

Case Study: Jobs To Be Done for Wine Drinkers

A user-centered approach to customer loyalty in the wine industry

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Introduction

To succeed in a highly competitive retail environment, companies are developing closer and more personalized relationships with their customers. Emerging technologies in data science and machine learning make it possible for brands to deliver personalized experiences that solve real problems for people. Brands are leveraging these technologies to drive innovation and earn loyalty.

But, technology alone is not a magic bullet for attracting and retaining customers: innovation for loyalty must begin by knowing customers' real needs. According to recent our client research on customer loyalty brands that address people's *emotional* and *social* needs, not just their *functional* needs, are the ones that encourage loyalty best. Experiences that address deep human motivations become so useful and integrate into consumers' lives so seamlessly that they build loyalty intrinsically, no reward points or coupons required.

One methodology that seeks to understand customers' social and emotional needs is the Jobs to Be Done framework, popularized by innovation expert Clayton Christensen. In Christensen's approach to understanding consumer choice, people "hire" products to solve problems and improve their lives. In this framework, a wine drinker in her 20s might "hire" wine for her party to help her friend group feel mature, supporting their emotional need to grow into their adult lives. Successful products solve customer problems very well, and a brand can disrupt a market when it meets a deep customer need in a new way.¹

This case study shares the methodology and benefits of applying the Jobs to Be Done framework to customer research for innovation in the wine industry. The research is a collaboration between Our client and the Master of Human-Computer Interaction and Design program at University of California, Irvine.

Methodology

The UC Irvine research team set out to identify the "jobs" that people hire wine to accomplish, to surface insights about motivations and barriers that could inform future product design. Researchers conducted 15 semi-structured interviews with wine-drinking, college-educated adults, ages 22-45, who live in the United States. Interviews lasted 30 to 60 minutes, during which interviewers asked for customers' stories about drinking, buying and learning about wine. Follow-up questions probed for data on the places and contexts that people drink, buy, and discover wine, and the feelings associated with their wine stories.

¹ Christensen, C. "Know Your Customers' 'Jobs to Be Done'," *Harvard Business Review*, Sept. 2016. <https://hbr.org/2016/09/know-your-customers-jobs-to-be-done>

The team identified the customer jobs in this report using a grounded theory qualitative research methodology. Researchers transcribed interviews and coded the data into 40 themes related to motivations and barriers. They used affinity diagramming to group the 40 themes into six broader categories. With some refinement, those six categories became the six Jobs to Be Done explained in the findings below.

Researchers triangulated the data by conducting a study of the wine community on Reddit and a review of published market research; these additional sources confirmed this study's key findings.

Findings: Why People Drink Wine

As a category, wine has a reputation for luxury and class status, but it is actually a popular beverage choice for people of all ages and income levels. It fits into people's lives on special occasions and casual nights at home, in settings that range from dining room to ballroom to boardroom.

Underlying motivations to drink wine vary, but this research identified one commonality among the many reasons people choose wine: **people hire wine to feel confident about their lives.** Wine is classy, relaxing and mature. It brings people together and offers rich content for conversation. Most importantly, the world of wine can be an educational journey, making it a hobby that offers a way to continually learn and improve.

Wine drinkers of all experience levels do not just *enjoy* these qualities of wine, they *use* them to build confidence and improve their lives.

However, wine's reputation for elitism provokes anxiety among some consumers. Their *lack* of confidence about wine is a primary emotional barrier to drinking wine or enjoying the experience. Products or services that address that anxiety and enhance customer confidence would both lower barriers to entry in the market and produce lasting loyalty.

What follows is a closer look at six jobs that wine drinkers hire wine to accomplish.

Wine is classy.

Consumers hire wine to express class status.

"I don't want to be drinking something that's really, really cheap. I don't know why. Like if I talk about it, I don't want anyone judging me for what I'm buying." – Rubi

"[When I first drank wine], Chardonnay was what I liked. I think I tried Pinot Grigio, and then I thought that sounds a little too common. It sounded like I didn't know my wine...There's this sophistication, this perception that goes along with that. Chardonnay seemed a little more sophisticated than Pinot Grigio." - Sarah

"I remember distinctly a time I tried a wine that I fell in love with. I was in Palm Springs, and it was my birthday. I was in a five-star hotel." - Melanie

Even though the wine market is diverse in price point and reputation, wine is generally seen as an upscale drink. Wine knowledge can be useful in situations that call for social posturing, and people hire wine to gain access to or participate in situations where status matters. Ambitious interviewees in white-collar workplaces expressed a desire to learn about wine to connect with their bosses. Another commented that wine is a good beverage choice at a networking event, because the choice reflects well on the drinker. Very few interviewees named class outright as a defining feature of wine, but most told a story that positioned wine as a beverage for people with influence.

The classy factor is a motivator in some contexts, but insecurity about elitism in wine culture is a barrier to entry for some novice wine drinkers. One interviewee said she had never gone on a winery tour, for fear that people would judge her lack of knowledge. Another got anxious when buying wine for others, concerned that he would make a poor choice.

Notably, wine enthusiasts expressed annoyance at elitism in wine culture, and insisted that passion for wine is about finding wine you love, not necessarily finding wines that are expensive or considered high-quality by experts.

Job Stories

- When I am at happy hour with my boss, I want to discuss sophisticated topics of interest to her, so that she thinks of me as well-educated.
- When I am giving a gift to someone I don't know well, I want to pick something classy, so the recipient feels appreciated and sees that I have good taste.

Competition

Sophisticated activities (golf, country clubs, vacations); upscale products (watches, scotch, fashion); cultural activities (fine art, gastronomy, news and media)

Design Implications

- **Alleviate elitism anxiety.** How might we make wine culture more accessible to people who feel that wine is too expensive or sophisticated?
- **Bust the myth that there is a right way or wrong way to enjoy wine.** How might we empower consumers to find wine they love?

- **Leverage the aspirational quality of wine.** How might we support professionals growing their careers?

Wine is relaxing.

Consumers hire wine to relax and feel special.

"You go to these wineries and they try to create this experience where you don't want to leave. You want to relax, and drink, and picnic. Maybe bring your puppy or whatever. That's all stuff I really like. It really creates an atmosphere where people can get away, and relax and enjoy themselves. I think that's a lot of the appeal of wine." - Sarah

"Wine is a way to unwind, de-stress...To have that time with my family. The wine is a way for us to relax, share stories, catch up over the week, and that's one aspect in how I define wine culture myself. It allows me to relax, and I get in a different frame of mind." - Nisha

People drink wine because it feels good: for many, the pleasurable "buzz" has a relaxing effect on the body and creates feelings of calm, happiness or even euphoria. Consumers can turn to any alcohol for the intoxicating effect, but our interviewees describe choosing wine when they want calmer, warmer experiences. Wine enhances the experience of quietly cooking dinner while listening to a baseball game, or casually catching up with friends, or enjoying a memorable meal. Consumers hire wine for this job in the comfort of their homes more than many of the other jobs in this report.

This job presents an opportunity to break down customers' anxieties about elitism in wine culture. Relaxing wine experiences are rarely formal, and no prior knowledge is necessary to enjoy its pleasurable effects. Notably, in relaxing contexts like home, interviewees did not express concern for picking an impressive or socially acceptable wine, and they talked more about drinking their "go-to" wines that they know they like.

Job Stories

- After a stressful day of work, I like to come home and unwind, to recharge for the next day.
- On a quiet Saturday evening, I want a low-key activity to do at home, to relax with friends without going out.

Competition

Exercise; television; meditation; vacation

Design Implications

- **Make every bottle of wine a memorable experience.** How might we make people pay more attention to each bottle of wine they experience?

- **Make wine-buying frictionless.** How might we make it as easy as possible to choose and buy wine?

Wine is mature and adult.

Young adults hire wine to feel mature.

"I really enjoy wine because as you get older, you kind of want a mellow drink." – Eric

Many drinkers associate wine with adulthood, and the social and emotional pull to act grown-up generates demand for wine among younger drinkers. Our interviewees articulated differences between the cultural expectations surrounding wine versus other alcohols: beer and liquor are common at college parties; liquor is best for late nights out. In general, they said that wine is most appropriate for calmer, more adult activities, like dinner, networking events, or dates. As one interviewee put it, "You can't chug wine." Consumers are also aware of a learning curve associated with wine drinking, and assume that they will gain more knowledge as they age.

Job Stories

- When I am planning a party for my 20-something-year-old friends, I want to serve something interesting, to create a party experience that feels mature, classy, and intelligent.
- When I meet a friend to catch up, I want to choose an activity that feels adult, so that we are inspired to have a meaningful conversation.

Competition

Clothing and fashion; cooking and healthy eating; weddings; home ownership; career advancement

Design Implications

- **Educate stealthily.** How might we begin teaching younger consumers about wine before they seek out wine knowledge, launching their wine journeys with little user effort?
- **Help consumers look good.** How might we help new wine drinkers look more experienced than they are?

Extra pull-out quote for this section:

"I feel like wine has more of an older culture. You don't see people who are eighteen going out for a glass of wine. I feel like I have never heard of that. I feel like... People who are drinking wine are a little older. Like moms. It's always classy. 'Let's go get a glass of wine. Not get hammered.' You drink a beer to go out. I wouldn't drink some wine to go out. I think it's more of an age thing. I think it's more as you mature into your career, or like settling down in life." – Kavita

Wine is social glue.

Consumers hire wine to bring people together.

"Wine is the socially acceptable thing to bring to a party. Everybody loves it. It's boozy but not aggressive...I would never feel comfortable bringing a bottle of vodka to a family party." - Sarah

Social connection is one of humans' most primal instincts, and consumers choose alcohol of all kinds to forge and sustain relationships. Wine is a central feature of house parties, celebrations, dates, client dinners, networking events, and other social experiences with family, friends, and coworkers. Wine faces strong competition from beer and spirits to complete this job, and consumers choose wine in contexts that value wine's key differentiators: wine is adult, and therefore broadly socially acceptable at parties and as gifts; it is fancy, and therefore an appropriate choice for celebrations and events that signal status and power.

Job Stories:

- When I attend a happy hour with my coworkers, I want to drink something that other people are drinking, to feel like I'm part of the team.
- When I go to a holiday party, I need to find a hostess gift that is popular and socially acceptable, so that I please the party hosts and fit in.
- When I take a client out to dinner, I need to create a sense of shared vulnerability, to build his trust and grow the relationship.

Competition

Other alcohol; food/restaurants; events (sports, music); hobbies; religion

Design Implications:

- **Illustrate how wine fits into different social events.** How might we help people fit wine into their social plans without being overly intrusive?
- **Make wine preferences shareable.** How might we make it easier to choose wine that the whole group will like, or to buy wine as a gift?

Wine is a conversation topic.

Consumers hire wine to have something to talk about.

"Wine is a good conversation to have with a bunch of people. Definitely with work people, we have work things or personal things to talk about. When we are ordering, I think it would be cool to say, 'Oh, I actually think that that wine would go better with whatever you just ordered.'" - Kavita

"I think a lot of it is my co-workers are super knowledgeable about all of this stuff. I don't like to even talk about what kind of wine I like to drink because... I don't know what's good or not." - Rubi

Drinking wine brings people together, not just as an activity but as a conversation topic, and most interviewees expressed a desire to talk articulately about wine. Wine is a conversation topic that fits well in work, networking, and social spaces because it is uncontroversial and classy. It also offers depth and complexity, because there is so much to discuss: tasting notes in a wine on the table; variations among regions, brands, varietals, and years; food pairing ideas; and others. Wine enthusiasts enjoy talking about wine, and all interviewees cited face-to-face interaction with friends or professionals as a locus of their wine learning.

However, lack of existing knowledge can be a barrier in conversations about wine. Two young interviewees named lack of knowledge as a reason for not participating in conversations about wine with more experienced drinkers. As one enthusiast put it, “It’s not easy to describe what you like.” Encouraging plain language in wine vocabulary may boost customer confidence in this area. Our interviewees are not alone: 36% of wine buyers prefer intuitive words to describe taste (sweet), while only 20% favor use of industry terms (tannins).²

Job Stories

- When my coworkers go out after work, I want to be part of the conversation, so I can get promoted or be a part of the ‘in crowd’.
- When I meet new people I want to have easy conversation topics on hand, so I can get to know them better.

Competition

Sports; travel and vacations; family; the weather; media (movies, television, books); the news

Design Implications

- **Make wine information easy to consume.** How might we give wine drinkers chunks of information that are memorable and easy to incorporate into conversation?
- **Ease barriers around wine language.** How might we help wine drinkers talk about wine more easily?

Wine appreciation is a journey.

Enthusiasts hire wine knowledge to help them learn and grow.

“It’s the moving target of wine that makes it fun. Your affinities are changing constantly. There is always something new to find because your palate is changing.” - Nolan

Most wine consumers know that there is a wealth of information to learn about wine. Connoisseurs can develop knowledge of wine regions, varietals, vintages, the wine-making process, and terminology. Some consumers derive particular pleasure from the journey of discovery. They describe with passion the hunt for a new flavor and the satisfaction that comes

² Mintel. “Wine, US, November 2016.” November 2016.

from continually evolving one's palate. Wine drinkers who hire wine to learn and grow have become loyal to wine as a hobby, because the returns feed the deep human need for progress.

Meanwhile, half of all U.S. wine drinkers still consider themselves "beginners."³ Onboarding more consumers into educational journeys could drive consumption and loyalty. For consumers of all experience levels, onboarding and 'leveling up' moments in wine education happen in a few common places: vineyards and winery tours, tasting events, bars and restaurants with helpful staff, or with knowledgeable friends.

Job Stories

- When I want to learn more, I like to go places where I can learn from people with first-hand experience, to get information directly from the source.
- When I need a confidence boost, I like to learn more about a well-known topic, so I have a way to measure progress.

Competition

Any hobby or activity in which people can experience self-improvement and demonstrate progress: marathons; video games; higher education

Design Implications

- **Share the wine journey.** How might we help wine enthusiasts share their achievements, progress and goals along their own wine journeys? How might we encourage them to share their learnings with wine novices?
- **Visualize the wine journey.** Young drinkers see themselves becoming more interested in wine when they get older. How might we encourage them to begin their wine journey now, through easy onboarding or gamified progression?

Research Summary

Products or services in the wine industry that address these customer jobs stand to build loyal relationships with consumers, as they turn to wine to help them achieve their goals. Brands might innovate by:

- **Lowering barrier to entry** by emphasizing wine's *social* and *relaxing* aspects, and *downplaying its elitism and cost*
- **Alleviating anxiety** around customer choice by easing access to *trustworthy recommendations*
- **Growing curiosity among newer drinkers** by supporting *easy onboarding* into wine education
- **Increasing customer satisfaction and loyalty** by helping customers find and appreciate wine *they like*

³ Mintel. "Wine, US, November 2016." November 2016.

The result of any of these strategies will be a more confident and satisfied wine drinker who experiences wine as a tool for progress in their lives. Businesses that begin innovation here will outshine their competition in the alcohol market and beyond it.

Designing for Jobs

Designers and business analysts can apply Jobs to Be Done research at all stages of the design lifecycle. As generative research, the framework provides a foundation for product development. For existing products, customer jobs can inform feature development and user experience design. Once a product is ready to launch, marketing messages rooted in the customer jobs are the most likely to resonate with users. Even a product name can speak to jobs to be done.

Coupled with new technology in data analytics like our client's Customer Genome, Jobs to Be Done research can help companies offer the kinds of personalized experiences that customers are beginning to expect from top brands. In the wine industry, for example, data-assisted machine learning could make possible a highly personalized wine recommendation service, which would address emotional, social, and functional needs in a customer's wine purchase decision.

Companies that find new ways to address Jobs To Be Done will help customers improve their lives, and when products deliver on that promise, people return to them. This is the heart of intrinsic loyalty, and should be the starting place for innovation.