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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Brock study finds developing evangelists as brand ambassadors key to reputation building in the wine industry**

Looking at Ontario's quest for recognition as a world-class wine region, researchers have found that cultivating evangelism among key audience members, such as wine connoisseurs, media and restaurants plays an important role in spreading the gospel of a winery's practice and the quality of Ontario wine.

Maxim Voronov and Wesley Helms, professors from Brock University's Goodman School of Business, examined how wine connoisseurs – individuals with a high degree of identification with wine culture – became passionate advocates for Ontario wine in their paper "*Evangelism and the amazing spread of quality reputation of Ontario winemaking.*"

In the study forthcoming in *Academy of Management Journal*, they found wineries' interactions with connoisseurs can foster a deeper connection that may turn these individuals into evangelists – passionate advocates of Ontario wine.

"Much like going to church, the ritualized tours, wine tastings and events create social interactions that connect evangelists to winemakers and the wine itself," said Voronov, a research fellow at Brock's Cool Climate Oenology and Viticulture Institute.

These ritualized interactions, whether a wine tasting, tour, or winemaker's dinner, were found to play an important role in generating not only sales among consumers, but in creating devoted advocates for the product.

Researchers emphasized that these tours and tastings must be more than marketing and must aim to create an authentic relationship between wineries and their guests.

“This is particularly evident in the Ontario wine industry,” said Helms. “The industry is incredibly mobilized and a passionate force of retailers and practitioners that are all going out and celebrating the achievements of the industry.”

This discovery was driven by the data when the researchers noticed that during the rapid evolution of the Ontario industry, it wasn't just a growing consumer base, it was connoisseurs using every tool at their disposal to advocate and promote Ontario wine.

Helms and Voronov did find that some wineries are doing a better job at cultivating evangelists on behalf of their product, while others could benefit from developing these relationships.

Voronov and Helms were recently featured on a Conversations with Goodman podcast here, which can be listened to and [downloaded on Soundcloud](#).

Their full report is available online at [brocku.ca/webfm\\_send/41006](http://brocku.ca/webfm_send/41006)

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