

The social dimension of sustainability is centred on people. This book focuses on the social dimension of sustainability, in the context of the global wine industry. In the wine industry, people include employees, the community in which wine businesses operate, wider society, consumers and other stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES

The concept of sustainability has been well examined in academic literature, with the environmental dimension receiving most attention. The wine business literature has similarly focused on the environmental dimension. This book aims to address the lack of significant focus on the social dimension of sustainability. In particular, it brings together research on this topic, in the context of the global wine industry, from academics in different parts of the world. In addition, this book brings together research based on varying methods, from qualitative case

studies to quantitative surveys of wine producers or wine consumers. This book offers the reader definitions of various key concepts and also explores social sustainability in practice across the global wine industry.

AUDIENCES

The primary audiences for this book are academics who teach business sustainability courses or those who teach into wine business or wine marketing programmes. In addition, this book will also be a useful resource for undergraduate or postgraduate students studying business sustainability or wine business. Finally, this book may also be of interest to wine industry practitioners who are looking to implement social sustainability practices into their own business and will thus benefit from the insights presented in this book.

SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS

Introduction

The first section in the book provides further introduction to the topic of sustainability and to the specific dimension of social sustainability.

- Chapter 1 introduces the concept of sustainability and discusses each of the pillars or dimensions. Social sustainability is specifically explored in Chapter 1, including a summary of research focused on this dimension of sustainability. Other key concepts are introduced and discussed, including corporate social responsibility (CSR), philanthropy, social enterprises, CSR communication and cause-related marketing—many of which are explored in subsequent chapters. This chapter ends with a review of sustainability research in the wine industry.

Impact on Stakeholders

Not surprisingly, the largest number of chapters in this book are devoted to the impact of social sustainability in the wine industry on people. Authors have examined social sustainability in terms of various stakeholders, including employees, local communities, charities, artists and tourists.

- Chapter 2 examines the potential for disruption in the South African wine industry due to technological change (i.e. the 4th industrial revolution), economic change and environmental pressures. The impacts of the possible disruption these changes will have on the social and economic sustainability of the South African wine industry are discussed. In particular, this chapter considers the impact of disruption on wine industry employees.
- Chapter 3 provides a case study of a South American winery—Colomé—located in a small town in Argentina. The chapter focuses on the operations of Colomé, including its biodynamic certification, and the contributions of the owner to the winery as well as the community in which it operates. The benefits of these social commitments to the workers employed at Colomé, as well as the local community in Argentina, are discussed. The chapter concludes with a discussion of what led the owner to sell Colomé, and the concerns of the workers and the community as to whether the new owner would, or could, sustain the level of social commitment.
- Chapter 4 examines the topic of disaster resilience among Sonoma and Napa wineries. This chapter is particularly relevant given the recent fire and earthquake disasters that have impacted on the wine industries in California, New Zealand and Northern Spain. The author has determined how well-prepared wineries are for future disasters, as resilience will lessen the impact of disasters on stakeholders such as winery employees and the local community.
- Chapter 5 focuses on wine tourism and its sociocultural benefits. Two case studies from Barossa and Coonawarra in South Australia are presented to illustrate the practical application and implications of the concepts of transformative innovation and cultural landscapes. This chapter provides an understanding on how wine tourism is able to boost the well-being of destinations, communities, wine providers and wine tourists by contributing to their well-being.
- Chapter 6 provides an insight into charity wine auctions with a discussion on a number of well-known auctions around the world and a detailed look at the Hawke's Bay Wine Auction in New Zealand. A history of the charity wine auction is presented with comments from the organisers about future developments. The motives and benefits of the participating wineries are documented, as are views of the recipient—the local Hospice.

- Chapter 7 provides a case study of a Waipara wine business that operates as a social enterprise. This wine business, 27seconds, was established by its owners in 2017 in order to raise funds for Hagar, a non-government organisation. Hagar provides recovery services for survivors of human trafficking, slavery and abuse. The brand name refers to the fact that every twenty-seven seconds someone is sold or trafficked into slavery somewhere in the world. The chapter documents the history of the wine business and some of the challenges faced by owners when starting a social enterprise.

Cross-National Studies

This section of the book contains four chapters documenting studies that have compared social sustainability across nations.

- Chapter 8 continues with the focus on people, as it examines the treatment of migrant workers by wine firms in New Zealand and Australia. This chapter provides an overview of sustainable wine programmes in New Zealand, the wine regions of Western Australia and Tasmania. Data were collected from wineries in New Zealand, Western Australia and Tasmania using a postal survey. This chapter examines the views of wineries with regard to social justice, sustainability, migrant workers' rights and corporate social responsibility. Differences between the Australian and New Zealand wine industries are presented and discussed.
- Chapter 9 examines whether culture has an impact on French and German wine firms in terms of their engagement in philanthropy. This chapter reports on quantitative data gathered from wineries in both nations using an online questionnaire. The authors take an interesting approach by examining the relationship between some of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and how French and German wineries engage in philanthropy. In particular, they explore whether cultural differences can be used to explain the intensity of philanthropic engagement and the spending behaviour in terms of supported beneficiaries.
- Chapter 10 is based on a study of French and Italian wine consumers through the collection of data via an online questionnaire. This chapter examines consumer views of sustainability across these two nations, and in particular whether they consider the social

dimension to be important. Wine consumers were asked to explain what the word ‘sustainability’ meant to them, and thus, the authors were able to ascertain whether consumers were more aware of the environmental or the social dimension of sustainability.

- Chapter 11 explores how the social sustainability of wine regions is impacted by land and water management decisions. This is done using two case studies—one on the Western Cape of South Africa and the other on Napa Valley in California. Each of these wine regions has its own unique challenges and opportunities, many of which are influenced by the governance—policy, planning and management—associated with land and water management decisions. The driving factors, as well as the outcomes, for each wine region are discussed, with lessons learnt having relevance for other wine regions.

Communication

The final section of this book contains two chapters relating to social sustainability and communication.

- Chapter 12 examines the sustainability reporting on the websites of New Zealand wineries. Reporting is examined across four categories—social sustainability; environmental sustainability; both social and environmental sustainability; and sustainability. The quantity of reporting in terms of volume and importance is examined, as is the readability of the reporting. Differences in quantity and readability are found among the four reporting categories.
- Chapter 13 examines French, Spanish, US, Australian and New Zealand wine firms that are engaged in philanthropy to establish whether they are reporting their charitable efforts to stakeholders. A structured questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data via an online survey from wineries in the five nations. Results indicate that there is quite a low level of CSR communication, and this is especially true of wineries in Old World nations. In terms of communication channels, wineries in the New World nations are significantly more likely to use online channels and marketing messages to report on their philanthropy than are their counterparts in Old World nations.

CONCLUSION

Wine consumers across the globe are at the forefront of a revolution in demanding natural, biodynamic, organic and responsibly produced brands (McMillan, 2019). The compilation of recent research into social sustainability in the global wine industry in this book is an important step in understanding the factors leading to a heightened awareness of the issues of sustainable production and consumption. Social sustainability has received less attention than environmental sustainability in the media, academic literature and from practitioners; this also holds true in the context of the global wine industry. This book thus provides a valuable resource for all who are interested in social sustainability in general and for all who focus more specifically on social sustainability in practice in the global wine industry.

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