

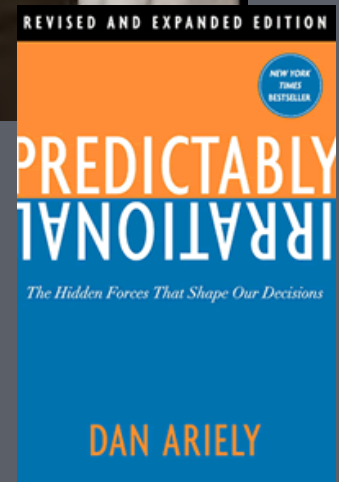
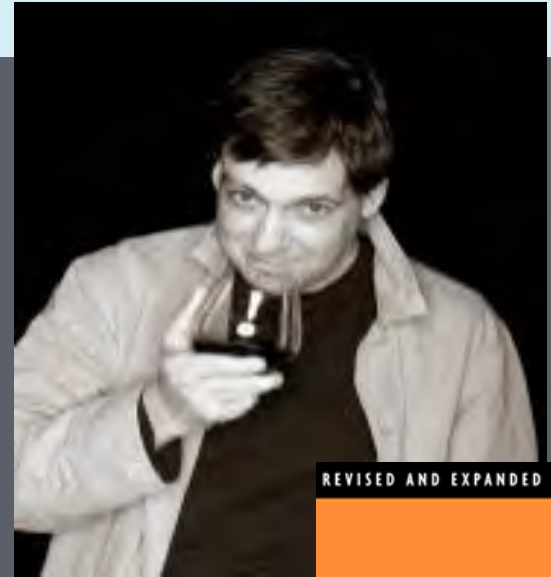
Dan Ariely, behavioural economist, (MIT& Duke)

Dear Dan,

I can't help noticing. Why does a behavioural economist have a publicity photo of himself that shows him drinking a glass of wine while smirking?

Just wondering in
Greenville, NC

--- Bob Knight



How wine writers influence consumer behaviour

On the predictably irrational nature of
wine writing today

Andrew Jefford, UK (Decanter)



“The creature we used
to call a wine writer
has died.”

Possible explanations

Fewer in the market; high unemployment

Possible unethical behaviour

Questions concerning their expertise

If their expertise was in doubt....

- No perceived expertise = no authority

- No authority = no influence

“For the first time in the long history of wine commentary (dating at least the 18th century) “wine experts” have become a suspect class, like sex offenders.”

Steve Heimoff, West Coast Editor

The Wine Enthusiast



Theory of Expert Competence

["What factors lead experts to do well or poorly"]

(James Shanteau, 1992)

- Knowledge of the domain
- Cognitive skills
- Psychological skills
- Decision-making skills
- Task Characteristics????



Task characteristics: good performers

Fairly stable stimuli

Experts agree on stimuli

Feedback available

Objective analysis

- ▣ Accountants
- ▣ Test pilots
- ▣ Grain inspectors
- ▣ Soil judges
- ▣ Astronomers
- ▣ Livestock judges

Task Characteristics: poor performers

Changeable stimuli

Experts disagree on stimuli

Less predictable problems

Feedback unavailable

Subjective analysis only

- ▣ Judges
- ▣ Counselors
- ▣ Parole Officers
- ▣ Stock Brokers
- ▣ Physicians
- ▣ Auditors

2001, Wine Writers' Expertise Suspect

Frédéric Brochet



- Experts couldn't tell a white from a red or
- a simple wine from a premium

Experts *taste* different from average consumers:



“The gap between wine expert ratings and consumer preferences.”

Jan Schiefer & Christian Fischer
(2008)



“Expert ratings may not be so useful as a decision cue for a consumer who wishes to purchase a wine he will like.”

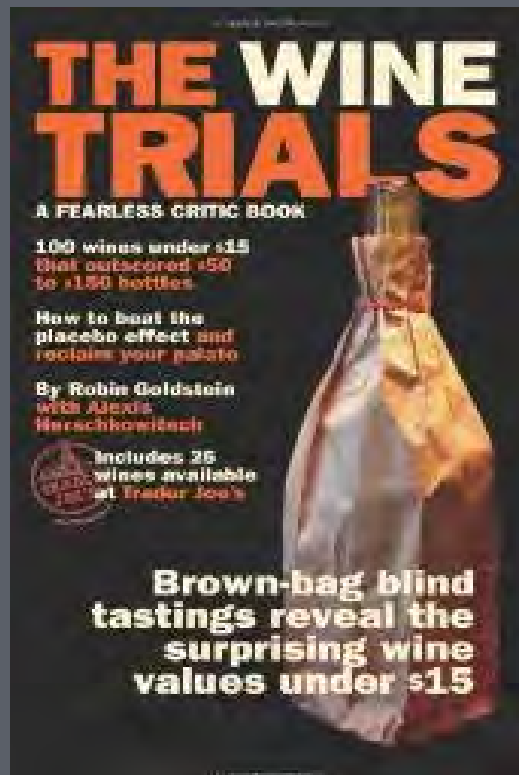
“Awards and ratings ...hold little value for a large share of the non-expert audience.”

“Wine Expertise Predicts Taste Phenotype.”
John Hayes & Gary Pickering (2012)



- “Wine consumers may wish to apply caution in adopting an expert’s endorsements or recommendations.”

Wine Trials, Robin Goldstein, 2008



- “Wine experts liked more expensive wines a bit more. But, a vast majority of wine drinkers are everyday drinkers. Therefore, expert reviews have little relevance to the average consumer.”

The siege continues...

Wine Competitions

Robert E. Hodgson



- Judges could not replicate their own scores.
- Scores varied by plus or minus four points over three blind tastings.

Highly criticized studies

(except Pickering's, of course)

- ❑ Some exceptional flawed
- ❑ Some a misinterpretation of the results
- ❑ All wine writers suspect ("like sex offenders")





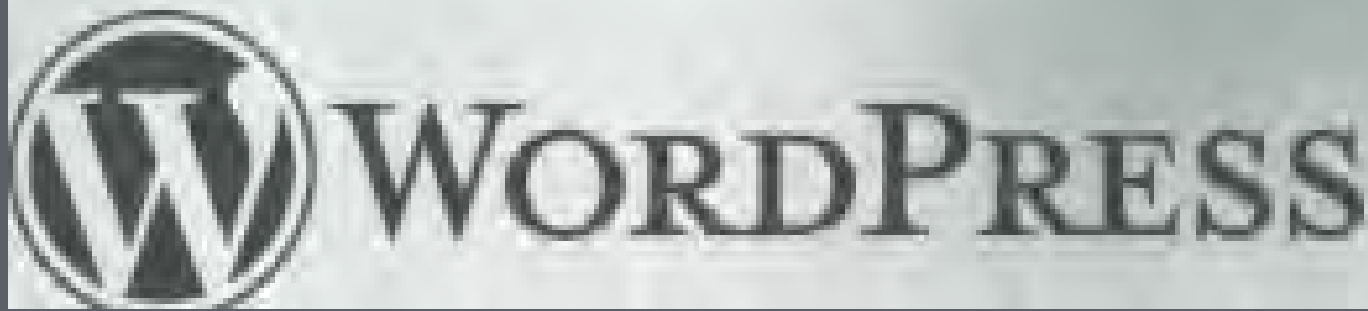
It wasn't that the traditional wine writer had no clothes, but he sure was down to his underwear.

New generation wine enthusiasts

“I want to know not just the deliciousness of a wine, but why it is culturally valuable... and, I do not want one man to tell me what is good.”

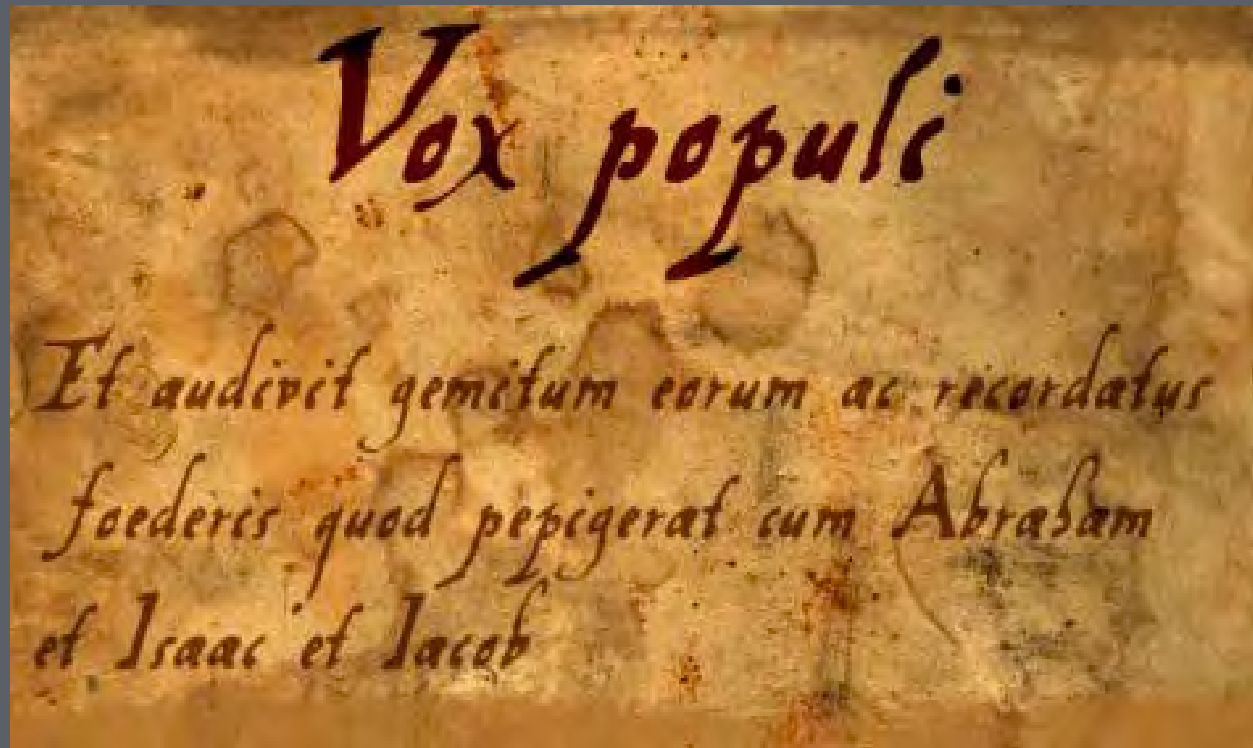
---Luscious Lushes, Aug. 20, 2012

(aka Thea Dwelle)



The perfect setting for a revolution

- Legitimation crisis
- Disruptive innovation
- Receptive new audience



"The empowerment of the people"

Mike Steinberger, *The Future of Wine Writing* (2009)

Wine Blog Revolution

- 1997 ---did not exist
- Today, 1500 in North America, 1000 written by non-professionals
- Fast, cheap, no criteria, no editors, no code of ethics, no monitors

As traditional wine writers entered the medium...

- ▣ Demanded standards
- ▣ Blog Awards
- ▣ Blog Conferences



Wine writing fragmented, however...

Dr. Liz Thatch



■ Sonoma State University



Dark side of blogs:

- ❑ Seldom profitable
- ❑ Hard to maintain
- ❑ Perpetuate myths, innuendos and falsehoods
- ❑ Blistering and unfounded diatribes against the innocent
- ❑ More amateur they are, the more bloated

Sorting the good, the bad, the ugly

Statistical Analysis

- ▣ "Social Network Analysis Index"
- ▣ Properties:
 - ▣ Recognition
 - ▣ Activity
 - ▣ Novelty
 - ▣ Eloquence

Dr. Kostas Zafiropoulos,
University of Macedonia



- fermentation.typepad.com (Tom Wark)
- vinography.com (Alder Yarrow)
- goodwineunder20.blogspot.com
- goodgrape.com
- wannabewine.com
- lennthompson.com
- drvino.com (Tyler Colman)
- jimsloire.blogspot.com (Jim Budd)
- wildwallawallawinewoman.blogspot.com
- dirtysouthwine.com

Linda's Ontario picks:

- deantudor.com (Dean Tudor)
- winealign.com (David Lawrason, John Szabo)
- winesinniagara.com (Rick Van Sickle)
- tonyaspler.com (Tony Aspler)
- grapeguyvintages.blogspot (Michael Pinkus)
- uncorkontario.com (Shawn McCormack)

Who influences the buying behaviour of the average consumer?



Who do friends and trusted advisors turn to for guidance?

If roughly 30% of regular drinkers still go to traditional wine writers....

And, if the other 70% go to friends and trusted advisors...

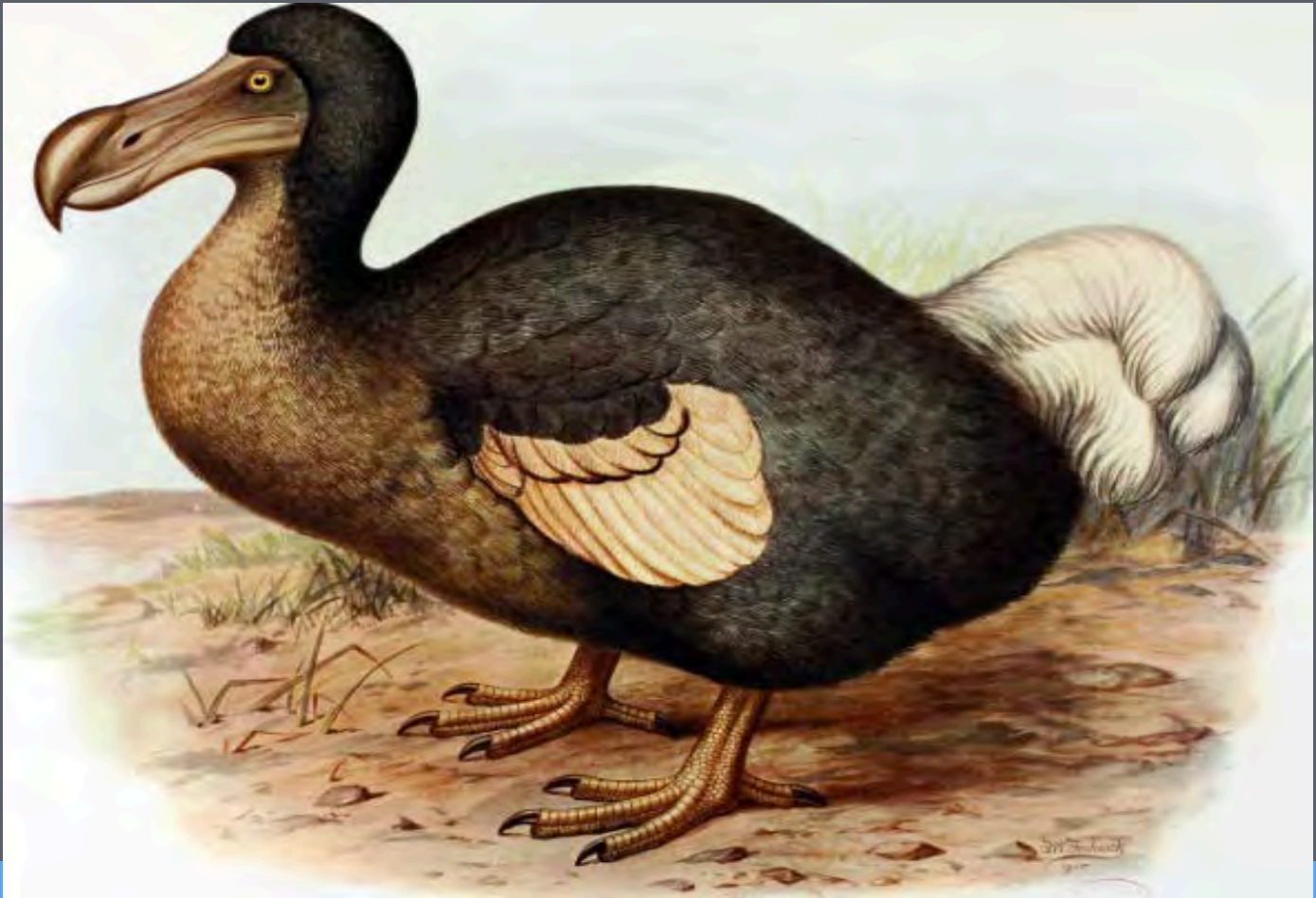
Looks like it's the friends and advisors who are still reading traditional wine writers.

Cellar Tracker: for those who prefer to crowd source their advice



CellarTracker is the world's largest collection of wine reviews, tasting notes and personal stories from people who love wine.

Have traditional wine writers gone...



LCBO thinks not

- ▣ Astrid Brummer, Product Manager, Ontario Wines



- ▣ Heather MacGregor, Media Relations, LCBO



Scientific evidence of influence is scant, but we do know this:

- The more wine education, the more concordance with traditional wine writers/experts
- Traditional wine writers' reviews still matter for the segment of experienced consumer
- However, wine writing and wine buying are not still perverse...

“Tracking Wine Media Usage and the Influence of Critics” (2012)



“ Wine Opinions ”



That's something Dan Ariely can
butter his bread on!

Special thanks

Dean Tudor, Wine Writers Circle of Canada

Debi Pratt, Public Relations Vincor