Wine evaluation training of sommelier students is successful

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Abstract

Sommelier students are trained to evaluate wine. This study examines how students differ in their use of systematic approach of tasting according to their level of training. In conclusion: the second and third year Bachelor students evaluated the wines more correctly and consistently. The statistical program PanelCheck was a valuable instrument in evaluating students training in wine evaluation.
Introduction

At Örebro University, School of Hospitality, Culinary Arts and Meal Science students of the Sommelier, Culinary Arts and Meal Science program (180 ECTS) are trained to use a systematic approach to tasting wine. The students at the school are educated in the subject “Culinary Arts and Meal Science” which includes the three knowledge’s; science, praxis and aesthetics and are trained as reflective practitioners (Jonsson & Pipping Ekström, 2011). The sommelier students are trained to use wine tasting in their future profession to evaluate wine. A systematic approach is used to assess each wine completely and objectively by using a consistent and structured tasting technique (Grainger, 2009). Wine tasting differs from other sensory evaluation techniques where a much narrower range of products are available, such as potatoes, tomatoes and cookies (Jackson, 2009). An assessment of wine typically relates to existing products were consumer choice may involve hundreds of products (Ibid.). In this research, how the students use the scales of the systematic approach to tasting is examined. When using human subjects as instruments the scale used is very important (Meilgard et al. 2007).

This study examined the difference between first year students and second and third year students when using the scales of the systematic approach to tasting used in their education. We wanted to examine if sensory evaluation techniques and the PanelCheck statistics program could be used to evaluate the student’s use of the systematic approach to tasting.

Method

Two tastings were carried out with four different wines where three of the wines were tasted in duplicate. Replicates were used to assess taster reliability and consistency (Jackson, 2009). The wines used were a 2006 Cabernet Sauvignon from Argentina (Gestos), a 2008 red Bordeaux (Seguin) and a 2007 Cabernet Sauvignon from USA (Gallo). The fourth wine, a 2007 Shiraz from South Africa was not tasted in duplicate and was not included in the analysis. The wines were evaluated in taste for the attributes acidity, alcohol, length, intensity, body and tannin. The attributes and a five point scale were taken from WSET© Systematic Approach to Tasting Wine (Diploma). The systematic approach to tasting is used during classes to train the students in evaluating wine and wine quality. For the different attributes descriptive words are used on a five point scale (Table 1). The first group, called group A, consisted of 15 students from the first year and the second group, group B, of 17 students from year two and three. The results were analyzed using PanelCheck V1.4.0 statistical program.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>Scale</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acidity</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>Low</td>
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<td>Length</td>
<td>Short</td>
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<td>Intensity</td>
<td>Light</td>
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<td>Body</td>
<td>Light</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tannin</td>
<td>Low</td>
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</table>

Table 1: The attributes and scale used.

Findings and discussions

The results show that the students with less training, group A, use the entire scale when evaluating the attributes (Fig. 1.). The more trained students, group B, use the middle range of the scale to a larger extent (Fig. 1.). The results also showed that the second and third year students were more consistent in their evaluation between duplicates of the same wine (Fig. 2). As the wines are all Cabernet Sauvignon based red wines of a similar quality the second and third year students evaluation is superior in regards to how they are trained to evaluate wine in reference to other wines available to the consumer. The less trained students of group A are using the scale as if they are comparing the wines to each other only which would be appropriate when making a sensory evaluation of a product with a much narrower product range (Jackson, 2009). This implies that the training carried out is indeed successful. A similar test should be carried out with wines with a bigger range of attributes. This was deliberately avoided in this test as it would have made it easier for the students to guess that some of the wines were replicates and evaluate them exactly the same.

During the test and analysis of the results we also concluded that sensory evaluation techniques and PanelCheck statistical program can be successfully used as an instrument in the training of wine tasters.

Fig 1: Mean values for group A to the left and group B to the right.
Fig 2. MSE-plot showing the panel members consistency in evaluation between replicates of the same wine. Group A, A-P and group B, AA-SS.

Conclusion

The second and third year students compare the wines they are evaluating to other wines they have tasted and therefore use a smaller part of the scale. The first year students can differentiate between the attributes but would have had problems if there were any wines on the extremes of the scale in the tasting.

The statistics program PanelCheck can be a valuable instrument in evaluating and training students in wine tasting technique

References


