

Women's Gendered Experiences in the Wine Trade



Introduction

This research explores the experiences of women employed in the wine trade in the United Kingdom. As an historically male-dominated industry, the wine trade offers opportunities to investigate the experiences of women as a minority group through the lens of gender.

Abstract

A theoretical foundation for my research was Bryant and Garnham's (2014) work with women in the wine trade, in Australia. Their research problematises media representations that suggests women working in the traditionally patriarchal wine industry are no longer subject to structural constraints according to gender, to which the findings illustrate are still apparent. As Moss Kanter (1977) claims both men and women work, but their experiences are profoundly shaped by deeply embedded gendered practices. This idea is supported by Walby (2007), who argues that women continue in the 21st century to be disadvantaged within what remains a male dominated society.

This research builds on their findings to explore the extent to which:

- Women feel barriers or inequalities.
As Glucksmann states (1982) it was obvious that the only qualification you needed for a better job was to be a man, suggesting that some women are going to feel barriers and inequalities and feel like intruders in an all-male preserve.

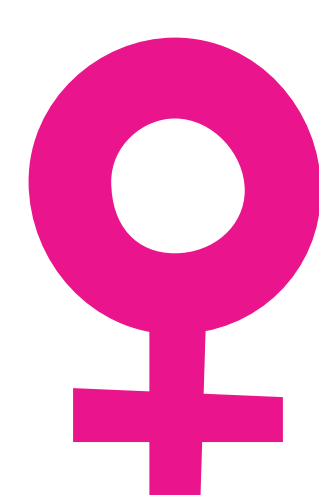
- Women may have had to restructure their working hours.

As Wajcman (1999) stated women have had to balance work life and private sphere responsibilities, suggesting that this is a competing demand in women's every day working lives, that can severely impact their career, where they do not progress at the same rate as men.

- Women may feel any significant changes within the wine trade.

As Zimmerman and West (1991) argue men and women do gender in their everyday lives without thinking about it consciously, with men doing dominance and women doing deference. However, as my research will rightly point out, women have negotiated and challenged this and so it is important to note that whilst the wine trade is traditionally patriarchal changes are occurring.

"Women have been so resolutely excluded from positions of the influence within wine for so long" (Mastar, 2006, cited in Bryant and Garnham p.112)



Method

The design of my research is qualitative, based on semi structured interviews. I felt qualitative research would be most useful to understanding women's experiences. As Jones et al (2010) stated, semi-structured interviewing allows participants to expand on their answers providing rich and detailed data. With regards to my sample size, eight women were recruited to take part, all of which were ascertained through a gatekeeper, a woman I already knew in the wine trade. I interviewed four participants face to face, meeting with them at a mutually convenient location, and the other four I interviewed over skype because they live overseas. The primary limitation of this study concerns the sample size. Whilst a sample of eight is plausible for a dissertation project, but it cannot claim to be representative of all women in the wine trade. Nonetheless, the sample does provide an indication of the experiences women feel are related to their gender, and is sufficient to answer the exploratory questions posed by this study.

Findings

My findings have illustrated firstly that, 6 out of 7 women who have had children, had to at some point during their career, restructure their working hours to balance the competing demands of work and family life. Secondly, it has become clear that whilst many of my participants occupy senior hierarchical positions in the wine trade, they are nonetheless questioned about their profession, due to being a female, which they feel can be a barrier to their reputation.

Thirdly, even though there has been an increase in women's influence and participation, it has been suggested that patriarchy has not disappeared and there are still wider societal pressures to discontinue gender segregation in traditionally gendered industries.

Conclusion

As such, this paper will contribute theoretically driven empirical insights, highlighting the importance of gender and that it is difficult to imagine the wine trade as a gender-neutral industry.