Taste as market practice: The example of 'natural' wine

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Purpose The chapter adopts a practice-oriented approach to address gaps in existing knowledge of the significance of cultural producers' and intermediaries' practices of taste for the construction and organization of markets. Using the example of the cultural field of 'natural' wine, I propose how taste operates as a logic of practice, generating market actions in relation to the aesthetic regime of provenance.
Methodology/approach The chapter sets out the conceptual relationship between aesthetic regimes and practices of taste. The discussion draws from interpretive research on natural wine producers and cultural intermediaries involving 40 interviews with natural wine makers, retailers, sommeliers and writers based in New York, Western Australia, the Champagne region, and the Cape Winelands.
Findings Three dimensions of how taste is translated into action are examined: as a device of division, which establishes a fuzzy logic of resemblance; as a device of operation, which provides an intuitive platform for shaping the means of production; and as a device of coordination, which enables an embedded experience of trust.
Originality/value The chapter's discussion of dispositions, affect, intuition and pattern identification provide new insights into the translation of taste into action, and the macro-organization of markets. I argue for attention to how cultural producers and cultural intermediaries are mobilized through their habitual sense of taste, shifting the focus away from consumers to those whose market actions are largely self- peer-referential. This is important for understanding processes of market development and value construction.

Keywords: Bourdieu, Cultural Intermediaries, Device, Practice, Taste, Wine

Introduction

Consumer culture theorists and sociologists of consumption and culture have recently noted the need to 'take aesthetics seriously' (van der Laan and Kuipers, 2016: 64), to understand 'how individuals convert taste into practice' (Arsel and Bean, 2012: 900), and to conceptualize taste beyond (merely) an instrumental game of position taking (Schwartz, 2013; Varriale, 2016; Warde, 2014). The pursuit of a more complete understanding of the practice of taste, and of what aesthetics 'do' in the everyday, seems especially apt amidst a contemporary market seemingly besotted with authenticity, artisanality, creativity and the handmade (e.g. Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Fuchs et al, 2015). Indeed, there appears to be no low-

involvement consumer good (Fill, 2009) ineligible for an injection of aesthetic content to leverage its capacity to display discernment and thus attract a price premium: the aestheticization of seemingly everything.

Appeals to consumers via their sense of taste are a mainstay of marketing and market making; yet, if the capacity of taste and aesthetics to direct market actions is well known, that knowledge is narrowly focused in two, interrelated ways. First, the mobilizing force of taste is typically reduced to a quest for prestige and the determining force of cultural legitimacy. Rather, Olcese and Savage (2015: 735) suggest we require a grasp of how everyday aesthetics are 'immanently located within the social.' In short, we require a shift of focus from the competitive consumption of prestige goods to the everyday ways in which tastes shape action. Second, the conceptual and empirical understanding of the 'taster' is almost entirely restricted to the consumer: a blind spot shared by consumer researchers and cultural sociologists; Olcese and Savage (2015: 721), for example, refer to everyday aesthetics and the 'aesthetics of cultural production' as if they are necessarily enacted by different populations. This chapter, in contrast, is concerned with the material effects of *cultural producers'* everyday tastes and aesthetic regimes.

The chapter analyses the practical implications of aesthetics and taste for the construction and operation of a particular market. In doing so, I draw together two dimensions of recent literature on market devices and practice-oriented approaches to studying markets. My analysis is, firstly, situated alongside parallel attempts to redress the lack of attention to the mechanisms by which judgements of good taste are institutionalized and translated into action (Arsel and Bean, 2012; Lamont, 2012; Warde, 2014); and, secondly, informed and enlivened by calls for greater attention to the affective dimensions of market devices and market actors (McFall, 2011, 2013; Zwick and Cayla, 2011; see also Hirschman, 1983). At first glance, these may seem incompatible sources of inspiration: the structuring frameworks for tastes and passions; the tastes and passions of market agents. Yet, it is precisely an aim of overcoming structure/agency divides that animates a 'practice' orientation and focuses attention on how 'practical and routine activity, embodied procedures, the material and instrumental aspects of life' operate to convert culture into action (Warde, 2014: 282).

The empirical context for my discussion is the 'natural' wine market. I draw on research conducted with wine makers and cultural intermediaries who are explicitly involved with wines that are made with few, if any chemical and mechanical interventions in the vineyard or cellar. Within the catch-all term of 'natural wine' (as I shall use it) exist multiple, overlapping and contested definitions of wines categorized as raw, natural, organic, sustainable, and biodynamic. Taken together, these products result from a mode of production that is arguably more environmentally sustainable, but also riskier: crops are more vulnerable to failure, vintages can be highly variable and often do not conform to established product expectations, and the legitimacy of natural wine remains questionable in the eyes of many consumers and other producers.

The paper proceeds with a discussion of how practice-oriented approaches have refocused examinations of taste, while remaining (as yet) relatively blind both to the role of taste as an affective market device, and to the significance of these issues vis-à-vis the lived practices of cultural producers and intermediaries. Bringing these threads together, I propose the notion of an aesthetic regime, and argue how such regimes make possible the capacity of taste to operate as an organizing device for market action. As an example, I briefly summarize the specific aesthetic regime of provenance, which characterises the cultural field of fine wine. I then provide an overview of the research, which has involved interview-based studies of professional wine market actors (wine makers and intermediaries) based predominantly in Western Australia, New York, South Africa's Cape Winelands, and France's Champagne region. I consider findings in relation to how the tastes of professional wine market actors shape their material practices and the market in which they operate. Specifically, I suggest three ways in which taste operates as a market device in relation to the aesthetic regime of provenance: as a device for division, for operation, and for coordination. In conclusion, I suggest the contributions such research offers to the study of tastes and market making.

Conceptual Foundations

Taste is a central theme in sociological accounts of consumption and culture, which are 'very much the sociology of value judgments and cultural hierarchies' (Schwartz, 2016: 142). Much of this work hinges on Pierre Bourdieu's attempt (1984) to unmask the disinterested aesthetic regime as socially-embedded and implicated in social reproduction (i.e. as something socially contingent rather than pure and universal), and to demonstrate how that aesthetic regime operates as a form of cultural capital. The ability to adopt and deploy a disinterested stance vis-à-vis cultural experiences—to divorce appreciation from pleasure and sensation (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984: 55, 486)—is revealed as a means of both social positioning and the reproduction of social stratification.

Considerable research has extended Bourdieu's critical exploration of the implications of taste and cultural capital for the composition and stratification of social groups (e.g. Friedman et al, 2016; Lamont and Molnar, 2001; Prieur and Savage, 2013; Schimpfossl, 2014). However, recent discussions—in both consumer culture theory and sociology of consumption arenas—have noted the tendency to reduce taste to merely instrumental position-taking, and have called for a more robust, *social* notion of aesthetics that amounts to more than (and is irreducible to) distinction (Arsel and Bean, 2012; Hennion, 2007; Schwartz, 2013; van der Laan and Kuipers, 2016; Varriale, 2016; Warde, 2014).

This revised focus invites attention to taste *as practice*, and to aesthetic regimes beyond those for which legitimacy is framed in terms of social positioning. Bourdieu's account of how taste 'works' as a generative mechanism of action has been influential in this. Taste is an outcome of habitus, which Bourdieu (1977: 72) defines as

> systems of durable, transposable dispositions/structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the generation and structuring of practices and representations which can be objectively 'regulated' and 'regular' without in any way being the product of obedience to rules, objectively adapted to their goals without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary to attain them and, being all this, collectively orchestrated without being the product of the orchestrating action of a conductor.

Habitus, in short, is Bourdieu's conceptual device for understanding how practices take material shape while overcoming a false agency/structure dichotomy. Actions are understood as outcomes of neither automatons blindly fulfilling systemic functional requirements nor charismatic, sovereign agents; rather, actions are the contingent working out of *both* how externalities (such as social norms) are internalized (as embodied dispositions), *and* how internalities (those dispositions) are externalized (as actions). Thus, tastes are situated within this account both as internalized externalities (dispositions and preferences shaped by normative practices and discourses), and externalized internalities (practices that arise because they 'make sense' via the habitus). In both senses, the account of taste as practice disrupts the myth of the sovereign consumer who exercises a sense of taste that is disembedded (both in itself and in its exercise) from social context.

This recent, and prolific, 'practice turn' is noted in a wide range of disciplines, including consumer research and market studies (e.g. Arsel and Bean, 2012; McFall, 2013; Muniesa et al, 2007; Zwick and Cayla, 2011), and draws from the work of Bourdieu as well as scholarship from economic sociology and Science and Technology Studies (see Nicolini, 2012; Postill, 2010; Schatzki, 2001 for reviews.) Practice-oriented approaches have in common that they

> emphasise routine over actions, flow and sequence over discrete acts, dispositions over decisions, and practical consciousness over deliberation. In reaction to the cultural turn, emphasis is placed upon doing over thinking, the material over the symbolic, and embodied practical competence over expressive virtuosity in the fashioned presentation of self. (Warde, 2014: 286)

A practice-oriented approach recognizes that the exercise of taste may involve overt acts of reflexive discernment, but emphasizes that it also (disproportionately more often) involves routine, habitual—even unthinking and distracted—evaluations and actions.

Two lacuna remain within the refocused study of taste as practice, both presciently noted in Hirschman's early discussion (1983) of the awkward relationship between aesthetics and marketing as a normative framework. She uses the examples of artists and ideologists, for whom the marketing concept appears incompatible with the social norms of their creative process (i.e. their production is regarded as a form of self- and peer-oriented expression rather than a response to what consumers might want). However, Hirschman suggests such incompatibility is resolved if such forms of self-oriented production are understood as an exchange between the artist-creator and him/herself: i.e. the artist as his/her own primary consumer. Hirschman (1983: 53) suggests that:

> [u]nderstanding the assimilative process of faith, emotion and intuition through which such products are created and consumed…could stand as a constructive complement to our large knowledge regarding those purchase decisions carried out in a logical, deductive manner.

First, despite Hirschman's call for attention to affect (faith, emotion, intuition), research on taste and market devices has largely ignored the 'affective/attachment component' (Olcese and Savage, 2015: 723) of taste, and the role of habitus, aesthetics and sense as market devices. Along these lines, McFall (2011: 150) suggests that practice-theoretical research lacks an account of the 'practical heart' of market activity: the embodied, emotional, sensual dynamics that enliven and enact the non-human devices, and that serve in their own way as devices (McFall, 2013; Warde, 2014). McFall's contribution (2011, 2014) has been to widen the lens on market devices to appreciate the role of consumers' affective dispositions, arguing that sentiment—'relations and relationships, by ties of duty, love, care, obligation and fear'—is fundamentally involved in mobilizing market activity (2014: 122; see also Miller and Rose, 1997). Relatedly, Fuchs and colleagues (2015) have explored the significance of love in consumers' positive perceptions and valuations of goods that are marketed as handmade, including consumer perceptions of the artisan's 'love' embedded in the object via the process of handmade production, and the emotional bonds between gift purchaser and recipient. Building on this work, my first contribution in this chapter is to explore how taste operates as an affective market device: not a 'material and discursive assemblage' (Muniesa et al, 2007: 2) but an embodied assemblage of senses that intervenes in the construction of markets.

Second, Hirschman notes the need to examine the processes by which products are *created*. If self-oriented 'artist-like' producers create products with reference primarily to themselves (rather than some (other) consumer), then an understanding of consumer markets requires knowledge of those consumers—i.e. of the producers *as* consumers. This is a growing theme in research that looks at cultural intermediaries (Cronin, 2004; du Gay, 2004; Moor, 2008; Negus, 2002; Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2012, 2014) and 'inside marketing' more broadly (Zwick and Cayla, 2011). Work on craft production (Banks, 2010), artisanal entrepreneurs (Paxson, 2010) and advertising creatives (Soar, 2000), for example, suggest that not only do such market actors often operate in the 'self-oriented producer' mode identified by Hirschman (1983), but also that their personal passions, tastes, identities and sense of 'the good' inform their work in fundamental ways that ignore or overlook the end consumer. My second contribution is thus to suggest that our knowledge of the tastes, desires and anxieties through which consumers are mobilized by market devices is incomplete without a complementary understanding of how cultural producers are mobilized through their habitual sense of taste.

In sum: taste is central to understanding consumption and consumer culture; insights regarding the socially-contingent notions of good taste and legitimacy (e.g. Bourdieu, 1984) help disrupt the myth of the sovereign (consumer) taster. However, there is a growing recognition that conceptualizations of taste have narrowly

focused on instrumental social positioning, neglecting the routine practice of taste—i.e. how aesthetic evaluations, preferences and practices arise as unthinking outcomes of established ways of doing. In addressing this shortcoming, practice-oriented accounts have focused on the routinization of market actions and judgments of taste via specific devices, but have (as of yet) neglected the significance of the affective, sensual dimensions of devices. In addition, work has focused on the consumer to the exclusion of other 'consuming' perspectives, including those of cultural producers and intermediaries whose tastes and values are primary to the shaping of many cultural goods. In response, I argue in this chapter for the need to address these two 'missing dimensions' by examining how the tastes of cultural producers and intermediaries operate as a logic of practice, generating market actions in relation to a field-specific aesthetic regime. Let me now discuss these ideas in more detail.

Aesthetic regimes and taste as a market device

As noted above in relation to Bourdieu's account (1977, 1984): tastes operate both as internalized externalities (preferences shaped by social norms), and externalized internalities (practices that 'make sense' via the habitus). As such, it is useful to analytically disentangle two scales at which taste operates in shaping action, via differentiating between aesthetic regimes and taste as a market device.

On the one hand, aesthetic regimes are collective heuristic frameworks. The concept focuses attention on systems of principles for appreciation and evaluation of the properties of some entity. They are both embodied and disembedded (part of individuals' habitus, and existing independently of any individual), through which disparate actors and market practices may be connected (cf. Arsel and Bean, 2012; Boltanski and Thévenot, 1999; Goudsblom 2001; Goudsblom and De Vries, 2003). Such regimes work through monopolization of forms of cultural legitimacy, categorizing some actions/objects/values/bodies as legitimate and others as illegitimate (and still others as not-yet-legitimate but legitimizable) (Bourdieu, 1990b). A growing body of research demonstrates the power of aesthetic regimes to organize consumption; such regimes help explain patterns of market action within cultural fields such as cosmetic surgery, gambling, food, and wine (e.g. Giesler, 2012; Humphreys 2010; Johnston and Baumann, 2007; Smith Maguire, 2016). For example, Arsel and Bean (2012) outline the material effect of a 'soft modernist' taste regime in the case of domestic interior design. In their account, actions are 'steered' by taste regimes that operate as distributed, shared 'road maps' of understanding (2012: 907, 911). As such, multiple actors (consumers) respond to basic processes of problematization, ritualization and instrumentalization with a similar sense of what 'fits' within the domestic sphere, resulting in recognizable patterns of home décor practices.

On the other hand, tastes can be understood as highly portable, widely distributed market devices that are exercised in relation to various (sometimes overlapping, sometimes conflicting) aesthetic regimes. The focus, here, is on taste as action or doing (Hennion, 2007). To 'have a sense of taste' is to have access to—and some

fluency and confidence in use of—an aesthetic regime's system of principles for appreciation and evaluation; 'doing' taste is the translation of that sense into action. There is no simplistic divide between micro, individual tastes and macro, collective-level aesthetic regimes: senses and practices of taste are socially embedded, embodied, and shared within groups; they are part of the habitus. Taste has the capacity to link people into an aesthetic regime, which exists outside of and independent of the market actor, while also being experienced and enacted as intensely personal.

Bourdieu's discussion (1977) of habitus as the generative mechanism of practices is significant to understanding taste as a mode of sense-making. He suggests that the senses provide a 'practical logic' of action. Senses are convenient, mastered and manageable, with a 'fuzzy systematicity and approximate logic' (1977: 123). The senses are not rational or systematic, and therein lies their rich malleability. In being indeterminate (for example, the flexibility of such evaluative pairs as hot/cold, heavy/light, dull/shiny), senses provide a link between multiple scenarios and moments, ordering the world through an ambiguous system of 'overall resemblance' (1977: 111).

Crucially, Bourdieu notes that the senses are not limited to the traditional five (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch). The 'successfully socialized agent' is equipped with all of the senses:

> the sense of necessity and the sense of duty, the sense of direction and the sense of reality, the sense of balance and the sense of beauty, common sense and the sense of the sacred, tactical sense and the sense of responsibility, business sense and the sense of propriety, the sense of humour and the sense of absurdity, moral sense and the sense of practicality, and so on (1977: 123-124).

Bourdieu thus provides an approach to understanding taste in terms of a practical modus operandi that engenders practices that are predictable and regular because they are consistent with a shared and largely unconscious logic of sense-making. Because they are guided by a common set of principles (aesthetic regimes), taste-led practices can result in the accretion of durable outcomes through collective repetition and sedimentation. Like gravity, taste operates as an organizational force, pulling disparate actors and actions into recognizable, recurrent, material patterns.

As an example, consider the aesthetic regime of relevance for this paper. Currently dominant in the field of fine wine and its niche sub-fields (such as that for natural wine) is an aesthetic regime that privileges specificity of provenance (where a wine was made, by whom, how and when). Elsewhere, I have suggested that the aesthetic regime of provenance be understood as a 'taste for the particular' (Smith Maguire, 2016). Akin to Arsel and Bean's discussion of the 'Apartment Therapy' (AT) taste regime, the aesthetic regime of provenance is a 'discursively constructed normative system' (2012: 900) governing meanings and uses of material culture relative to a particular cultural domain, closely linked to particular authority figures and legitimating institutions and forms of media, such as prominent wine writers and sommeliers and specialist wine magazines (e.g. *Decanter* and *Wine Spectator*).

Aesthetic regimes do not operate in mutual isolation. For example, as Arsel and Bean (2012) note, the AT regime draws from soft modernist and craft consumption norms. The aesthetic regime of provenance draws on the well-established legitimacy of *terroir*, a French concept that links wine quality to the environment (soil, climate, topography, history and culture) in which it was produced and historically served as a device for securing competitive advantage and monopoly rents (Charters, 2006; Fourcade, 2012; Harvey, 2002). But crucially, the aesthetic regime of provenance extends beyond *terroir*: it is a valuation of goods, practices, places via the hyper specification and democratization of provenance—a sort of *terroir max*—that reflects contemporary notions of good taste that privilege the authentic, artisanal, transparent, traditional and sincere (Beverland and Luxton, 2005; Inglis, 2005). An analysis of specialist wine magazines (Smith Maguire, 2016) identified common material referents for provenance-related legitimacy claims, including biographical and geographical transparency (e.g. wine made by *someone*, from *somewhere*), heritage (e.g. multi-generational winemaking families, or traditional modes of production), and genuineness (e.g. perceived sincerity of the producer's motivations, rather than a commercial orientation). Natural wine makers and proponents place an exaggerated emphasis on a wine providing as pure an expression of its place of production as possible, thereby offering ample points of attachment for such an aesthetic regime.

In addition, a taste for the particular draws legitimacy from the disinterested aesthetic regime outlined by Bourdieu (1984): the varied details of provenance become the subject of connoisseurial discernment. While proponents of natural wine may stress an explicitly *interested*, passionate—even vulgar, in Bourdieusian terms—engagement with wine (e.g. as one of the winemaker respondents said: 'We do wine to drink, not to be tested'), the disinterested aesthetic regime is nevertheless notable through exercises of aesthetic distance. For example, esteem is attached to disregard for orthodoxy and conventional 'high status' wine regions and producers. As such, critiques of natural wine by established wine critics (e.g. Robert Parker (in Asimov, 2012) described it as 'one of the major scams being foisted on wine consumers') affirm, rather than undermine, the legitimacy of natural wine in the eyes of its producing and consuming adherents.

The chapter now turns to look at the implications of the aesthetic regime of provenance vis-à-vis the cultural producers and intermediaries who share this sense of taste. What does a taste for the particular *do* as a modus operandi in the field of natural wine?

Overview of the Research

As noted above, one of my primary concerns is with understanding how the tastes, values and perceptions of cultural producers inform their market actions: an understanding being developed within cultural intermediaries and 'inside marketing' research (e.g. Smith Maguire and Matthews, 2014; Zwick and Cayla, 2011). Reflecting this conceptual orientation, the chapter daws from interpretive research on wine maker actors. Data primarily consist of transcripts from semi-structured

interviews with 40 wine makers and intermediaries (e.g. sommeliers, retailers). Data collection extended over several years and rounds of fieldwork in New York (2010 and 2012), Western Australia (2012), France's Champagne region (2012) and South Africa's Cape Winelands (2015).

Interviews were typically 45 to 60 minutes, and were guided by the same set of questions I have used across past research on cultural intermediaries in established wine markets (e.g. Smith Maguire, 2013), focused broadly on an individual's market context (e.g. generic responsibilities linked to their present occupation, length of time and different work experiences within the wine market); the characteristics of their work (e.g. usual work practices, major obstacles to accomplishing desired ends, perceptions of their typical consumer); and their engagement with wine in their personal lives (e.g. their 'consumer' attitudes and practices). Natural wine explicitly informed the selection of respondents, all of whom are involved with natural wine (e.g. making and selling raw, biodynamic, organic, or natural wine, or on- and off-trade retailers and distributors specializing in such wines). (Whereas, natural wine (definitions and virtues thereof) was not a direct focus of the interview questions; discussion of natural wine, *terroir*, quality, taste and so forth emerged organically in the course of the interview through probing questions that followed-up on respondents' comments.)

The majority of the interviews took place primarily in English, with a few of the France-based interviews conducted in French and subsequently translated. A summary of the respondents appears below, reflecting their primary role within the market: 20 wine makers (active in either the cultivation of grapevines, making of wine, or both); 13 distributors/retailers (including those selling wine to restaurants, and to consumer in restaurants or wine stores/bottle shops); six sommeliers (qualified experts in wine, often responsible for the wine lists in restaurants); one wine writer (presenting information about wine to consumers). All respondent names in the paper are pseudonyms.

Primary Role	Number of Respondents
Wine maker	20
Distributor/retailer	13
Sommelier	6
Writer	1
Total	40

The analysis adopted an interpretive stance towards the data, with the interviews understood both as accounts of practices and preferences, and performances of marketplace identities and roles. A thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was approached both deductively and inductively (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). In brief, deductive coding reflected the interview guide, with responses coded for general market and career context; work practices; cited obstacles or difficulties; characterizations of consumers; personal wine practices and preferences. Inductive coding within the categories then identified themes within and between responses, which were then the basis for further deductive coding. For example, deductive

coding for discussions of personal preferences in wine drinking identified relevant passages within each transcript, within which inductive coding identified references to taste-led 'eureka' moments (e.g. anecdotes about how the specificity of the taste of certain wines marked them as different, which led to the realization that the wines were made in a particular ('natural') way, which prompted further involvement with that style of winemaking). Mentions of taste-led interest in natural wine were then coded deductively in the other transcripts, allowing an analysis of all references to this point of attachment with regard to the particular context of use (e.g. in relation to what prompted them to adopt this style of winemaking themselves, or how the respondent positioned his/her taste in relation to others, as discussed below with regard to the findings).

Findings

The aesthetic regime of provenance is typical in the wine field. This was often evidenced in the transcripts through reliance on the well-established language of *terroir*. For example, Jean-Pierre (biodynamic winemaker, Champagne) describes his approach:

> It's not industrial, it's not technological, it's natural, it's not soilless production. These days you buy tomatoes that weren't grown in soil. For me, the vine has a history, is linked to a *terroir*, it isn't soilless production.

References to *terroir* were not limited to 'Old World' producers or references to soil, but were expansive and intuitive. As Alex (sommelier, New York) commented:

> You know honestly, I think a lot of times, say nine out of ten times, you can taste if a wine is made from a, you know, small producer. So I think that really shows. … With these wines, you know, when you have these small traditional family growers who've been making wine for 600 years, you taste it.

In general, the 40 respondents explicitly privileged specificity of place and transparency of production in their definitions of quality for the personal consumption and production: not just any vine, but *this* vine; not just any wine, but *this* wine made by *this* person (this is also broadly true across the 100+ wine producer/intermediary interviews I have conducted over the years; this is not an aesthetic regime restricted to participants in the natural wine market).

Thus, all participants demonstrated their sense of a 'taste for the particular' and engagement with the aesthetic regime of provenance as a collective heuristic framework. From the analysis of the transcripts there emerged three broad ways in which that sense of taste translated into action: as a device of division, operation, and coordination.

Taste as a dividing device

Bourdieu notes that logics of taste are conventions that tend to operate through oppositions; they are principles of division (Bourdieu 1984: 479) that reduce complexity and make selection and categorization a manageable—even unthinking—exercise. The theoretical significance of division devices is well recognized in social theories of markets (Lamont, 2012). For example, Slater (2002:

67-8) outlines the relationship of markets to the socially and culturally constructed and contingent definitions on which they rest:

> [M]arketing strategy appears…as a simultaneous definition of both markets and products. Each possible choice of product definition—of what the product could be—is simultaneously a choice of consumption relations (different culturally defined product characteristics, uses and consumers) and a choice of competitors (goods which are perceived as similar or different). In short: different product definitions delineate different markets. Conversely, a choice between different markets is a choice between different products, uses and consumers.

Herein lies the significance of cultural producers' sense of taste as a division device, through which categories are demarked.

The practical significance of division devices is evident in the following two examples from interviews at two different New York wine stores specializing in natural wine. Griffin refers to what is *not* for sale in his store: 'I've taken to calling them magazine wines. They're everywhere and I'm not interested. I'm interested in showcasing *terroir*.' Whereas, Kevin notes:

> Sometimes…you have to compromise…it can't just be the wines that you love and the stories that you love. So there is a certain amount of industrial wine that we have to sell just to kind of pay the rent.

In both cases, personal taste is used as a way to make categories: magazine/industrial wines as opposed to 'their' preferred wine.

Such taste-led divisions are also apparent in the following example from Jerome, a winemaker whose champagnes are on the wine list of one of the world's best restaurants. Jerome differentiates between wines for drinking versus tasting:

> It's a question of taste. …Some [wines] are impossible…to drink. It's just… We try to do wines that are possible to drink! (*laughs*) The result of this is I don't send anymore wines to magazines, guides …because they taste wines as a competition, or like this [*shows small sip from tasting glass*]. And we do wines to drink, not to be tested. It's completely different. If you have wines with a lot of sulphur, of course you can drink a small glass like this it's ok. But if you have to drink two bottles, you are completely out of order the next day! (*laughs*) We can drink 2 bottles of this without any problems the day after. We can work. (*laughs*)

Jerome makes sense of his own position in the market through a categorization based on palate and mode of engagement. What is particularly striking is the use of the personal pronoun 'we' (especially as Jerome works largely on his own): a process by which Jerome, at the same time as placing himself in a particular category, calls forth an ideal social group with which he identifies (cf. Elias, 1978).

These examples are not simply about sense-making (what wine do I like; what wine do I want to make/sell) but also, fundamentally, about market segmentation. As Venter and colleagues have recently noted (2015), there is no necessary equivalence between the planning and doing of market segmentation. My research suggests an additional (pre-planning, pre-rational) dimension to their observations. Market segmentation arises and becomes durable, in part, through the affective, taste-led

divisions that self- and peer-oriented producers and intermediaries use to define their identity, and the interrelated worthiness of themselves and their wares.

With the aesthetic regime of provenance as an external referent, such practices of the taste for the particular (e.g. aligning oneself with others with similar preferences; evaluating wines based on the transparency and specificity of their provenance) operate as division devices, separating wines and other goods—and their producers, intermediaries and consumers—into categories of more/less legitimacy, worthiness, and value.

Taste as an operating device

The habitus provides actors with a 'modus operandi' (Bourdieu, 1977: 72, passim) or 'feel for the game' (Bourdieu, 1990a: 63), which enables action to proceed on an instinctual, intuitive level of 'gut-feeling'that is—by virtue of the habitus—deeply socially structured, even if experienced as intensely individual. This affective dimension of taste-as-doing has largely been overlooked in the market devices and practice literature thus far, yet is exemplary of the focus on 'practical consciousness over deliberation' (Warde, 2014: 286) that is exemplary of practice-oriented research.

As an example, consider Christie, a New York-based importer of natural wine.

> Well I always go back to the beginnings of our company when we were just discovering all of these wines and at the time we didn't know how they were made or that there were natural wines, it's just [we] would go to Paris to visit this bistro or this specific store … and be completely intrigued and bowled over and just in love with what the wines had to say. And the more questions we asked about how they were made, the more we realised that they were all made with the same philosophy; the ones we actually liked to drink happened to be natural wines. It wasn't: 'Oh here's our ethics and … we want to go and start an organic wine company.' No it was just: 'These wines are really good. Why are they good? Oh its people who are working organically in a field and working organically in the cellar.' And that's what makes these wines interesting and complex and that they speak of *terroir*…

In Christie's account, there is a post hoc rationalization of what was, at the time, a 'fuzzy systematicity and approximate logic' (Bourdieu, 1977: 123) of wines that emotionally and sensually appealed to her and her partner. Similarly, Rex—a Melbourne-based wine writer—refers to the role of embodied sensation in directing his activity:

> If you look at the wines I review, probably more often than not they probably fall on the 'natural' side of the ledger. ... I like to think I will never review a wine just because it's BD [biodynamic] or natural. If the wine doesn't appeal to me, I won't… It has to be about taste. It's all about taste. From the very beginning, the thing that interested me in organics, although it chimed with my personal ideology, was the flavour, and the character of the taste.

In the accounts from both Christie and Rex, we catch a glimpse of the 'embodied and pre-reflective nature of aesthetic experience' (Olcese and Savage, 2015: 734)

that guides productive action (choosing wines to import/write about), and provides the basis for eventual pattern recognition.

If taste leads intermediaries such as importers and writers to operate in particular ways, so too does it lead wine makers—as in the case of Maurice, a Champagne winemaker who works alongside his brother:

> Our only target, our only goal, is to make the best wines possible. Everything which would go in the direction of sustainable agriculture, or something like that, would just be a consequence of that choice. ... I don't want to say that we don't care, because it's not true. [*laughs*] But it was not our idea first. Our idea is to make good wines, the best wine possible, and if it helps to be sustainable, then fine. If it doesn't, then too bad. But obviously it does.

In the interview, Maurice recounts the process by which their approach to viticulture emerged though the idea, not of sustainability, but of quality. He and his brother, many years earlier, had abandoned a first blend of their non-vintage champagne because it was too great a deviation from the house style (a standard house style, unchanging annually, is the orthodox approach in non-vintage champagnes), despite the fact that both found it a superior wine. Having sacrificed quality to orthodoxy, the brothers decided to work differently: 'We work from a white sheet of paper and we try to make the best wine possible.' This approach brings a 'vintage' mentality (offering an expression of a particular year's harvest) to the production of non-vintage champagne (which is made by blending wines from different years); while Maurice and his brother, in time, could recognize, externalize, and market this approach as something distinctive for their house (which they now follow as their own orthodoxy), it was initially a manner of operating led by discomfort at making anything less than the best possible wine.

Maurice, Rex and Christie provide examples of how taste serves as an operating device: a method of doing led not by instrumental rationality but by gut-feeling. However, intuition should not be understood as the absence of rationality. Intuition is a means of forging a programme of action through the adjustment of action in accordance with internalized externalities (rules). For the respondents, those rules are oriented towards notions of authenticity, truth and beauty, rather than economic criteria of the maximization of benefits. That is, the respondents' means of operating (choosing wines/making wines) emerge through an objective adaptation of behaviour to fit their sense of duty to quality and palate (cf. Bourdieu, 1977: 72, 123-4): a way of doing led—at least initially—by emotion, palate and taste.

Taste as a coordinating device

Taste serves as a device for the coordination between various actions. This coordination between ways of doing and a sense of 'the good' can occur at the level of the individual market actor, leading to the accretion of a durable mode of working (that then risks becoming an end in its own right through the logic of rationalization and commercialization). With the lens trained on the consumer, a way of operating led by a sense of when things 'go together' is what McCracken (1988) refers to as 'Diderot unities.' Taste also coordinates between actors: again with reference to the consumer, this is typically understood through reference to processes of social

inclusion/exclusion based on shared relative control of and capacity to perform particular forms of social capital (e.g. Jarness, 2013; Lamont and Molnar, 2001).

Based on this research, I suggest that a perceived shared sense of taste can establish the basis of coordinated action between market actors (wine producers, intermediaries). For example, the following two respondents are intermediaries responsible for sourcing natural wine; both disavowed reliance on formal regulation schemes:

> By and large, we like to go with wines that are certified, but we're not caught up in glorifying 'organic' or 'biodynamic.' Here, it's really about method: smaller production, lower yields, hand-picked grapes, naturally occurring yeasts. These tend to be, by default, people who are also organic or biodynamic. (Benjamin, sommelier, New York)

> I'm of the view that you can't talk about *terroir* or microclimates if you're not also talking about people who are doing everything they can for the health of their land. But I'm not looking for certification. You should be able to prove it without having to be governmentally regulated or certified. … As someone who buys and sells wine, you *should* be able to know. You should do that *anyway* if you're going to properly represent these families and this wine. (Griffin, retailer, New York)

Via reference to a shared sense of taste, both Benjamin and Griffin establish a sense of 'going together' with the producers they select to represent.

This is also reflected from the point of view of the producers, whose routes to market hinge on mutual taste—between the producer and intermediary, and intermediary and their audience. Philippe and Jerome both recounted difficulties in finding a market for their champagne because it differs from the mainstream product. While their renown now means that customers—and intermediaries—come to them, at the outset it was a matter of finding intermediaries (wine shops in Paris, in the case of Jerome) who shared their sense of taste. Philippe, for example, noted how this continues even now with regard to moving into new markets:

> The *problem* was to find the clientele who could follow that style of champagne that was very different from the commercial category that you find worldwide. … The idea was to find the customers … to find everywhere those who would enjoy the type of champagne that we produce.
> [Interviewer] How do you find them?
> We had to find the importers. First was to invite them here, to come. So that we could explain how we work, and it has been really word of mouth. …I had someone from Chile last week, from Santiago de Chile, a *caviste*, a retailer, a fan of champagne, knowing the philosophy of our wines, and he said 'Well, that's a concept we like. Because champagne is really discotheque product, but this is…different.' Champagne *can be* from grapes, from a grower, there is a cellar, there is a concept, and he liked that. He came and spent the afternoon visiting, tasting, and knowing how we do it.

The examples of Philippe, Jerome and the New York intermediaries suggest how taste can underpin the formation of social relations through feelings of trust and mutuality.

Sassatelli and Scott (2001) identify a fundamental tension for trust in well-developed markets. As markets become larger and more complex, the means by which trust is established and circulated tend to move from informal, traditional and localized devices (such as personal relations) to universalistic, institutional, and impersonal devices (such as state regulation). This shift from embedded to disembedded trust regimes, however, creates the conditions for people to become disenchanted with the guarantees provided by certifications and ranking schemes, and grow nostalgic for the seemingly more authentic, genuine guarantees of personal recommendations and mutual identification. In the case of the natural wine market and the aesthetic regime of provenance (for which authenticity and genuineness are paramount for legitimacy), this is a tension between the need for disembedded guarantees of quality that can circulate globally with the wine to help coordinate actors, and the need for embedded guarantees of legitimacy and worthiness. This tension emerges as (for example) a disavowal of certification schemes, and performances of personal sincerity (e.g. wines are to be trusted because the intermediary knows/likes them personally, not because they are certified biodynamic by an impersonal regulatory body). The examples thus suggest that a perceived shared sense of taste not only works as a coordination device (linking up producers and intermediaries and, eventually, end consumers), but also offers a 'fuzzy' resolution to the tension between trust regimes. The aesthetic regime of provenance provides a disembedded, globally distributed schema for regulating action that is enacted and experienced as if it is embedded, personal and passionate.

Looking across these three dimensions, we can see how processes of division, operation and coordination intertwine. Division makes operations possible and sensible, and underpins coordination. As Martin suggests:

> When 'we get it' – when we experience the artistic beauty of a painting, say – we focus on the 'it', the object in question, and the beauty as the quality of this object. But when we get the 'it' we get the 'we' as well, in the sense of establishing a presumption of like-mindedness from those of similar taste. The aesthetic experience is inseparable from perceived entry into some group (cited in Olcese and Savage, 2015: 727).

The mutual recognition of the quality of natural wine on the palate or the affective power of the stories of small scale producers (the 'it') simultaneously enables a division of 'it' from its 'other,' the articulation of a 'we', and an identification of and with a shared set of terms of engagement through which action can be mutually adjusted and aligned.

Conclusion

In conclusion, let me elaborate on what this research offers to the conceptualization of taste, aesthetics and the organization of markets. I have offered an account of how taste operates as an affective market device. This sits within a growing body of work concerned with developing a more fulsome, social account of aesthetics that does not diminish taste to simply an exercise in distinction or a concern with what is in fashion. Taking up insights from conceptualizations of practice and practice-

oriented approaches, I have suggested that taste is experienced and exercised as an affective, embodied, sensual capacity to identify patterns (and thus to divide 'like' from 'unlike'); to identify (even if only through an intuitive, 'gut' feeling) a path of action (a modus operandi); and to establish trust and common ground between actors (thus allowing coordination of actions and actors).

These findings confirm and build on past work, while extending it in particular ways. First, while taste as a device of division is well-established in existing accounts (Bourdieu, 1984; Lamont, 2012), this chapter offers the groundwork for developing new understandings of processes of market segmentation. Second, while taste as a device of doing is also well-recognized (Hennion, 2007), I examine new dimensions of the processes (division, operation, coordination) that translate taste into action. Moreover, I call attention to the significance (oft-ignored) of non-rational, intuitive, 'fuzzy' thinking. Third, taste as a device of coordination is understood primarily in relation to processes of social distinction/capital and closure/exclusion (e.g. Jarness, 2013; Lamont, 2012); this chapter provides an account of how practices of taste and aesthetic regimes achieve a macro-organization of markets, market actors and actions. Finally, I argue for an account of how cultural producers and intermediaries are mobilized through their habitual sense of taste, thereby making the case that this is an important—if, as yet, largely absent—dimension of understanding how tastes shape markets and mobilize action. Picking up on Hirschman's (1983) invitation to consumer researchers and marketing scholars to examine the identities and practices of self-oriented producers, the chapter provides further impetus to 'shift the focus' (Smith Maguire & Zhang, 2016) to cultural producers' and intermediaries' practices of taste in order to fully understand processes of market development, value construction, and the organization of markets.

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