

# Winery diversification options for Native American tribal enterprises

Winery options  
for Native  
Americans

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This study examined the perceptions of tribal members regarding the strengths, challenges and opportunities presented by tribal winery operation. Issues of business diversification, marketing, perceived barriers to success, potential benefits to the tribe and the role of agriculture in the preservation of tribal heritage were considered.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A modified mixed-methods exploratory sequential research model was used to collect and organize data in two studies. In Study 1 quantitative data was used to inform the development of Study 2 which included a qualitative interview protocol. Qualitative interviews followed to elaborate on the various aspects of each of these areas of consideration.

**Findings** – Results indicate that there is neutral to positive opinion on tribal wineries and that any venture would have to be carefully thought out in terms of marketing and preserving tribal heritage.

**Practical implications** – This research examined the potential strengths, challenges and opportunities provided by tribal winery operation that can be used to inform future business practices.

**Originality/value** – The results of this research provide a framework for consideration of the potential strengths and opportunities provided by tribal winery operation.

**Keywords** Native American wine, Tribal operations, Agriculture, Economics

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Wine and the wine business have predated written records and possibly even farther beyond modern archaeology. Wine has been an integral component of civilization for thousands of years and has developed into a beverage conveying significant social symbols – from celebration to piety, destitution to extraordinary luxury (Barber *et al.*, 2008). There is uncertainty about the details of the first cultivation of wild grapevines; however, Egypt, Greece and Rome are cited as the first to have a wine culture (Estreicher, 2006). Initially used as a beverage, religious reasons and trade to form alliances and sustain political power (Orth *et al.*, 2007; Barber *et al.*, 2008) small vintners by the hundreds of thousands grow grapes to make wine to sell to wine drinkers close to their vineyards as well as worldwide.

The most popular and widely collected beverage available today is wine (Taylor *et al.*, 2008). Originally rooted in production agriculture, the wine business has become more commercial and global in the last decades (Orth *et al.*, 2007), wine is no longer the esoteric beverage consumed by small numbers of aficionados, but has become more commercial in its production, marketing and business management contributing to a major shift in the focus of

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wine business professionals from viticulture and enology to business management and marketing (Spawton, 1991; Orth *et al.*, 2007).

Bellos *et al.* (n.d.) examined the importance of an analysis based on the use of market-based mechanisms in the wine industry and determined it was important for devising management strategies that could promote environmental conservation alongside economic prosperity. Bellos *et al.* (n.d.) stated wineries were good examples of working landscapes, because many communities are solely dependent on wine production for their survival. The wine industry also covers three sectors of the economy: agriculture, manufacturing and trade. These strategies continue to be utilized by wineries to increase profit margins. Orth *et al.* (2007) stated that despite wine's ties to its place of production, there will always be small producers serving different market segments opposite the global brands. These small producers will serve the wine industry through novel approaches, such as tribal wineries.

In the United States, there are 566 federally recognized Native American tribes spread over half of the country (National Conference of State Legislators, 2015). Also prevalent in the United States is the production of wine, which is made in every state (Stevenson, 2011). The US wine industry has enjoyed consistent sales growth (Conway, 2021), with California and Texas among the top wine producers. California and Texas, along with Oklahoma, also have the three largest shares of Native American buying power, totaling 140 billion dollars last year (Melancon, 2021; Conway, 2021).

There are multiple points of interaction between the wine industry and Native American individuals and businesses that beg examination; however, no research has been conducted on any facet of their relationship. This gap exists despite tribal populations being centralized in the same states as the majority of US wine sales. Study of Native American individuals' perception of the wine industry and the implications for tribal business opportunities could prove integral to their success. Following in the footsteps of other wine researchers working with minority populations (Velikova *et al.*, 2016; Hammond *et al.*, 2014), the present research seeks to understand the underserved sectors in the US wine market. The negative circumstances that shaped Native Americans' experience a generation ago – poverty, poor health, and cultural disintegration – have improved with casino-generated wealth (Garrigues, 2012); however, experiences and perceptions will likely be different for wineries. Nonetheless, the casino industry's experience is important for two reasons. First, the casino industry is a good starting point for understanding tribal wineries, and second, understanding the casino industry highlights the need for diversification among tribal communities.

Like the wine industry, Indian gaming revenue has increased steadily for the past decade (National Indian Gaming Commission, 2014). In a typical commercial gaming setting, such as Las Vegas, about 50% of revenue is generated through gaming, and 50% is generated through hotel bookings, food and beverage sales, and entertainment (Red-Horse, 2006). In tribal commercial settings, however, 80–90% of revenue is generated through slot machine activity alone (Red-Horse, 2006). Allocation of revenue from tribal gaming is regulated by the Indian Gaming Revenue Act and must be used to meet the infrastructure, educational and social program needs of the tribe (Robertson, 2012). Gaming revenue provides opportunities for self-determination, i.e. local decision-making, and is important to the future of Native American communities (Stevens, 2015). In 2015, the slowed growth rate of tribal gaming was a popular topic of discussion for economists. Meister (2015) reported that tribal gaming growth slowed, likely due to market maturation, and Freiss (2015) discussed the effects of market saturation and competition on tribal revenue, as well as identified a shift toward diversification in tribal portfolios. A small selection of federally recognized tribes have moved toward diversification through winery operation, but this opportunity has yet to garner consideration in the majority of tribes. This could be attributed to the gaming aspect of diversification essentially relying on capital expenditures and investments; whereas, wine diversification relies on the scientific disciplines of viticulture, enology and vineyard

practices. Wine diversification would require experts with an intense amount of education, knowledge and expertise that would generate sufficient yield to render grape growing and wine production profitable. The lack of existing literature on the subject, coupled with the reality of pressing tribal financial needs, indicates the practical and academic value of the present research.

### *Tribal businesses and the wine industry*

In the United States, Native American involvement in the wine industry is relatively new. Members of the Lumbee tribe in South Carolina started Native Vines Winery in 1998 and were the first Native-owned winery in the United States (Gabbard, 2015). In 2010, the Yavapai-Apache Nation started Fire Mountain Wines in Arizona (Kettman, 2013) and was followed into the industry in 2012 by the Lytton Band, the Dry Creek Band and the Yocha-Dehe Wintun Nation, who were the first Native Americans in California to release wine under their own label (Kettman, 2013). A small force of Native-owned operations began to emerge, and tribal elders identified a need to educate their members, who form the primary workforce of wine cellars, and tasting rooms (Garrigues, 2012). Vineyards can be used as an attraction to gaming establishments, and there is significant pride of ownership in tribal members as they cultivate the land. This is a different situation than tribes found themselves in a generation ago, when many faced poverty, disease and cultural disintegration (Garrigues, 2012).

Traditionally, these kinds of economic improvements are usually seen as a benefit to a historically underserved population, studies indicate that about one out of four Native Americans live below the poverty line (Johnson, 2019; Retter, 2020). Despite recent economic gains, incomes for American Indians living on tribal lands trail behind the national average (Hyde, 2015) and native populations experience shockingly high rates of sexual violence, alcoholism and addiction issues (Garrigues, 2012; Johnson, 2019; Retter, 2020). Meanwhile, the positive impact that casino revenue has had on Native American lives is seen in better health care, schools, roads and other community needs (Johnson, 2019). According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2020), casinos provide upwards of 100,000 jobs. Retter (2020) states that due to Native American casinos, young adults have moved back to reservations, fueling a 12% population increase; adult employment increasing by 26% and a 14% decline in the working poor. These statistics indicate a major contribution to the rise in the quality of life for Native Americans. Research (Hyde, 2015; Johnson, 2019; Retter, 2020) states there is a significant correlation with the decline in obesity, smoking and heavy drinking with the increase in employment in casino operations among Native Americans. Additionally, the cash payouts that some tribal governments have disbursed to tribe members has been shown to increase school attendance and degree attainment in the poorest households (Hyde, 2015). During the twenty-year period from 1990 to 2010, real income per capita for American Indians living on reservations increased nearly 50% (Hyde, 2015). However, while gaming income has helped economic development for Native Americans, Hyde (2015) notes that tribal governments still need to diversify their economies and protect tribal budgets.

Native-owned businesses have been pressured by economic forecasts to seek diversification. However, there is a gap in the literature in terms of examining businesses' experiences – the motivations, challenges and benefits – that is important to address. As gaming revenue has been declining, these early entrants will serve as a hopeful example for other tribes. Tribes already invest heavily in a variety of hospitality operations and use these investments to provide jobs for tribal members. Although Native Americans comprise 3% of the US population (US Census, 2018), 25.6% of Native Americans work in service jobs, an occurrence that is 9.2% more frequent than their Caucasian counterparts.

It is important to identify the potential barriers to successful winery operation before considering its viability for tribal entities. The three primary challenges to successful winery operation identified by Holyoke and Heath-Simpson (2013) are the ability of the operator(s) to

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learn the business, the relationship the operator(s) develops with other area wineries and finally the general business acumen of the operator(s). A large collection of research also examines authenticity in winery operations, with perceived authenticity being a potentially powerful barrier to successful winery operation (Kim and Bon, 2016; Robinson and Clifford, 2012). Finally, Reynaud and Simon (2006) laid out the importance of addressing core competences of know-how, dexterity, actions, attitudes, comportment and interaction to successful winery operation. The absence of consideration of the preceding factors will, at best, limit the potential success of tribally owned wineries or, at worst, diminish tribal resources through inception and support of a failed venture. It is integral that barriers to tribal winery operation be considered not only in terms of mainstream operations, however, because perceptions of tribal members will be important as potential supporters or detractors.

### *Current study*

This investigation uses two studies to examine perceptions and attitudes toward winery operations. Specifically, it seeks to answer the following research questions: 1) What are non-involved tribal participants' current perceptions (i.e. benefits and barriers) of tribally owned winery operations? 2) What are the perceptions of non-involved Native American individuals toward the use of Native American icons or symbols on tribally owned winery products for marketing purposes? 3) How do non-involved Native American participants perceive the future of tribal wineries? The designation of "non-involved" was created to provide clarity to the research questions. Non-involved individuals are members of federally recognized tribes who do not currently have a role in the wine industry. The investigation was broken down into two studies. In Study 1, a quantitative survey was sent to tribal members to gather information to inform Study 2. In Study 2, qualitative interviews elaborated on the various aspects of each area. While some portions of the design were drawn from literature that was tangentially related, no research that combines the examination of winery operation and the Native American population has previously been conducted, making the current exploratory inquiry imperative.

## **Study 1: quantitative analysis exploring tribal winery operations**

### *Method*

*Participants and procedure.* Study 1 used a quantitative survey to examine the perceptions of tribal members regarding the strengths, challenges and opportunities presented by tribal winery operation. Non-involved tribal members (NITM) were those Native American individuals whose tribe does not currently participate in the US wine industry. Following IRB approval, an Internet-based Qualtrics survey was distributed via email and social media, and snowball sampling was employed. Recruitment was directed toward individuals of Native American blood or tribal descent, with a screening question at the beginning. Respondents were given the opportunity to provide their name and phone number if they were willing to participate in a follow-up interview.

Due to deficits in previous research, an expert panel aided in survey development. Expert was defined as having obtained an advanced degree in hospitality and/or having a background in Native American hospitality enterprises. Experts were recruited from the community. A list of potential barriers, benefits and marketing strategies for tribal winery operation was compiled from previous literature on casino gaming. It was explained that some of the information could be transferable to tribally operated wineries, and that barriers may exist which were not listed because of the differences presented in a tribal setting. The panel was encouraged to critique the list and modify it from their experiences. [Table 1](#)

Article	Findings
<p><i>Potential Benefits</i> Reed (2013)</p>	<p>Brings increased revenue to tribe Creates jobs for tribal members Provides opportunities for community growth Increases potential customers for the casinos Provides opportunities for the preservation of tribal heritage Ties in with current tribal business</p>
<p><i>Potential Barriers</i> Holyoke and Heath-Simpson (2013)</p>	<p>Learning the winery business Building a relationship with other wineries General business acumen Perceived authenticity of the venture</p>
<p>Kim and Bon (2016) Robinson and Clifford (2012) Reynaud and Simon (2006)</p>	<p>Core competences (know-how, dexterity, actions, attitudes, comportment and interaction)</p>

**Table 1.**  
Potential benefits and barriers from previous research

presents findings from previous research that were presented to the expert panel for modification.

### Measures

*Potential benefits.* The potential benefits of business diversification through winery operation included jobs for tribal members, opportunities for growth, potential customers for casinos, opportunities to preserve heritage and relating to current tribal businesses. For example, participants were asked “How important is each of the following potential benefits that a tribally operated winery could bring? Bring increased revenue to the tribe” and “Create jobs for tribal members” (1 = *not important*; 5 = *critically important*).

*Potential barriers.* Participants reported whether they thought learning the winery business, building a relationship with other wineries, perceived authenticity of the venture, general business acumen and core competencies (i.e. know-how, dexterity, actions, attitudes and interaction) were barriers to winery success. An example is “Do you agree or disagree that each of these statements would challenge your tribe, building a relationship with other wineries?” (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

*Marketing.* To measure the acceptability of using Native American symbols and icons in marketing tribally produced winery products, the expert panel brainstormed categories. Specifically, participants were asked “Indicate how appropriate it would be for a tribe to market their winery product using the category described”. Categories included geography, ceremonial dress, Native American historic figures, animals and totems (1 = *completely unacceptable*; 5 = *completely acceptable*).

*Perceived viability.* Respondents were asked questions to determine whether they believe tribal winery operation would be a viable in their tribe, and whether it would be a viable opportunity for other tribes (1 = *strongly disagree*; 5 = *strongly agree*).

*Demographics.* Participants answered questions regarding their gender (*male; female*), age (18–20; 21–25; 26–34; 35–49; 50+), marital status (*single, never married; married; cohabitating; separated or divorced; widowed*), location (*open ended*), occupation (*professional; management; clerical; sales; education; military; self-employed; student; retired; other*), employer type (*tribal; federal; state; private organization; other*), tribe (*open ended*) and educational level (*high school; some college; bachelor’s degree; master’s degree; doctoral degree; professional degree*).

*Plan of analysis*

As Study 1 was descriptive and exploratory, mean values were calculated for participants' demographic characteristics, perceived barriers and benefits, marketing acceptability and perceived viability.

**Results**

A total of 192 surveys were collected (78.1% response rate). Overall, the participants were 78% female between the ages of 26 and 49, 66% married and 54% had some college or a college degree. Most reported working for a private organization (36%), with 18% in state government and 15% in tribal organizations. Participants were located in Oklahoma (72%), Arkansas (14%), California (4%) and Texas (3%). Participants were mostly Cherokee (79%), Choctaw (5%), Creek (Muscogee; 4%) and Mohawk (1%). It should be noted that while California is the top producing wine state in the United States and has the largest population of Native Americans (US Census Bureau, 2020) the largest participant response rate came from the state of Oklahoma. Oklahoma has the second largest Native American population in the United States (after California) (US Census Bureau, 2020). This largest response rate from Oklahoma can be attributed to the fact that Oklahoma has approximately 533,348 people who identify solely as Native American, which accounts for 13.5% of the population of the state of Oklahoma as opposed to the 799,889 people who identify solely as Native American in the state of California, accounting for only 2% of their population (US Census Bureau, 2020). Additionally, the majority of the response rate being from Oklahoma could be attributed to the location of where the study originated.

To answer the first research question examining tribal members perception of the tribally owned winery operations (i.e. benefits and barriers), mean scores were calculated for each question and an overall total for benefits and barriers (Table 2). Overall, the perception of the benefits was perceived higher than the barriers.

To address the second research question examining the accessibility of Native American icons and symbols, mean scores were calculated for each of the marketing categories determined by the expert panel to appear on the survey. The average ratings for each category varied, with geography ( $M = 3.92$ ;  $SD = 1.15$ ), animals ( $M = 3.87$ ;  $SD = 1.24$ ), tribal writing ( $M = 3.73$ ;  $SD = 1.26$ ) and tribal objects ( $M = 3.48$ ;  $SD = 1.34$ ) scored the highest on acceptability, indicating that were would be least controversial for marketing purposes.

Benefits	<i>M (SD)</i>	Proportion agreement	Barriers	<i>M (SD)</i>	Proportion agreement
Jobs for tribal Members	3.71 (1.03)	62%	Learning the winery business	2.73 (1.12)	26%
Provides opportunities for growth	3.60 (1.00)	60%	Building a relationship with other wineries	2.68 (1.05)	21%
Increases potential customers for hospitality enterprises	3.35 (1.00)	47%	Perceived authenticity of the venture	2.87 (1.16)	32%
Provides opportunities for the preservation of tribal heritage	3.41 (1.13)	48%	General business acumen	2.76 (1.30)	34%
Ties in with current tribal businesses	3.42 (1.08)	43%	Core competencies (actions, attitudes, interaction)	2.68 (1.18)	32%
<i>Total score</i>	3.44 (0.89)		<i>Total score</i>	2.87 (0.78)	

**Table 2.** Perceived benefits and barriers scores for participants



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Ceremonial dress ( $M = 3.15$ ;  $SD = 1.46$ ) and historic figures ( $M = 3.01$ ;  $SD = 1.49$ ) scored neutrally. Totems ( $M = 2.83$ ;  $SD = 1.43$ ) were below the neutral cutoff. Marketing using spirit beings, sacred objects and symbols was regarded as unacceptable.

In examining the third research question regarding the future of tribally-owned wineries and perceived viability, participants agreed that a tribally operated winery might be a viable business opportunity for their tribe ( $M = 3.63$ ;  $SD = 1.04$ ) and for other tribes ( $M = 3.66$ ;  $SD = 0.92$ ).

## Study 2: qualitative analysis exploring tribal winery operations

### Method

*Participants and procedure.* The results from *Study 1* were used to develop an interview protocol and questions to explore the thoughts and feelings of NITB. The protocol included examination of participants' perceptions of challenges and benefits associated with tribal winery operation, the perceived viability of such operations and the appropriateness of each marketing category that appeared on the survey instrument. Research participants were selected from those who indicated willingness to participate in a follow-up interview in *Study 1*. The composition of the cohort in *Study 2* was selected using purposeful sampling based on demographic characteristics of *Study 1* respondents, with the goal of obtaining a diverse group of interviewees.

*Measures.* The qualitative interview protocol was developed based on responses to the quantitative survey from *Study 1*. There were 15 open-ended questions assessing experience or knowledge, opinions, benefits a tribe would encounter when considering wineries and marketing. Example interview questions included, "Overall, would you characterize your opinion of tribally-operated wineries as positive, neutral, or negative? Can you give me some background and context to this opinion?" and "Can you describe any important benefits to the tribe that a tribally operated winery can provide?"

### Plan of analysis

Three phases of coding – open, axial and selective – were used in the analysis of interview data (Creswell, 2007). In the first phase of coding, open coding, the researcher examined interview transcripts looking for relevant information with which to form categories. Through this, constant comparative analysis was conducted in order to "saturate the categories – to look for instances that represent the category and to continue looking until the new information obtained does not further provide insight" (Creswell, 2007). Next, axial coding took place for each of the core categories identified in the open coding phase. During axial coding, the researcher returned to the data and identified categories surrounding the core category. As cited in Creswell (2007), Strauss and Corbin (1990) prescribed casual conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions, and consequences as the appropriate considerations for each category in axial coding. Finally, selective coding was used to examine the models of each category and how they may be interrelated (Creswell, 2007).

## Results

Table 3 lists the demographic characteristics of the 10 participants interviewed. Based on the quantitative survey, themes were coded into the categories of business diversification, perceived benefits, perceived barriers, the role of agriculture in the preservation of tribal heritage, marketing and perceived future of native-owned wineries.

### Business diversification

The following themes emerged: supporting existing tribal businesses, applying existing tribal resources, land issues, matters of the wine market and being new/novel (Table 4).

Participant	Gender	Age	State	Tribe	Familiar with tribal wineries	Opinion on tribal wineries
1	Female	32	Oklahoma	Cherokee	No	Neutral
2	Male	36	Arkansas	Creek	No	Neutral
3	Female	21	California	Sherwood valley Rancheria Pomo Indians of California	No	Positive
4	Male	36	New York	Mohawk	No	Positive
5	Female	31	Florida	Cherokee	No	Positive
6	Female	44	Oklahoma	Cherokee	No	Positive
7	Male	39	Oklahoma	Cherokee	No	Neutral
8	Female	43	California	Miwok	Yes	Neutral
9	Female	31	New York	Mohawk	No	Negative
10	Male	46	Oklahoma	Cherokee	No	Neutral

**Table 3.**  
Non-involved  
participant  
demographic  
characteristics

*Supporting existing businesses.* Of the 10 interviewees, 50% of respondents discussed a tribally operated winery supporting existing businesses. Interviewees felt that inclusion of wine products bolsters already thriving tribal operations. Other participants noted that integrating wine into existing tribal enterprises could mitigate the perception of the tribal population's struggle with alcohol worsening as a result of producing wine. This is illustrated in the third quote in Table 4. The participant indicated that the initial perception was negative, but overall moved to be neutral considering the way wine can support other businesses.

*Applying existing resources.* Seven participants discussed applying tribal resources to the wine industry (e.g. business sense, networking abilities, financial and other assets, and reputation). Some participants noted that whenever the tribe gets involved in a business venture, it is generally successful. Others pointed out that tribal winery operations would be like any other winery, except they have the networking and monetary advantage of the tribe. These resources were also tied with sharing business models within and across tribes. Nearly all participants felt that existing tribal resources were assets to use in conceptualizing a winery.

*Land issues.* Eight participants discussed issues of land, including availability, location and surrounding population. Interviewees indicated that a growing wine industry provides the tribe access to nonphysical resources such as a location's reputation. While the nonphysical resources are there, the land is the hardest part to find. Others noted concern for the utility of the land, such as whether a particular tract would be better for other agricultural endeavors. In addition to the availability and quality of land, some respondents discussed the population surrounding the potential winery. There was expressed concern with the idea of a winery on the reservation itself, where alcohol would be more available to an at-risk population; however, there was support for off-reservation wineries.

*Matters of the wine market.* Seven participants discussed the importance of the US wine industry and state regulations in making this diversification decision. Specifically, they discussed monitoring the wine market in general and making decisions based on its performance. One quote described the potential growth of the market as being a major factor in the perception of benefits. Other participants described the legal elements of business development and indicated that state officials might be favorable if there was a way the state could benefit. There was expressed concern that the state would support it as a way to defund other programs. Moreover, others thought that previously negotiated circumstances at the state level for tribal businesses would benefit the tribe's diversification into winery operations. The perception was rather than the state government taking advantage of tribal revenue, legal conditions likely exist that would be a boon.



Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
<i>Business diversification</i>	<i>Supporting Existing Tribal Businesses</i>	<p>“There are casinos it would directly support. Cherokee Nation is growing, and they’re building onto their casinos all the time. They’re adding hotels, they’re adding so much to it that I think it could only get better and better”</p> <p>“They have some fantastic existing resources they could use. The casinos could sell the wine; they could use it in their restaurants. I mean, there are so many aspects. Even their banquets that they do—they could utilize it there instead of having to pay some other company for their wine. Why pay someone else when you could be growing it and pay yourself?”</p> <p>“Well, initially, just the uh, a tribe having a winery is a no, you know, a negative thought because they want a healthy tribe. But then you think about all the other operations that they have to bring in funding for all their different operations, the casinos serve alcohol. So, it’s kinda, that’s why it’s neutral”</p> <p>“Just like any business that the tribe might engage in, if they can find a way to be good at it. I do not know if they can apply any sort of tribal tax breaks to it or not, there might be business or tribal or some sort of other advantages they have, but aside from the possibility of those, you’ve got a group of people who already have contacts to each other, and so off you go with a business. I would think it would be the same as if they were starting a stationery or tech company. You know, as a tribe you have some networking built in there.”</p> <p>“There’s plenty of examples around here of other people starting wineries not affiliated with the tribe . . . if this comes through (successful tribal winery operations) and it all goes well and people see the value and start going at it down there, boy it would be awful nice if they would forward that data up here. They’re going to get you to build a model and go off it, and it would be nice if we could too”</p> <p>“The land is going to be the hardest thing to find. A lot of it is all wrapped up already, and people who have it are not particularly interested in letting it go. So, you’re going to have to go in there and given them an offer they cannot refuse as far as money goes”</p> <p>“I know there are some Oklahoma wineries but I do not know of any in our area, so I do not know if it would be viable”</p> <p>“Is it [the winery] located on the reservation? It raises the statistics of alcoholism, of violence and abuse, then it just helps the everlasting circle that’s already going on in our reservation, in our communities, and you know were the highest number of alcoholism, incarcerated, suicides, and it’s just going to contribute to that”</p> <p>“So, I’m sure they’ll be like hey it’s a billion-dollar market! even if we got 10% of it, that’s a lot of money. Even if we got 1% of it, that’s a lot of money for our tribe. If you start at 1%, then it’s only going to grow”</p> <p>“It would probably depend on the revenue base. If they thought they could make a dollar on it or tax it or not give money to the tribes. If they were, you know, if they could defund another programs because they have this instead”</p> <p>“I think they could get you know how they get the tax breaks on the cigarettes and different liquor licenses, and probably loophole some other things that the federal government would let them because they’re on sovereign land”</p>
	<i>Land Issues</i>	
	<i>Matters of the Wine Market</i>	

(continued)

## Winery options for Native Americans

**Table 4.**  
Qualitative analysis of business diversification and the benefits and barriers of tribally owned wineries

Table 4.

Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
<i>Perceived benefits of tribal winery operations</i>	<i>Being New/Novel</i>	<p>"I never thought about tribal wineries before. But I think it'll be, because we live in a nation where people are like, oh they built the iPhone? I want to build a phone too. They came out with a movie about toys? I'm gonna . . . so it's like copycat industry. So, I think so, once they see it as a sustainable income, and like I said now that people are more, I think social drinking is more acceptable now"</p>
	<i>Increased Tribal Revenue</i>	<p>"The money they make, they could funnel it back into the schools, that money can go all over. Healthcare, schools, there's just so many places they could benefit from what they earn from this"</p>
	<i>Keeping the Community Close</i>	<p>"Continue the housing projects or the education projects or the elderly projects, something like that. Just increased revenue would be it [the biggest benefit] in my opinion"</p> <p>"Keeping those jobs here is also preventing the whole next generation of . . . they're needing to move away. They're needing to move for those jobs and for school and all of that, because our very small band . . . there's colleges that are close to here, but it's just such a new focus, and it's such an adjustment I think in one generation that has not happened yet. And keeping these traditional ag jobs is a big deal for the younger kids that, they're not making that shift yet. So, it has far reaching implications as far as its not just the ag and keeping the jobs for them. It's keeping our community close. Once you separate us . . . so yeah, it's a bog connector factor to have everybody together and have everybody go into that line of work"</p>
	<i>Employment Opportunities</i>	<p>"The jobs alone would be amazing because there are so many people still that have no jobs, and in our area where there are so many tribally owned businesses, if you're Native American there should be no problem getting a job if you want it"</p>
	<i>Establishing Presence of Native Americans in the Modern era</i>	<p>"They could lease some fields to wineries or to the Nation or whoever was doing it [making wine], and that would increase maybe some farmers type, maybe create a few jobs. There would be revenue"</p> <p>"Getting a tribal name out there and your own tribal interests. I think it would be good for the indigenous community at large just to show that, uh, there is still a presence of Native Americans. We're not just in the past, we have current and future projections. In our area, it's just smallish tribal communities but a lot of them. Having a specific name out there is incredibly beneficial . . . we are a small tribe and we're always looking for expanding knowledge and awareness that we're there and we have a name"</p>

(continued)

Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
<i>Perceived barriers to success of tribally owned wineries</i>	<i>Social Resistance</i>	<p>"They want a healthier Nation and a healthier tribe, versus a bad image. And any alcohol would be unfavorable to the positive image of the tribe and of their people. Because they want good people in the tribe and raise them all up good"</p> <p>"You have health issues with Native Americans having a high instance of fatty liver disease and alcoholism, as a rule. The tribe would have to deal with that. But then there are the health benefits of wine—there's moderation. You have to – if you're not doing something in moderation then that has to be on you and not on your tribe because they bottled your wine. It's just something they have to take it in moderation and they have to know just because they do this does not mean that they're necessarily the one contributing"</p> <p>"The cultural backlash - it's just. It's just such an ingrained thing in culture and Native American culture with alcohol. My own mother committed suicide when we were kids because of alcohol"</p> <p>"I think, because we live in the Bible Belt, which I consider myself a Christian, but in the Bible Belt you'll have a lot of people seeing wine as a big alcohol thing, but you know most wine is a very low point alcohol and it's not like hard liquor or a high point alcohol so like, I do not get that. But I think the majority of people around here would. They'd say 'oh they're making booze over there!' I mean, we even have counties next door to us in the south that used to be dry counties, and I think there's still a lot of that mindset"</p> <p>"Just having Native American on a label is an automatic bias. In my area, it's an automatic negative. It's automatic that, when people think about a Native American winery, it's not the traditional image of something that would be very classy, that people with money are going to go to and they're going to want to enjoy themselves or anything. The first thing they picture around here is that 'Oh shit, there's a bunch of drunken Indians.' So, it's a lot of marketing work"</p> <p>"Big thing is the stereotype of the drunk Indian . . . even cartoons from the 1940s and things, the black and white cartoons, it was always the Indians with the jugs"</p> <p>"People still picture us living in teepees and, uh, I had a guy once ask me how I got WiFi in my teepee, and I was beyond offended. People are stupid—I was playing an online game and he found out I'm from Oklahoma and I'm Indian, and he went back to the 1800s. And I said I live in a house, just like you, you know, you're just living in the dark ages –open a book. Another thing is that I think if people educate themselves a little bit, those stereotypes and those hindrances, they would see there's no need to feel them. They're more perceived than they are real"</p>

*(continued)*

## Winery options for Native Americans

Table 4.

Table 4.

Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
<p><i>Agriculture in the preservation of tribal heritage</i></p>	<p><i>Resources and Delayed Gratification</i></p>	<p>“There is this whole generation of kids who have grown up with this instant gratification of casinos. I think more so now with us with other generations just because everything is so instant gratification and it’s so fast. When you make the decision to build a new housing development, it’s all pre-fab, and it’s up in a week. Your decisions are just instant.”</p>
	<p><i>Authenticity</i></p>	<p>“A winery, to grow real good grapes, it takes a long-term investment you know what I’m saying. To have a real good vineyard takes years and years of sitting back and watching it grow, and I think that’s tough. I think it’s tough because, like, you know what happens if drought and disease? It just brings a lot of doubt to people that are used to easy investments and easy returns.”</p> <p>“It does not seem like a Native American business enterprise. Wineries seem like something that would be a European thing, so a tribe running one, while it’s fine, it seems like it might be hard for them to tie in the tribal history/Indian business side of it into the winery side of it—putting those two together, you could do it, though there does not seem to be a synergy there.”</p> <p>“For instance, like a basket weaving or leather type business that has an obvious tribal tie in. And I saw obvious, like obvious to most other non-Native type populations. There’s no obvious match [with wineries]. It just does not tie in.”</p>
<p><i>Tribal History</i></p>	<p><i>Preservation of Heritage</i></p>	<p>“This land they operate on, we were close and we were used as slaves. It was just all up and down the west coast. We were the ones who set the original posts that are still there. The rows and lines for all the wineries and vineyards—that was us, making perfect lines”</p> <p>“Lots of our family and out tribe, we’re a very small band, they traveled to the [winery] for work. That’s all there was. In the vineyards and in agriculture in general, [Wineries] were big hirers, and we could not get a lot of jobs in like offices or jobs that required higher education or a degree. So they did stringing for hops and they did stringing for grapes. They put the poles in, they tilled the ground, they planted the grapes, they harvested the grapes.”</p> <p>“We did not really have friends outside our family. It was a huge family and it was just us, and they went to work in the same fields and in the same area. The men worked in the woods in the logging industry. The women went further down they would camp and stay and work in the fields . . . the younger generation has moved to different places. There’s a huge disconnect . . . that the last probably decade we’ve been working to bring all of our family back together. The agriculture industry really did keep us together to a certain extent.”</p> <p>“So yeah, it’s a big connector factor to have everybody together and have everybody go into that line of work. A lot of older generation, like my mom’s generation, they were sitting around after the funeral. I brought my mom’s photo album and they were talking about “Oh yeah, this is when we were down there working on um, the tomato farm” and “down here” and “blah blah blah,” and they were just down there working, the family would stay together. And then you knew other families from other areas that were doing the same things. And come ceremony times, everybody was really close because they had worked together all summer.”</p> <p>“Talking about how nobody is looking at saving all of this land - that is being developed so fast - for agriculture, because that’s what was here. And traditionally, our traditional agriculture was there, and we’re losing our plants. We’re losing all of our traditional foods and our medicines that were growing in these areas. We’ve lost one whole area that used to be volcanic rocks for sweat, and now it’s all shopping malls. It’s just gone.”</p>

*Being new/novel.* Nearly all participants indicated that tribally owned wineries were a new concept for them. Participants reported that, while there was a lack of awareness, tribally operated wineries are a business venture that will likely be copied when a successful formula arises.

#### *Perceived benefits*

Nine participants identified benefits to the tribe outside of business diversification, including increased revenue for programs, community connection, employment opportunities and establishing the presence of Native American individuals in the modern era.

*Increased revenue.* Eight of the participants noted that increased revenue was an important benefit of a tribally operated winery. Increased revenue was the only balancing factor for one respondent, who felt a tribally operated winery could provide funding for programs. Additionally, multiple participants stated that wineries could provide support for projects and at-risk tribal members, which was of key importance. This increased revenue would be generated from a winery and its operations, not a vineyard. There is a distinct difference between the two and many reservations or tribal land are not conducive to vineyard development. However, the tribe would be able to conduct winery operations that include but would not be limited to: fermentation of grapes, aging and blending of grapes, and the final production of wine.

*Community connection.* This demonstration of community spirit was regarded as a primary benefit to winery operation by some participants. Respondents added that their tribe's strength came from connection, and a way to facilitate that for younger generations was to create jobs that would allow younger tribal members to stay geographically close. Some described historical communal living as the primary arrangement. In "just 40 short years," a fundamental dynamic shifted that destabilized their connections with each other.

*Employment opportunities.* Seven interviewees identified the importance of jobs for tribal members. Jobs would be valuable if the hiring processes offered employment preferences to Native American candidates. Other respondents mentioning jobs as a benefit did not explicitly state that Native-preference in hiring practices would be a benefit, it was implied by their discussion of benefits of tribal wineries.

*Establishing the presence of Native Americans in the modern era.* Four participants felt strongly that Native-owned wineries would be good for establishing tribal presence. The benefits of awareness and education have long been necessary connecting factors between Native and non-Native communities, and the fundamental nature of these benefits would likely be foundational to successful tribal winery operations.

#### *Perceived barriers*

All participants were able to identify barriers to tribal winery operation. Cited issues were social resistance, the negative stereotype associated with Native Americans and alcohol, issues of resources, delayed gratification and authenticity.

*Social resistance.* Three respondents cited resistance based on health concerns within the tribe. They stated that tribe members suffer from alcohol problems, which combined with health issues, make them susceptible to disease. Participants worried that characterizing wineries as positive would send the wrong message to the tribe's youth and normalize alcohol consumption. Three participants identified "cultural backlash" from alcohol-related Native American business enterprises. One participant described the Native American population as having the highest rates of both abstention from alcohol and rates of alcoholism. Another respondent expected cultural backlash to play a role, as perception of an at-risk population operating an alcohol-based enterprise could impact its success.

*Stereotypes.* Distinct from the social resistance, stereotypes of Native Americans and alcohol stem from a culturally ingrained stigmatization of tribal populations. While the term

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“stereotype” was used by some respondents in their description of possible social resistance, the follow-up description was used to divide the former and current categorizations. In essence, the difference is that social resistance was identified by the researchers, as coming from within the tribe, and the perceived barrier of stereotyping comes from individuals outside the tribe. Half of the participants felt stereotyping was likely to exist as a barrier to winery operations. One participant noted that the perception of Native Americans as alcoholics is a “genetic, or perhaps only social, or perhaps only fictional” problem that will exist in public perception if not in reality. One participant described a familiar tribally owned winery, and stated they are careful to avoid labels that are overtly connected to their tribe or casino. This demonstration of a negative stereotype effecting an otherwise acceptable product is a barrier that requires careful strategic management of the brand. Participants discussed that people associate alcoholism with Native populations and that ingrained stereotype is difficult to circumvent. As Native Americans grapple with maintaining their traditions and heritage in the modern day, they are faced with archaic mindsets that directly affect how they are treated. They also noted the need for public awareness of modern tribal members.

*Resources and delayed gratification.* Issues of infrastructure and delayed gratification were additional barriers identified by respondents. Five participants believed outside resources were needed, which could be problematic as tribes look to build upon their current strengths and resources. Participants also cited issues of infrastructure. For example, room for required equipment or to grow grapes was a concern. Other participants noted that resources such as seed money and location were pieces of the puzzle that were needed before moving forward. This led to discussions of the role of instant gratification. Rather than identifying instant gratification as an issue when working with younger tribe members, two participants noted that because their tribe was impoverished, it would be difficult to embrace a long-term business investment. The need for social resources could drive business decision makers in the direction of investments with quicker turnarounds. The length of the initial investment contributed to greater perceived risk because of the possibility of uncontrollable factors associated with acts of nature. Access to immediate resources would likely result in different perceptions of the seriousness of these barriers.

*Authenticity.* Perceived authenticity in winery operation has been established as an important potential barrier to successful operations (Kim and Bon, 2016). This topic was addressed by three of the participants who felt that a more authentic avenue to tribal business diversification would be successful because there was not a historical connection to winery operations of which they were aware. The participants acknowledged that, while there was no inherent problem with the tribe engaging in this business, the lack of “synergy” had potential as a barrier when considered in the context of authentic enterprises.

#### *The role of agriculture in the preservation of tribal heritage*

Themes of heritage and agriculture emerged through discussion and concepts identified included tribal history, preservation of heritage and preservation of the land.

*Tribal history.* While the connection between midwestern tribal members and the wine industry was considered to have a lack of “synergy” because the two parties have not historically intersected, this was not the case for the west coast-based participants. The history of their tribe and the wine industry is the first thing that came to mind. These participants had a negative association with wineries in their area because of the way early operations were conducted. When they considered the wineries, the remnant of their ancestors’ work was the factor that most clearly presented itself. The pain their people experienced as a result of this enterprise influenced their opinion, but they remained supportive of Native populations should they choose to enter the industry. The difference



between the experiences of the participants two tribes, however, was that for one's tribe, the work was out of necessity rather than compulsion.

*Preservation of heritage.* Extending the discussion of previous generations' agricultural work, these participants spoke of their childhood and the way that agricultural work contributed to the strength of the family. During the interview, one participant described the recent death of a family member, and how the extended family had all come together for the first time in years. Distance was a frequent discussion topic among family members who have seen an exodus from traditional tribal areas in search of other opportunities. This consideration had a large part of the tribe's decision to pursue information about winery operation. They believed an agricultural enterprise would provide opportunities to members in their area; thereby, keeping them closer to home and helping them maintaining strong tribal and familial bonds. The camaraderie that resulted from closer work within their family and with other tribal families on agricultural endeavors directly contributed to the fellowship felt during meaningful tribal ceremonies. The occasion to preserve their heritage diminishes as physical distance grows between tribal members.

*Preservation of land.* These participants discussed how agriculture was a huge part of the areas where they live, which has been diminished by housing development and strip malls. With the perceived value attributed to agricultural enterprises, traditional members were trying to find ways to keep agriculture prominent in their communities, such as vineyards. Another participant viewed winery operation as economic aid and a preservation measure. They explained the difficulty in saving land to use for agriculture, even though agricultural pursuits were traditional to that area. The use of land for agriculture was considered a waste of valuable real estate, because the value of agricultural development was not evident to those in the surrounding population. In addition, there was a direct need for education on the importance of agriculture, both monetarily and ecologically, and the processes required for crops to flourish.

### *Marketing*

Participants were asked to comment on winery marketing strategies (Table 5). For the category of marketing, responses were divided into the categories of geography, ceremonial dress, historic figures, animals, totems, writing in a tribal language and meaningful objects.

*Geography.* The subthemes of shopping local, connection to nature, area reputation and possible negative considerations emerged. Four of the participants felt that tying a product to the state or region where it was produced would be advantageous because it demonstrated that, by purchasing that product, you were supporting the local economy, culture and community. The connection between the community and the product would, in their estimation, strengthen its market position. Two participants recognized that marketing with their local area could be advantageous because of their location's proximity to established wine-producing areas. It made sense to both respondents to take advantage of the existing winery reputation, if possible, in product establishment.

The degree to which tribes were tied to geographical elements was an important consideration in determining whether marketing would be advantageous or ill-received. One participant noted that use of a historic site would likely be acceptable, but sites with a ceremonial element would not be. One person addressed the connotative power of landmarks, cautioning that an area could be associated with any number of injustices even though the marker itself is considered aesthetically appealing. While it was noted that such information would be more readily recognizable to members of the tribe than to those outside, they believed it was still a best practice to avoid marketing with anything as overtly negative as locations along the Trail of Tears ("the Indian equivalent of the holocaust") or as subtle as a town built by taking their people's land.

Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
<i>Marketing</i>		
	<i>Geography</i>	“The truth is like, Cherokees have not been here for a thousand years, we were moved here. So, we do not have like holy sites like the Black Hills, those Native Americans have been there for like a long, long time. So those have more sacred sites where we do not, I should not say we do not, but we do not see those as much here. So, if they took a picture of the Illinois river and put it on a bottle of wine, I do not think the Cherokees would have a right to say we were offended ‘because that’s our sacred river”
	<i>Ceremonial Dress</i>	“If you are Native American and you are marketing stuff that’s of tribal, or of, um, traditional, you’re allowed to do that. Say if you’re a beader or you make regalia. That’s fine. That’s totally fine if you’re marketing that business and it being used for the things it’s supposed to be used for, like ceremonies” “they’re going to be more likely to know how not to make it offensive versus someone who had no idea. But it’s still right there at that line. It’s getting close”
	<i>Historic Figures</i>	“That’s just, I do not know, because most of our historic figures we look up to would be people who really fought for traditional things. So, I cannot see that being, being a positive but that would be up to the tribe. Another thing I think about it ‘oh my gosh, my grandma would kill me!’ That’s a lot of the fight in Indian country nowadays is trying to keep ahead and be so integrated into the business models and resisting and that traditional stuff is really clashing and holy cow, it causes so much strife”
	<i>Animals</i>	“I could see the argument both ways, and it depends on how you market it I suppose. If you’re going to do clever names and work that in the artwork and be catchy, I could see that getting people’s attention. On the other hand, if you’re going to do sacred animals and, do we really want to put, you know, the apostles on a bottle of wine? I could see the argument both ways on that one” “For us over here, it’s a bear. And just a footprint of a bear, I know would make half of my family so angry, and the other half would say “Ah yeah, that’s cool!” A lot of it is age. It’s the younger generation that has, they’ve been out in the world a heck of a lot more. They have non-Native friends, and they have a lot more schooling and a lot more exposure to things that I think it definitely affects their decision making as far as what is appropriate and what is not appropriate as far as . . . My grandma would be ‘No, no no No’ . . . And the younger ones would be like ‘Yeah, you know, we’re pretty proud of something that we’re making, and this is, we’re bear people. We need to have a bear on there. We need to make our mark on it” “So, in my tribe, we have Bear Clan, Deer Clan, you know, Snipe Clan, Turtle Clan. All those things, those things are sacred to me, so I would not use that for marketing either. So, when there are things that are drawn up and use their emblems to support programs or made up a new program, those are the things we use. And that’s to help things in our community. Where, this is using it to advertise alcohol, and I’m really against that, just because like I said, this means something to my culture”
	<i>Totems</i>	“Any kind of totems, that’s, that’s bad. Spirits, that’s too personal, that would be like saying Jesus Wine. I’m not trying to be offensive, but I can see ‘Jesus Wine: This used to be water!’ So, what would be, you know, you have to be culturally sensitive especially when it comes to religious aspects because that’s where you’re going to step on toes faster than anywhere else – religion” “I think when we put those symbols on wine or the casino, that’s not who we are as a Nation. And that’s what we’re saying, you know, that gambling is part of our heritage. So, when you put a star on there, or you put something that’s heritage on there, then you say gambling is part of our Nation. And I know everyone in the world probably gambled at one time. But it’s not something that was part of our Nation as a people”

**Table 5.**  
Qualitative analysis of  
marketing of tribally  
owned wineries

(continued)

Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
	<i>Tribal Language</i>	<p>"It would have to be left up to the tribe. But, for something like telling a story on the label, I was thinking about that. Gosh, would I be really bad with telling a story on the label in a traditional language? No? Because then there's that big education part of it that people might not be otherwise exposed to your language. And just the exposure that, like, there's still living Indians in this country, and that we still have things like our own language is a big deal. And, yeah, we're not just running around in loincloths and grunting, we're into some viticulture over here"</p> <p>"Oh, I think that's super cool! especially the Cherokee tribe has a written language, and it's super awesome! I have a scarf written in the Cherokee language, and I think it's beautiful. I think it's a great idea [to market with]. Completely acceptable. 100% go!"</p>
	<i>Meaningful Objects</i>	<p>"Well, I think it's a bad marketing choice, ultimately speaking. But all those fall under the category of some of the previous ones. What are we selling? And do we want to become the Irish Pub of winemaking? Do we want to become that German guy in lederhosen you see when you go to Germany? I think a lot of traditional culture and cultural activities - they get drowned for the tourists. And ultimately, I think that those traditions are alive to a certain degree because of that, but it's sort of an undead sort of alive because they're not really being practiced. They're being put on a stage for people to draw tips from, and I do not think we should do that to ourselves if we do not have to"</p> <p>"If those items had special significance outside of just being part of the tribe, but if there's a religious tone to them, like some people object to dream catchers, some tribes do not actually care because they were not particularly religious to them. You did it for its purpose but it was not, it just had a function of catching dreams, so depending on what you think people believe about those objects or symbols. Teepees, as far as I know those were just houses, so it's like putting a picture of a house on the bottle. Sure, go for it! But if you chose symbols and things decorating that teepee that make it out to be the tribe's priest or medicine man's teepee, then people might object. The number of people who might notice could be small but that could, in today's internet world, people could look it up and say 'hey that symbols supposed to be . . . and look what they did!'"</p>

Table 5.

*Ceremonial dress.* The subthemes of religion and deeper meaning, cultural appropriation and commodification of culture arose for the category of ceremonial dress. The most common assertion made by participants (40%) was that the use of ceremonial dress in marketing was inappropriate. Since these items are used in religious ceremonies, it's not appropriate that they be displayed on wine or in advertising. They believed that marketing with ceremonial dress should honor the original use. Since wine is not a traditional part of their tribal heritage, marketing with traditional ceremonial dress was not appropriate.

Some participants discussed the cultural appropriation of non-tribal members wearing ceremonial dress for Halloween and referring to traditional wear as "costuming." They noted that it is important to be culturally sensitive in using these items in marketing, but when the tribe has control of the marketing, they will be able to make sure it is not offensive. Tribal officials making these marketing decisions will require a deep knowledge of the traditional elements of tribal beliefs to make decisions that are appropriate to their membership.

*Native American historic figures.* The subthemes of historic figures' values, honoring memory and permissions were addressed by participants (40%). One participant acknowledged that we do have likenesses on money and signs, but they were designed to honor that historical figure. Not only could marketing using a historic figure's likeness be considered an abuse, it was noted that the tribe would need family permission from descendants.

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*Animals.* The theme that arose in using animals for marketing purposes was the concept of sacred vs ordinary animals. The use of ordinary animals in marketing winery products was not a cause for concern with participants; however, once meaning was assigned to the animal, the issue became a denser concept to navigate. One participant addressed this point in noting that the use of sacred or ceremonial animals, such as owls, would likely be considered inappropriate.

*Totems.* The category of totems was the only one rated as a measure of less than neutral on the acceptability scale in Study 1. In the qualitative portion, the concepts of religion and identity arose once again. Participants felt that spiritual aspects of the tribe and marketing of tribal winery products were simply not related. Since wine is not a traditional part of their culture, use of totems that represented the spiritual aspect of their heritage should not be transferred into marketing such a modern endeavor. The social etiquette that dictates proper behavior in religious contexts required the exclusion of the modern or nontraditional. The theme was that their symbols were inappropriate for use in marketing.

*Writing in a tribal language.* In exploring marketing with writing in a tribal language, the subthemes of preservation and education, aesthetics and targeted marketing emerged. One participant felt that it would be acceptable to use a small amount of text, especially as a way to preserve the language. The perceived benefit would be twofold: it would expose individuals to the language and also help to combat negative and outdated stereotypes that the Native American population regularly experiences. Thus, Native languages may be a less-contentious category to market and educate with than others examined in this study. Language was described as functional but not necessarily sacred. The aesthetic appeal of written language was an element that can be appreciated by both tribal and non-tribal individuals. However, decisions of which words to use and how to present the language were integral.

*Meaningful tribal objects.* The primary considerations identified in this category were stereotyping and whether the object was sacred or ordinary. Two participants cautioned against marketing with objects in this category. They felt that they would not contribute to the development of an interesting brand, because tribal objects are commonly stereotyped to represent Native Americans. Reinforcing the stereotypes from which Native Americans work to break free would be a disservice to the tribe and unacceptable. This offered a powerful description of the possible ramifications of marketing with culturally based material. Some felt that exposure would help educate non-tribal members. Participants felt that ordinary objects could be great signifiers, but religious connections would result in objections from tribal members.

#### *Perceived future of native-owned wineries*

Themes identified included potential negatives, wine and the market and tribal considerations (Table 6).

*Potential negatives.* Tribe members' personal and tribal histories contributed to fears of a potential negative outcome. Two participants noted the history of substance abuse within tribal populations, and worried that it would contribute to similar patterns of behavior in the future. One was concerned with the effect that alcohol would have on their tribe's reputation. While they did acknowledge that tribal hospitality enterprises currently serve alcohol, they felt that further association with an alcohol-based product would not be favorably received within their tribe. Another had similar experiences in their tribe, and did not believe the cost-benefit analysis involving potential profits at the cost of public health was a future in which to invest.

One participant compared the morally contentious nature of gambling with the path they imagined Native-owned wineries would follow. In considering casino operations, they

## Winery options for Native Americans

Topic	Identified themes	Illustrating quote
<i>Future of native-owned wineries</i>	<i>Potential Negatives</i>	<p>“Especially with our already statistics, and then what if that turned into, it raises the statistics of alcoholism, of violence and abuse, then it just helps the everlasting circle that’s already going on in our reservation, in our communities, and you know we’re the highest number of alcoholism, we’re the highest number of incarcerated, we’re the highest number of suicides, and it’s just going to contribute to that. It would go backwards, you know, but I want that number to come down”</p> <p>“So now we realize that we have casinos everywhere and Oklahoma schools are in worse shape than they’ve ever been, so I think whenever we look at this as a Nation, that’ll be that way too. People will be like ‘Oh, that’s what they said about gambling, that oh we’ll have more money for our Nation,’ but we have a hard time getting eyeglasses and people are still having a hard time getting certain stuff paid for, and we have a problem with poverty in our Nation, and so you know, they do not see the money actually coming back. So, I think that would be, that’s a real challenge to bring something up that you have a moral dilemma on say, ‘Hey, but it’s going to be great for our tribe and more money. Since they’ve had that experience, they’re gonna be a little more hesitant, because they’ve done that with the gambling, and people are gonna be like ‘oh man, it’s going to be such an influx of money in our Nation because they’re going to put these big casinos in Tulsa and here in Siloam Springs’ and we have not seen that”</p>
	<i>Wine and the Market</i>	<p>“Used to . . . everyone was drinking a cold beer, but now it’s like more metropolitan in rural areas. People are drinking wine with their dinners instead of having a cold beer or Kool Aid or just tea. People are just getting together and smoking expensive cigars on their back porch and drinking a glass of expensive wine in Oklahoma. Nowadays . . . people are like connoisseurs of wine in places and in people you would not have thought – people that are just blue-collar people that are 9 to 5 living paycheck to paycheck. When they go out, they want a nice glass of wine. Or when they have family over for Christmas, they buy a nice bottle of wine, which usually that was more metropolitan or urban type, but now it’s like country people are getting the finer things in life”</p>
	<i>Tribal Considerations</i>	<p>“I think definitely it’s going to be a bigger thing as long as there are a few success stories out there, and tribes have access to land and funding out there to get this off the ground, and, just for us, ourselves, we’re so close to places like Napa and all along the Sonoma Hills that there’s plenty of mentoring and plenty of examples, and people who are willing to help”</p> <p>“Anything that could be seen as a constraint to the whole process from the beginning to the end, I think there’s ways around it, unless the tribe was so small that they could not, and they had no land and no casino to use their own wine in as much. I cannot see that being as fiscally responsible as it would be for a big tribe like mine that would just grow from it”</p> <p>“They do not see that Indians should have a casino. That the people who are claiming to be Indian now, it’s like the Donald Trump interview, ‘they do not look Indian to me.’ the whole atmosphere has really put Native Americans in the forefront, and they’re in the traditional agriculture areas. People are seeing the casinos and Native Americans as job killers like the Mexicans. And I’m like, nobody is doing these jobs! The last few years when the migrant farm workers have moved out of places, nobody will save those farms. And it’s the same mindset with the casinos . . . there’s a lot of education that needs to go there”</p>

**Table 6.**  
Qualitative analysis of  
the future of tribally  
owned wineries

described people mitigating the negative considerations with rallying cries that the profits would fund education and support their future. They imaged that deliberation over tribal winery operation would be more difficult based on the tribe’s experience with casino operation. The history described provided context to members’ potential opinions in the

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future and served as a cautionary framework for addressing the educational needs of the membership.

*Wine and the market.* Three participants projected that it would take their tribe years to develop a viable winery operation. The time investment and element of risk that are part of business development directly affected the perception of the idea's viability. One respondent sensibly projected that tribally operated wineries would mirror the wine industry in the rest of the region. The room for growth was identified by interviewees from both coastal tribes, and there was discussion of a tribally owned winery being a nontraditional way to fill a niche in the market. Finally, two participants considered the future of the tribal winery operation from the consumer standpoint. Choosing to work with a product that has a sustained demand and industry growth indicated to one participant that tribal enterprises would be wise to consider this direction.

*Tribal considerations.* Participants primarily discussed the benefits that could result from tribal winery operation. One felt that strategic planning was an important component in bringing that prediction to fruition, while others noted the importance of mentoring activities and resources. The belief that the concept would grow as more positive examples presented themselves would also indicate that more seasoned professionals would be available to form mentoring partnerships. They explained it made sense for tribes to make determinations individually based on their specific mix of factors, and the viability of any enterprise would depend on the requirements of the operation (such as, in the case of wineries, access to land, workforce and financial resources), the specific needs of the tribe and their location within the market.

Finally, the needs of education and outreach were identified in perceptions of the future of tribally operated wineries. One participant felt that Native Americans entering the wine industry had chance of overcoming the identified barrier of social resistance through education. Acknowledging that the barrier was likely to exist in the early stages of strategizing would allow the tribe to consider the best method of addressing it. Participants echoed this thought but also stressed that education was needed for Native Americans and those outside the tribe. They described that, in their area, people reacted to Native American individuals in two ways: some people refused to believe that modern Native Americans existed, while others, acknowledged Native American heritage as secondary to mainstream society; therefore, not worthy of resource control. Like the stereotype of alcoholism in Native populations, this stereotype also reduces individuals to only their component parts, and it places value or legitimacy solely on those that can be visually or overtly confirmed.

### **Discussion and future research**

As tribes experience concerns about market maturation, slowed growth, increased competition and market saturation in the gaming industry (Wilson, 2012; Freiss, 2015; Meister, 2015), decision makers are looking to other options to provide support to their memberships. The US wine industry has enjoyed consistent sales growth, slowed only during the economic recession of 2008 and 2009 (Statista, 2016). As a result, some tribes have slowly pursued enterprises in this area. As the present investigation demonstrates, this is still a new and novel idea to many tribal members.

Self-preservation lead tribes toward increased autonomy and cultural revitalization. The function of these goals was supported by both federally available grants and income from tribal businesses. The grants are largely maintained by allocated funding from the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, but tribal business can take many forms. One of the benefits discussed in the interviews was the importance of preserving both the environment and tribal heritage in conducting business. To this end, winery operation was seen as a potential avenue that would not require land to become part of housing or retail developments



and could potentially be supported by federal grants. Based on respondents' assertion that a benefit of tribal wineries would be to support other tribal hospitality enterprises, it is likely that these business structures within the wine industry would be categorized as "Lone Rangers" (Castaldi *et al.*, 2005). This is because they will likely operate with a single location within each tribe.

Respondents perceived that revenue, job creation, support for other tribal enterprises and the preservation of tribal heritage as potential benefits for winery operation. These concepts were identified as important goals for new business endeavors, as tribes seek to create a "business enterprise structure that encourages entrepreneurship and allows the tribe to take advantage of business opportunities without sacrificing cultural values" (Reed, 2013, pg. 132). The connection that winery operations could provide between members was seen as a strength to this business concept by respondents in the current research.

A theme that arose in the course of this research was the "old versus new" concept within tribes. More traditional members tended to be leery of new pursuits without a solid amount of evidence that it would be an appropriate and successful endeavor. Upholding the integrity of the tribe is of utmost importance in these considerations, and it was difficult for some to consider an alcohol-based enterprise because of the potential effect on their at-risk members. Based on acculturation level, this study found that more traditional members of the tribe had a higher perception of the barriers likely to exist in winery operation. Each individual tribe's challenge will be to communicate effectively to all tribe members.

The challenges of balancing between former member experiences and the newer diversification opportunities were very much on the minds of tribal members as they undertake wine-related ventures (Kettman, 2013). The present research suggests that these experiences in some tribes are not as far distant as previous research advises. For this reason, this challenge must be actively addressed if winery operation is considered.

Marketing a tribally produced wine product was seen as a contentious prospect, with sacred objects, animals and icons seen as inappropriate for use. Of additional interest to the present research agenda concerning the marketing of Native-owned winery products, Boudreaux and Palmer (2007) examined images on wine labels and how they related to purchase intent. These findings indicated that while the present research concerning meaningful Native American imagery on wine labels in the animal category may not have scored as inappropriate on the quantitative measure, they should still be carefully considered in the context of effective wine marketing strategies.

The role of agriculture in preservation was seen not only in importance to the land itself, but in the connections that tribal members were able to sustain with each other through communal work. The agricultural jobs potentially provided by a winery operation were seen as a method through which younger generations could find work without leaving the geographic area, thereby maintaining tribal strength. For Native-owned wineries, it is possible that both passion and revenue could be motivating factors for the businesses due to the tribal reliance on diversified generation of revenue to fund tribal social structures and a connection to tribal lands, i.e. they could operate for love and for money (Scott-Morton and Podolny, 2002).

A large collection of recent research also examines authenticity in winery operations, with perceived authenticity being the most important in the current context and a potentially powerful barrier to successful winery operation (Kim and Bon, 2016; Robinson and Clifford, 2012).

This topic arose in respondents' discussion of winery operation as not being a pursuit where tribes bring credibility based on their historic pursuits or heritage.

Since tribes provide infrastructure improvements, educational opportunities and social programs through the revenue produced by gaming, per the IGRA (Robertson, 2012), it is integral that funds continue to provide for these provisions. Fullmer (2013) recommended

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that, to successfully grow and diversify, leaders should “engage in critical deliberations about what kind of society they have now and what they’re hoping to have in the future.” The opportunity exists for a tribally operated winery to fill these needs if the potential barriers are addressed early and thoroughly in strategic planning.

Future research should address the topics identified in this research with tribal membership to build a bigger and broader picture of the specific strengths, challenges and opportunities that are likely to exist. Careful consideration of the resources available within the tribe should impact considerations of winery operation, as supporting current tribal enterprises was a primary benefit identified here. When pieces of the tribes’ businesses can support each other, the benefits could flow in both directions. Education and outreach should be important pieces of tribes’ strategic plans in pursuing winery operation. Within the tribe, the social resistance encountered could potentially be mitigated by assuaging fears of increased alcoholism and other negative consequences of embracing an alcohol-based enterprise through education and clear, effective communication. For individuals outside of the tribe, stereotyping of Native Americans in the modern era as primitive or abusive drinkers must also be addressed through outreach and education. These perceptions should also be addressed by making conscious marketing decisions that do not commodify Native American culture or reinforce the commonly encountered stereotypes.

Future research into this topic would benefit from more representation across demographic areas. Specifically, improved representation across different age groups would be valuable. Finding a way to secure participation by tribal members who identify as Traditional and Marginal on the acculturation measure would provide additional insight into the experience and perceptions of a more representative sample of tribal participants. Identifying connections in more tribes across the United States to serve as key connectors for dissemination of the survey could potentially increase the reach and response rates, as well. Potential future research in this area should seek to isolate and deeply explore the key insights addressed in this research.

Finally, it would be valuable for future research to recruit representatives from tribes who are currently involved in the wine industry to examine their perspectives on the same issues. Representatives of Native-owned wineries could provide valuable insight into the actual benefits and barriers of operation and give insight into the issue of marketing a tribal winery product.

## **Conclusion**

The results of this research provide a framework for consideration of the potential strengths, challenges and opportunities provided by tribal winery operations. The perspectives represented within are of members of NITM, so they reflect the issues that could be expected in a new tribe considering this diversification option. In general, the most important repeated acknowledgement is that the information should be used on a tribe-by-tribe basis, as there is no one-size-fits-all approach. Careful consideration of the resources available within tribes should directly impact considerations of winery operations, as supporting current tribal enterprises was a primary benefit identified in this research. When pieces of the tribes’ businesses can support each other, the benefits could flow in both directions. Education and outreach should be important pieces of tribes’ strategic plans in pursuing winery operation. Within the tribe, the social resistance encountered could potentially be mitigated by assuaging fears of increased alcoholism and other negative consequences of embracing an alcohol-based enterprise through education and clear, effective communication.

A limitation of this study is some reservations, tribal land and tribes might be limited in the areas of viticulture, enology and winery operations. Due to vinicultural practices and vine

environment, many tribes may not be able to grow the species and varieties of grapes that lend to a quality wine. Additionally, tribes may not have the sources to ensure that proper enological practices are followed and accompanied with the correct operations of a winery: practices that are crucial for how a wine develops; and therefore, also crucially important for the end product.

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**Further reading**

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Winery options  
for Native  
Americans

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