

Tbilisi 2022 Abstract Submission

Title

TRAINING WINE STAFF - THE KEY TO INCREASED SALES

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

Corresponding Author

Linda Piggott-Vijeh

E-Mail Corresponding Author

lindavijeh@hotmail.com

Affiliation

None

Co-Author/s

| Name | Affiliation |
|------------------------|-------------|
| Linda Patricia Piggott | |

Keywords

Sales; Training; Restaurants; Wine Lists; WSET

Research Question

How do we measure the effect of an accredited wine education programme on knowledge and behaviour? Did this transfer to improved financial results?

Methods

Interviews and observations with a range of hospitality businesses across the West Country in the UK.

Results

All delegates completed post-training evaluation. Results indicate that participants had a positive attitude towards the training and were highly satisfied with the instructional methods and activities used.

Abstract**Purpose**

To consider the effects of investment in wine education, with reference to financial benefits and impact on hospitality staff motivation and retention.

Methodology

Interviews and observations with a range of hospitality businesses across the West Country in the UK.

Findings

Post-intervention, participants reported improved attitude and increased confidence in customer engagement. Formal wine education improved wine knowledge, which had an impact on sales and boosted the prospect of financial rewards.

Significance

Research focused on the formal learning offered by WSET, in addition to in-house programmes and bespoke sessions and tastings offered by wine makers and merchants.

Introduction

Wine is universally acknowledged as important to the dining experience, contributing much towards a restaurant's profitability.

Prior to the 2008 recession, restaurants invested heavily in staff training; then, budgets were slashed.

Recent events have caused hospitality businesses to suffer hugely. Survivors are looking for quick, sustainable recovery, whilst economic constraints and rising energy bills have significantly harmed disposable income.

Recent studies show that online sales have increased by up to 42%, and increased caution has resulted in consumers dining out less. Statista research shows a 32% decline in seated diners in UK restaurants since 2019; fewer people eating out, less frequently, with less money to spend, and higher expectations.

When dining out, consumers want an 'experience'. In gauging their perception of 'quality', diners often consider the range and quality of wines on offer, providing the all-important differentiation at a time of heightened competition.

Many restaurants offer multi-course menus with food and wine pairing suggestions:

Nine courses with wines are offered at Robin Wylde, Lyme Regis, Dorset for £140; The Olive Tree, Bath - £223;

Restaurant Gordon Jones, Bath - £165; The outstanding feature they share, apart from their extensive wine range, is the passion and knowledge of servers.

Whilst modest restaurants offer few wines by the glass (around 6), at the high end, 15 are available, and upwards of 100 by the bottle.

Evidence suggests that wine education boosts server confidence, and diner confidence in their wine choices.

Upskilling sales staff can be carried out internally or outsourced. In-house training is cost effective, enabling customised modules, but often the preferred route is for external trainers. The Wine & Spirit Education Trust qualifications have worldwide recognition; suitable for those seeking future career opportunities.

As a WSET Approved Programme Provider (APP), I have gathered evidence from 50 exam course candidates. Of these, 70% of those studying WSET Level 2, remain employed within the industry, one third have their own wine-based businesses, and two have planted vineyards.

Post-training, business owners reported that wine sales increased by up to 30%. However, without reinforcement, a drop in sales was seen after one month.

Those establishments showing consistent levels of improvement were where staff were routinely exposed to new offerings; having seen it and tasted it, they more confidently make recommendations.

Context

WSET qualifications must meet specific criteria regarding educator qualifications and other key standards. The Level 2 Award in Wines is a beginner-to-intermediate level qualification for individuals working in a wine-related industry.

The course requires 18 hours of classroom instruction, and 12 hours self-study, covering theory and tasting, the winemaking process, principal grape varieties, wine styles, important wine regions, labelling terms, wine service and food pairing.

Expectations relating to increased wine sales were not disclosed. 50% of delegates self-funded, identifying the opportunity a recognised qualification offers. For remaining delegates, training was funded by employers.

Participants took part voluntarily, self-selecting, so pre-dispositioned towards learning; 72% attended in their own time.

Post-training checks were carried out by independent inspectors, to test knowledge, assess improved customer engagement and willingness to discuss wine options.

Research

Gauging the effect of an accredited wine education programme on knowledge and behaviour. Did this transfer to improved financial results?

Training was held at the main APP site, and satellite sites in Somerset, Dorset, and Devon. Training schedules were tailored to meet individual needs, taking place across one long weekend, or as three separate one day sessions.

Participants were 51% female, 49% male. Half of the candidates wanted to improve their wine knowledge to seek industry employment; the remainder were working in the industry and remain so.

The average age of delegates was 34 years old, the youngest being just 17 years old. In all cases this was their introduction to formal wine education.

Data Collection - Wine knowledge

All candidates were assessed for their existing wine knowledge prior to the course, and post-training learning verified by the WSET Level 2 exam.

Qualitative phase

How did their WSET exam result affect their post-training behaviour? All candidates completed their training, with 100% pass rate; 5 passed with Distinction, 18 with Merit, and 27 Pass. Their scores showed a correlation between their seniority within the business and their personal motivation.

Interview protocol

One-to-one interviews took place in the first four weeks after exam results were received. Questions focused on the delegate's experience post-training.

'What has been the most positive aspect of the training for you?'

'How have you utilised your newfound knowledge in your role?'

Interviews also took place with business owners to establish benefits, both financially and in terms of staff motivation and retention.

Results

All delegates completed post-training evaluation. Results indicate that participants had a positive attitude towards the training and were highly satisfied with the instructional methods and activities used.

Transfer of Knowledge

Participants had high levels of motivation to transfer training; with a measurable difference experienced between those who chose to self-fund, and those who were supported by employers.

Wine Bills

Three months post-training, the significant factor linking improved wine sales was the extent to which staff received incentives, and the attitude of their managers to ongoing learning; being given responsibility, and authority, to impact on the wine offering.

The ability and enthusiasm to offer and suggest wines increased the average spend, and also increased sales in the mid-range price bracket.

Achievement

In exploring the influence on participants' attitudes there was consensus that both the increased knowledge, and gaining a qualification, cultivated a sense of achievement.

Guest Engagement

Improved confidence in communicating with guests fostered the desire to spend time talking with them and sharing knowledge. They were also more likely to initiate conversation, enhanced by managerial encouragement and a willingness to allow employees to experience the 'guest experience' themselves.

Gratuities

Participants, grateful to be in receipt of increased tips post-training, believed that this was due to increased customer engagement.

Findings

The results from this group demonstrate that employment stability, and gaining in-depth knowledge, are key to succeeding at a time of instability.

As a food and wine professional since 1984, I have found that the key to successful sales is the collaboration between employer and employee, based on mutual trust. Providing outstanding customer service, and a willingness to invest in learning. There must be a link between the time and effort taken to gain knowledge, and the rewards gained as a result.

<https://www.wsetglobal.com/news-events/news/2017/september/05/training-is-key-to-upselling-spirits-success/05/09/17>

<https://modernhospitality.co.uk/training-staff-to-sell-wine-effectively/> Worthington 09/01/20
<https://troly.co/blog/small-producers/sales-tips/5-tips-for-training-your-servers-to-get-more-wine-sales> 06/21
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331717359_Increasing_wine_sales_through_customised_wine_service_training_-_a_quasi-experiment 14/11/21
<http://winesmarties.com/wine-education/wine-wset-certification-courses/> Pomeroy 16/08/16
https://www.memoireonline.com/12/11/4995/m_Wine-education-in-the-wine-country4.html
Orlowski, M. (2021), "External wine education and certification for restaurant service staff: a mixed-methods evaluation of training effectiveness", International Hospitality Review, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/IHR-03-2021-0023>
<https://www.wineintelligence.com/why-has-our-relationship-with-wine-changed-in-the-covid-era/>
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/chrisfurnari/2020/12/01/online-alcohol-sales-surge-amid-coronavirus-pandemic/>
<https://www.statista.com/statistics/1104991/coronavirus-restaurant-visitation-impact-united-kingdom-uk/>

Consent

I agree to the privacy policy.

You find the link to our privacy policy at the bottom of the page. In the privacy policy you find a link for exporting and/or erasing your personal data stored in our database.