

Digital online training for wine professionals: From responsible service to a sustainable consumption of wine

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Abstract. Moderate and responsible wine consumption is integral to many cultures around the world and can be part of a healthy lifestyle. However, a minority consumes alcoholic beverages excessively or in a binge drinking pattern. Everybody in the wine value chain - from the producer to the salesperson to the restaurant service staff – can contribute to reduce harmful consumption and promote responsible drinking patterns. Therefore, the education of wine professionals is essential to equip them with the necessary knowledge to communicate and spread the message of responsible consumption patterns and encourage moderate consumption habits by serving alcoholic beverages responsibly. For this reason, nine interactive online training modules have been developed, the topics include: wine/alcoholic beverages and health, responsible advertising, the wine-related legal framework, responsible wine tastings, oenotourism to just name a few. All of the educational modules will be obligatory in the online training. The participants of the training will take a test at the beginning and at the end of every module. Every professional who has successfully completed the digital training will be considered a Wine in Moderation trained professional. For this, they need to have reached at least 80% in the quizzes at the end of all modules. Because wine drinking patterns vary depending on local traditions, education, gender, age group and socio-economic factors, the training can be adapted in every country. At the end of a successful completion of the training, the participant will receive a certificate. The details of the online training will be presented and discussed. Considering the increasing interest in wine/alcoholic beverages and health issues and professional training in responsible service, these online education modules should be useful for every actor of the wine sector to empower as many professionals as possible on responsible consumption habits. This is the only way the sector will be able to preserve a sustainable culture of wine.

1 Introduction

1.1 Responsible wine drinking patterns

Wine is integral to many cultures around the world and its moderate consumption can be part of a balanced diet and lifestyle. The great majority of consumers enjoy wine moderately with their meals, only a minority misuses alcoholic beverages and drink excessively, which can damage their health and others.

Thus, moderate and responsible wine drinking patterns are the only sustainable way of consumption and efforts should be made to promote such a sustainable culture of wine and encourage responsible wine drinking patterns.

There are many possibilities to reach out to consumers and one way is through wine professionals who are in direct contact with their customers and can act as multipliers in spreading the responsible drinking message: during wine tastings, hospitality events, wine tourism, etc.

1.2 Professional training

Thus, all representatives of the wine sector - in every region and at every step of the value chain - have a role to play in finding the best ways to communicate about responsible and moderate consumption patterns of wine. They can, thus, contribute to reduce harm from excessive

and hazardous drinking. Educating and training wine professionals is key to empower them with the necessary knowledge and tools to talk about responsible consumption patterns and encourage moderate consumption habits.

Professional training will be central to reach these objectives and skilled professionals can act as multipliers to increase consumers' awareness of healthy lifestyles and the risks linked to excessive drinking.

The Wine in Moderation (WiM) Association developed a training dedicated to inform and educate professionals in responsible service but also in moderate and responsible consumption patterns in general and how to offer a responsible wine experience. The training consists of nine modules capturing all topics relevant for wine professionals. It is a blend of information, useful skills, (national) legal framework, best practices and socially responsible business practices for professionals to help them to present wine in a responsible manner, whether it is in wineries, restaurants, wine bars, or through any other type of communication. These training modules and tools were initially developed for face-to-face education.

With this training and its related tools, the goal is that wine professionals receive the knowledge and instruments they need to offer the best possible experience to their customers. The training modules have been adapted linguistically for implementation in the various countries and the face-to-face training at national level has been organised.

However, digital training has been identified as a more efficient way to reach professionals around the world. This is the reason why the training modules were modified for digital online use.

The objective of this article is to present the digital training tools that have been developed to implement the Wine in Moderation training online and to give a short overview of the nine modules.

2 Designing an (online) training for wine professionals

As explained previously for the development of the face-to-face training, the content and structure of the material are based on past experience, knowledge gained through the Wine in Moderation Program (WiM) (see more details in the Appendix) and subsequent discussions with experts. The goal with this (online) training and its related tools, is that wine professionals receive the knowledge and instruments they need to offer the best possible experience to their customers.

Because of the international nature of WiM, an online format of the training allows to reach many more wine professionals than with a face-to-face format.

2.1 Target group

The wine sector is composed of a wide variety of actors from different areas and different sizes and structures, and can range from producers of bulk wine to producers of fine wine, from large multinational companies to small

local winemakers. The network of wine professionals expands much further than only producers and traders but also includes educators, hospitality businesses, HORECA (hotels, restaurants, catering), wine communicators, etc.

An online training is an easy way to reach all these actors from different areas all over the world and it can be easily adapted linguistically. Any registered WiM supporter and their employees interested in taking the training can use the online tool. Other advantages include that it is available at any time with little organisational effort and new employees can be easily trained at their convenience.

The online content is based on the original nine modules for a face-to-face delivery via a trainer.

2.2 Training modules

Every interactive module aims to tackle a specific topic that is considered important for the sustainability of the wine sector. Following a summary of the nine modules:

2.2.1 Module 1: Introduction to wine

Wine has been part of life for centuries. The art of viticulture and winemaking has evolved over time and in this long historical path, the association of wine with gastronomy, history, tradition, origin, local quality products and convivial settings has never changed.

In this module, a short introduction into the world of wine and wine culture will be given to the students.

2.2.2 Module 2: Wine/Alcoholic beverages and health aspects

The link between wine/alcoholic beverages and health aspects has been often debated in the media and society raising questions among consumers and professionals alike. The topics in this module include among others, drinking guidelines, responsible and risky drinking patterns, what is the J-curve, how is alcohol eliminated from the body, etc. The risks of excessive drinking will be explained, who should not drink and in which situations drinking any alcoholic beverages - including wine - should be avoided. This information is based on the latest scientific evidence.

2.2.3 Module 3: Legal framework

In this module, the national specificities around wine-related legislation will be discussed.

2.2.4 Module 4: Self-regulation & Wine Communication Standards

Besides wine-related legislation, the Wine Communication Standards - the wine sector's self-regulation code - is an important feature of responsible wine advertising. Examples of how to implement them will be provided.

2.2.5 Module 5: Creating the right environment

It is said that the general atmosphere of an establishment may influence the way customers will consume alcoholic beverages and how they will continue their evening. Thus, creating the right environment is important, both for the employees and for their customers. Some tips will be provided on things the students can put in place, how they can observe and identify early signs of risky drinking or problematic behaviours, etc.

2.2.6 Module 6: Good practices

In this module, examples of good practices which the students can put in place to encourage a responsible and moderate consumption of wine, will be shown.

2.2.7 Module 7: Wine & food

Wine has always been an important part of diet, gastronomy and conviviality. The importance to balance wine and food is introduced in this module, guidelines for the best wine and food pairings, the calorie content in various wines and some fun facts from around the world are shared.

2.2.8 Module 8: Wine tasting & events

In this module, students will be given some tips on how to facilitate a responsible and moderate consumption of wine, for example teaching them the use of spittoons, and providing some guidelines for organising a responsible wine tasting.

2.2.9 Module 9: Oenotourism: diversifying the offer

Wine tourism is becoming more and more popular and an increasing number of visitors choose beautiful wine destinations for their holidays. In this last module, some tips and tricks on how to create additional value for customers will be provided.

Similar to the face-to-face training, the online content will be adapted to the cultural, legal and linguistic needs of every country. In cooperation with the National Coordinators, the participants of the online training will take a test (online questionnaire) at the beginning of every module to assess their existing knowledge, and at the end of every module to measure the knowledge retained.

Every module follows a similar structure:

- **Introduction to the module**
- **Set of questions to assess the preliminary knowledge of the student:** a short set of questions will allow the student to have a better understanding of where they stand in terms of the knowledge that will be presented during the module.
- **Module content**
- **Pop quiz to assess the knowledge retained from the module by the student**
- **Key takeaways:** the student will find a set of key takeaways at the end of every module.

3 Selection of online training platform

For the selection of the online platform to host the digital training, several providers were contacted and tested: Moodle, EdApp and Canvas. EdApp was selected since it turned out to be the e-tool that was the easiest to use, interactive and fun, with a proven track record of high energy learning experiences that capture attention, with flexible, multi-device access and which supports long-term knowledge retention.

4 Testing period and adaptation of the training

The content of the face-to-face training has been already extensively tested and evaluated by external experts. Their feedback and suggestions were implemented in the content of the nine modules.

These nine modules are the basis for the content of the online lessons with adaptations for the digital environment. Once the drafting and the design of the online training tool is completed, it will be tested in three key markets/countries that yet need to be determined.

After this pilot phase, the online lessons can be adapted accordingly in the various countries by the National Coordinators to fit the national context and the cultural, legal and linguistic needs.

5 Implementation of the online training

Digital training has been identified as a very good and efficient way to reach wine professionals around the world. Once finalised and available, the National Coordinators will organise the access to the Wine in Moderation online training tool in their respective countries. For countries without National Coordinator, the WiM Association will handle the digital access.

5.1 Evaluation

The WiM Association together with the working group determined how trained professionals can be identified in the frame of the association's Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). All nine modules will be obligatory for those taking the online training. They will be asked to take a test at the beginning and at the end of the training. Every professional who has successfully completed the nine online modules and the test and who has passed with a minimum of 80%, will be considered a trained professional for the KPI.

6 Conclusions

It is key for the sustainability of the entire wine sector to empower its professionals active in the wine value chain with knowledge and competences on socially responsible business practices and healthy lifestyles. Social responsibility is a growing demand not only for the wine sector but also for consumers in general. Thus, it should constitute a central element of today's business practices.

The Wine in Moderation Program provides a tangible and up-to-date online training tool for all wine professionals interested in encouraging moderate wine consumption and responsible drinking patterns among consumers. The involvement and action of the National Coordinators will be central in the success of this interactive online tool.

However, with easy and far-reaching access to this digital training tool, international organisations such as the International Organisation of Vine and Wine (OIV), or other professional organisations, will also have an important role to play by recognising the need for such a training and also by promoting and motivating partnerships and actions in this regard.

Appendix: The Wine in Moderation Program

Wine in Moderation (WiM) is the social responsibility program of the wine sector that aims to encourage moderate and responsible consumption patterns. The Program, which was initiated in 2008 by the European wine sector, has been growing ever since, becoming the first international program of its kind and a real reference in the sector.

Centrally coordinated from Brussels, the Program is implemented at national level and can be adapted according to local needs while respecting the national culture and legislation and disseminating the same message of moderation.

Wine in Moderation is a unique coalition of responsible wine organisations, universities, authorities, and wine consumers from around the world, that aims to promote well-being and a balanced lifestyle and to safeguard the cultural heritage of wine.

Built around a single message to encourage a moderate consumption of wine, the Program is based on the latest scientific evidence, education, and self-regulation to empower the wine value chain and raise awareness and knowledge about the sustainable consumption of wine.

Wine in Moderation is an international and credible reference of the wine sector's social responsibility, developing a wealth of actions and campaigns to inspire the conscious enjoyment of wine. The following principles guide its actions:

- A minority of people misuse alcoholic beverages. This misuse can be damaging, not only to the consumers themselves, but also to the people around them. On the other hand, a responsible and moderate consumption of wine can be compatible with a balanced and healthy lifestyle.

- Wine is part of many lifestyles and cultures around the world and drinking patterns depend on local tradition, education, gender, age group and socio-economic factors. Therefore, when encouraging moderation, the needs of each population has to be taken into consideration. All efforts should be based on sound research, social and cultural aspects.
- The wine value chain brings an invaluable social, cultural, agricultural, environmental, and economic contribution to regions and countries. The representatives of the wine sector –in every region and at every step of the value chain– have an important role to play when it comes to communicating about moderate wine consumption.
- Wine in Moderation does not intend to promote or increase the consumption of wine, nor does it intend to encourage those who do not drink to start drinking.
- Wine consumption should be avoided by certain individuals such as minors, during pregnancy and breastfeeding, former addicts, when taking certain medications and when driving. In case of any question about how to evaluate individual health risk, it is advised to consult a medical practitioner.

The WiM Association is the non-profit association responsible for the coordination, accountability, and growth of the Program. It is composed of a number of members and partners who act at national and international level targeting both professionals and consumers with the primary goal of encouraging a sustainable consumption of wine. Entities active at local level, such as wineries, wine bars, wine writers, etc. can also join the movement as WiM supporters and have a direct impact on consumers by informing and educating them about moderate and responsible consumption. Since its start more than 10 years ago, Wine in Moderation has grown outside of EU borders and counts today 14 National Coordinators in 12 countries across Europe (11) and South America (3).

In addition, other Wine in Moderation activities are organised in the rest of the world and include communication, information campaigns during wine fairs and expos, educational activities, etc.

Educational activities form a very important pillar of Wine in Moderation. The information and content presented during the professionals' training are based on the latest scientific information and on the culinary and cultural heritage of wine.