The Cassandra syndrome: why wine doesn’t want to accept success

scritto da Fabio Piccoli | 31 Ottobre 2025



This editorial explores the “Cassandra Syndrome” in the wine industry: a psychological resistance to success. Highlighting positive case studies, such as in hospitality, often provokes negativity. The article argues that this pessimism is a toxic alibi for mediocrity and that embracing innovation and professionalism is the only strategic way forward.

Working in the wine world exposes one to a curious psychological paradox: the difficulty in accepting others’ success and, consequently, one’s own potential vulnerability. Stating today that companies are growing in exports, in the Italian market, or in wine tourism **seems almost a personal affront to those who are not succeeding**. One is reprimanded,

invited to “tell the truth” that “things are going badly,” as if we were liars just for highlighting an area of light. This attitude, which partly harks back to the old idea of the farmer complaining regardless (a historical cultural alibi), is toxic today.

The sin of hospitality and the retaliation of pessimism

The reflection of a skilled marketing and communication expert, Anna Caprini, regarding her recent wine tourism experience, is clear proof. **By recounting how a winery managed to drive bookings through communication focused on sunsets, gourmet menus, and perfect pairings** (without any technical jargon), she exposed the reality of the consumer target.

On social media: no technical mention of the wines. The wonderful photos of the bistro, the gourmet menu, and the perfect pairings led to the booking. **The quality of the wines, therefore, took a backseat, despite being excellent**. Success, therefore, came from the place, the professionalism, the capacity for hospitality, and the imagination. The wine was excellent, but it wasn’t the starting point; rather, it was the wonderful confirmation of an already winning experience. The reaction to this best practice? An entrepreneur who responds, annoyed: “They are doing it all wrong, because they are competing with the restaurant industry.”

The backlash from the entrepreneur who fears competition with the restaurant industry highlights a flaw in perspective that is even more limiting than complaining about others’ success. **If a winery decides to invest in hospitality, guaranteeing an excellent dining experience** (obviously in compliance with legal regulations) **or offering wise pairings, it is not “doing it wrong”.**

On the contrary, it does an excellent job for itself. **The winery creates an additional source of income** (D2C) and, as

Anna’s experience shows, an emotional connection point so strong that it guarantees purchase and brand loyalty. It does an excellent job for the territory: A high-quality wine tourism experience elevates the level of the entire area. It attracts a demanding target clientele, who in turn will seek out other local excellences, benefiting restaurants that offer service and quality to match.

The fear of competition arises from the fear of comparison. Instead of denigrating the winery that excels in hospitality, restaurateurs should see it as an incentive to improve their own standards of service, quality, and professionalism. When quality rises, the “pie” of food and wine tourism grows for everyone. The winery that offers excellent, memorable service is, in fact, teaching the market that this territory deserves to be visited and deserves a higher price for the overall experience. Those who complain about others’ innovation are simply admitting they are unable to compete on the fronts of quality and vision.

The Cassandra syndrome and the perfect alibi

This is the Cassandra syndrome applied to business: preferring to listen to the prophecy of doom rather than the happy ending. Why this resistance to recognizing positive experiences? Recognizing that wine tourism only works if you invest in professionalism, design, and, when able, also in cuisine (i.e., in assets that are not the vineyard) means accepting the need to leave the productive comfort zone.

It’s easier to say “they are doing it wrong” than to admit “I don’t have the structure or the will to invest that way.” Collective complaining also creates a sort of pessimism lobby that acts as a brand umbrella for mediocrity. **As long as everyone shouts that “everything is going badly,” negative performance is justified by the general context.** Anyone who

breaks this front with a success story is seen as a liar or hopelessly naive. The production-focused mentality often dictates that technical quality must be the starting and ending point of every communication process.

The idea that the consumer can be led by a sunset and a menu (lifestyle) before a monologue on polyphenols is experienced as a betrayal of the production identity. **As I have repeatedly stressed in my editorials, this atmosphere is extremely dangerous, as it generates a negative tone that depresses consumption intrinsically linked to positivity and quality of life.** And that is why I insist on this problem, certainly not to bore our readers.

Welcoming success isn't naive; it's strategic. Companies that buy customer loyalty with wonder and professionalism are not "doing it wrong"; they are simply applying the law of the market: first, you sell an emotion and flawless service, then you confirm the quality of the product. If Italian wine wants to grow, it must stop denigrating the positive experience and start studying its mechanisms to replicate them.

Key points

1. **The wine industry often displays a Cassandra Syndrome**, preferring negative narratives over analyzing success.
2. **Collective complaining** serves as a cultural alibi to justify mediocrity and avoid innovation.
3. **Successful wine hospitality is wrongly criticized as "competition"** rather than seen as a best practice.
4. **Consumers are led by emotion and experience** first; technical quality serves as the confirmation.
5. **Embracing success is a strategic move** that elevates the market and builds brand loyalty.