



# 4

## Beyond “Entrepreneurial Passion”: Are There Other “Deeper” Forms of Passion Involved in Entrepreneurial Pursuits?

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### 4.1 Introduction

There is no doubt that passion and entrepreneurship are somehow connected, at least in such expressions as “entrepreneurial passion” or “passionate entrepreneur”. But there are two key questions concerning these key concepts.

First, before anything else, let us ask ourselves: what do we actually mean by “passion”? This notion seems simultaneously so straightforward

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and so notoriously evasive. To be passionate about something indicates that we are emotionally aroused and have strong or even very strong feelings for or toward the object of our attention. Mostly love but also hate. Who hasn't heard of passionate lovers, steamy crimes of passion or obsessive behavior concerning hobbies or other peculiar things? Probably before but at least since Schumpeter, passion is also firmly associated with business. Passion, according to Schumpeter (1951) is what makes the world go round, at least the entrepreneurial part of it.

More recently, passion and entrepreneurship have started being seen not only as closely connected but also as an integrated, indeed "fused" in the concept of *entrepreneurial passion* (Cardon et al. 2005; Cardon 2008). This new term coined by Cardon et al. (2009) has lately gained considerable impact in the scholarly field of entrepreneurship. Even more than so, they see "the nature of entrepreneurial passion as consciously accessible, intense positive feelings experienced by engagement in entrepreneurial activities associated with roles that are meaningful and salient to the self-identity of the entrepreneur" (Cardon et al. 2009).

In our view though, this conceptualization of the elusive notion of passion is problematic. The reason for this, we contend, is that the concept of passion becomes basically all-encompassing. Passion then has been diluted by Cardon et al.'s indicator of "intense positive feelings" (Ibid) into a vague placeholder of some heightened emotional activity in general terms. We are not going to review the various contemporary attempts within business studies of conceptualizing passion, but we suggest a different and more emotionally oriented perspective on passion. In short, we need to distinguish passion from any other type of "intense positive feelings" experienced by entrepreneurs and lean instead toward its more extreme manifestations. Therefore, we suggest hooking up with the French philosopher Denis Diderot.

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His notion of passion is not to be equated with a situation of strong emotional arousal in general, but should rather be reserved for a significantly more extreme state. Diderot (1765/1995) writes: “Passions. Penchants, inclinations, desires and aversions carried to a certain degree of intensity, combined with an indistinct sensation of pleasure or pain, occasioned or accompanied by some irregular movement of the blood and animal spirits, are what we call passions. They can be so strong as to inhibit all practice of personal freedom, a state in which the soul is in some sense rendered passive; whence the name passions.”

Diderot does not stop there but continues in the next paragraph to further underline that passion is not to be understood as aroused emotion but rather something of even significantly higher emotional magnitude. Passion, according to Diderot, can be pathological: “This inclination or so-called disposition of the soul, is born of the opinion we hold that a great good or a great evil is contained in an object which in and of itself arouses passion. So that when this inclination is brought into play (and it is present in everything that represents pleasure or pain for us), the soul immediately, as if struck directly by good or evil, unrestrained in its opinion that this object is very important to it, believes it for this reason to be worthy of all its attention; it directs all its faculties to its consideration; forgetting in this contemplation, in this desire or fear nearly all other objects: so it is in the case of a man struck down by an acute illness; he is not at liberty to think about anything unrelated to his pain. It is also in this sense that passions are the diseases of the soul.”

So, in our opinion, understanding passion as a pathological or at least extreme state of obsessive emotion makes it somewhat more stable and analytically distinct from other emotions or feelings, which can intervene during entrepreneurial activities. Following Diderot’s sharp characterization makes passion lose some of its vernacular easiness but it gains as a theoretical construct. This brings us to our next point.

Second, we need to ask a similar question to the one we posed about passion: what is entrepreneurship? The word itself derives from the French (again!) *entrepreneur*, an individual who undertakes to organize and perform a certain activity for the benefit of someone or of a market. Its historical origin is assumed to come from the widespread mercenary business, which was largely the resource and organizational base of the European wars between 1300 and 1700. Kings and emperors had few

troops themselves and it was common to simply hire troops to fill up the army with mercenaries who would fight under the banner of the financier.

Of course, the word's significance has gradually shifted toward a more civil and, above all, commercial content. Today, an entrepreneur is a doer, someone who manages to make a good deal out of something that has not been done before under the exact same conditions. There are many variants of definitions that jockey for the number one position. Generally, common to most definitions of entrepreneurship since the times of Schumpeter (1934) is that they try to capture the character or activity of an individual who manages to identify new market needs (in broad terms), find and organize resources in new ways (technical, economic and social) and to create new forms of offers (business model). Harvard professor Howard Stevenson gives a fairly straightforward and well-functioning definition in "entrepreneurship is the pursuit of opportunity beyond resources controlled" (Eisenmann 2013). This definition is useful insofar as it underlines the entrepreneurial pursuit of opportunities beyond what one already has. In other words, it is not about just doing the same thing with the same things, but in some new ways doing new or old things.

Having established a working definition of passion as well as of entrepreneurship we can finally turn our attention to our point of interest in this chapter, the new venture started by Mr. Gerardo and the involvement of his business consultant Mr. Antonio in a complex game where passion in various forms gets intertwined with the pursuit of business. Mr. Gerardo has grown himself a vineyard and built himself a winery. As will be shown in greater length further down the road in this story, Mr. Gerardo has extremely strong feelings about wines and many other things in life such as food and agriculture. Despite starting up a considerably complex and financially burdensome business, Mr. Gerardo seems less interested in running it, at least not in a "business-like" manner. Aware of his lack of interest and ability to focus on the boring side of enterprising he is more or less compelled to hire a young business consultant, Mr. Antonio, to take care of that side of his business, while he can focus on those elements for which he is truly passionate: wines, food, tractors and good life.

So, what can Mr. Gerardo's and Mr. Antonio's adventures show us of relevance for entrepreneurship theory? We believe that this case provides us with a good foundation to contemplate the difference between the growingly employed construct of *entrepreneurial passion* (Cardon et al.

2005, 2009) and the concept of a *passionate entrepreneur*, that is, an individual driven by some other form of possibly more Diderotian passion than Cardon et al.’s entrepreneurial passion. In particular, we suggest that *entrepreneurial passion* should not be considered as synonymous with any form of passion that drives entrepreneurs in the pursuit of their business, but rather that other, much deeper forms of passion can intervene, for good and for bad, in entrepreneurial pursuits.

In our study of the case of Mr. Gerardo’s winery we explore the following questions:

Which is the nature of the passion driving Mr. Gerardo in the pursuit of his business? Is Mr. Gerardo driven by “entrepreneurial passion” in the sense of Cardon et al.? Or is it passion in Diderot’s more extreme sense that makes him a “passionate entrepreneur”? And, in more general terms, how are passion and entrepreneurship combined in this case?

In presenting this Winery case we will shed more light also on the interactions between Mr. Gerardo, who follows his personal deepest passions around which he happens to start a new venture, and Mr. Antonio, who acts as a business consultant. Understanding this interaction may be beneficial to explore what happens when two types of passion meet with each other, one which is more brutal and detached from business pursuits and one which is so close to business to resemble more a form of rationality expressed by strong commitment to the venture, that is, to what Cardon et al. (2005, 2009) term “entrepreneurial passion”.

The chapter is organized as follows: after a brief discussion on how the notion of passion has so far been treated within entrepreneurship research, we provide details on how we built the case featured in this chapter. Then we present our case and conclude with some reflections on the various forms of passions involved in entrepreneurial pursuits.

## 4.2 Passion in Entrepreneurship

Most organizational and managerial theories are based upon the assumption of individual rationality, even though rationality is meant to assume varying degrees, including an array of bounded forms of rationality. Most of these theories approach decision processes and business outcomes without considering the role of emotions. However, more recent streams

of research in among others entrepreneurship recognize that most entrepreneurs are driven by emotions, to a point that some researchers have identified the already mentioned “entrepreneurial passion”, that is, a form of generalized passion for the very pursuit of entrepreneurship (Cardon et al. 2005). It is in fact implicit in Cardon et al.’s (2009) definition of this concept provided above that those individuals have strong positive feelings simply about the fact of performing entrepreneurial actions or being entrepreneurs, somehow independently from the very content of the venture they are pursuing, which could be a sports outlet as much as a winery.

Analyzing passion in entrepreneurship implies to focus on the entrepreneur and try to understand also the multiple roles played, the different activities performed—in sum, it seems necessary to analyze how the entrepreneur moves within the business context. The entrepreneur is often viewed as the owner and manager of the business (Cooper et al. 1988; Brockhaus 1980), the organization builder (Collins and Moore 1970; Gartner 1988), the founder (Howell 1972; Davids and Bunting 1963; Draheim 1972; Mescon and Montanari 1981; Hornaday and About 1971; Hornaday and Bunker 1970), the actor who combines factors (Ely and Hess 1937; Lachman 1980), the formal authority in the organization (Hartmann 1959), the one who takes risks in business (Hull et al. 1980; Palmer 1971), the one in the organization who is goal oriented (Litzinger 1965) and who exerts leadership (Schumpeter 1934). Gartner (1990) pointed that “in the early days of the new enterprise, the overall enterprise is not viable without the entrepreneur”, thus the commitment of the entrepreneur is crucial in running a business; Venkataraman (1997) added on the previous definitions that “the venture is highly dependent on the entrepreneur”. Moreover, Gartner (1988) proposes that “entrepreneurship is the creation of new business organizations” and “what individuals do to enable organization to come into existence”. While the above are certainly all important roles of an entrepreneur, especially in relation to a new organizational form, resources to be combined or markets to be created or approached, those definitions do not say much about the degree of engagement and attachment of the entrepreneur to the new business. Introducing passion means looking for non-rational explanations of entrepreneurial behavior, but as we contend in

this chapter, the form of passion mostly considered in the literature and termed “entrepreneurial passion” (Cardon et al. 2005) still remains rather rational, just because it is very functional to the pursuit of business.

Schumpeter (1951) was one of the first who explained entrepreneurial behaviors through the concept of passion (Cardon et al. 2009). Since then, many researchers have identified passion as a feeling that is embedded in the behaviors of the most successful entrepreneurs (Bird 1989; Smilor 1997; Cardon et al. 2005, 2009; Cardon 2008). Passion remain nonetheless a relatively underdeveloped concept in management studies and entrepreneurship. Schumpeter may well have recognized that “entrepreneurs need passion in order to have a strong will to overcome difficulties during the process of the creation of a new business”, but there are no conceptualizations that can capture the full breadth and complexity of the nature of the passions involved in entrepreneurship. Looking at the notion of entrepreneurial passion introduced by Cardon et al. (2005, 2009), it becomes quite all-encompassing especially when they consider it as “any intense emotion that stirs the human with energy and deep longing to make a difference” (Cardon et al. 2009). It is in relation to the idea of passion as simply an “intense emotion” that we aim to create a contrast by pointing out forms of passion that are so intense and blind to become almost maniacal, obsessive and painful, and hence much less functional to the pursuit of business, but nonetheless are still accompanying and somehow driving entrepreneurial efforts.

In the extant literature it is possible to find many origins and drivers of passion. The concept is often related to strength and courage (Bierly et al. 2000), to the pursuit of challenging goals (Smilor 1997), to drive, tenacity, willingness to work long hours, initiative and persistence (Bierly et al. 2000; Bird 1989), to the encouragement of creativity and the recognition of new opportunities (Baron 2008). But there is not much in these accounts that help to really separate this lukewarm, quasi-rationalistic notion of passion from simply heightened emotions and greater attachment to any kind of pursuit.

Portraying a somewhat warmer conceptualization of passion is the idea of passion for a business as “entrepreneurial love” (Cardon et al. 2005), which can lead to great achievement, but possibly entails also very dark sides. Passion helps entrepreneurs to persist while facing difficulties and

keeps in the hearth of the entrepreneurs the enthusiasm to pursue their goals (Cardon et al. 2005). Passion can be recognized as the non-monetary reward for the entrepreneurs (Cardon et al. 2005) and as “a central element of the entrepreneurial process” (Cardon 2008). Passion is related to intense feelings that trigger the entrepreneur to be committed with the venture and involves the creation of a deep identity connection with the firm that involves also the finding of a personal meaning for the entrepreneur (Cardon 2009). According to Cardon (2009), an entrepreneur full of passion can also have a positive effect in motivating and obtaining better performance from the organization’s employees. The entrepreneur’s passion for her venture is what creates the bond and the deep commitment to put the venture’s needs on the top (Cardon et al. 2005).

However, passion can also be considered as a potential burden for the entrepreneur and the development of the venture. In fact, entrepreneurial passion may present also dark sides and cognitive biases, which are often associated extreme risk acceptance, persistence despite poor results, extreme devotion to the business, extreme self-sacrifice, delayed gratification and overcontrol of activities (Cardon et al. 2005). Passion may influence the role identity and the activities performed by the entrepreneur: often the entrepreneur tends to engage more with certain activities and disengage from others (Cardon et al. 2009). Thus, the passion for specific activities may catalyze the efforts of entrepreneurs in certain activities that they love more to the detriment of other activities. The deep bonding of the entrepreneur with the venture sometimes becomes an obsession that could result in critical problems for the business, such as failure to delegate, difficulty to let go the dream when the results do not come, obstacles to the development of the firm, personal troubles that could affect the entrepreneur’s social relationships and health (Cardon et al. 2005).

Thus, entrepreneurial passion can be very inspiring and could be seen as a critical factor for the success of the venture, but it could be also dangerous for the entrepreneur and her personal relationships (Cardon et al. 2005; Cardon 2009). In conclusion, to ease the understanding of the concept of entrepreneurial passion, it is possible to take the simply but deep view on entrepreneurial passion of Baum and Locke (2004), Shane et al. (2003) who argue that “entrepreneurial passion is a love for work”.



To conclude, Cardon et al.’s notion of entrepreneurial passion may well embrace a stronger set of emotions, including their dark side, but it is hardly leaning toward the extreme side of an emotional continuum à la Diderot and, importantly, this passion is strictly oriented toward work, the venture and the business, no other passionate elements which can deviate from these economic pursuits. We argue instead that there are other forms of passion that influence entrepreneurs but are not “entrepreneurial” in themselves, as we shall see in the case of Mr. Gerardo.

### 4.3 A Note on Methodology

Our initial interest was to understand how passion and entrepreneurship are connected. One specific question in this regard was: which forms of passions appear during entrepreneurial activities or drive their pursuit? Such a question emerged from our preliminary analysis of the case of an Italian entrepreneur who started a winery, which we simply call “The Winery”, a few years ago. He wanted to become a successful wine producer, recognized as “expert producer of very high quality wine”. However, the behavior and choices of this entrepreneur signaled immediately levels and facets of passion so extreme that suggested to the authors that something more and beyond entrepreneurial passion (Cardon et al. 2009) was at play in this story. We could see from the case also another interesting phenomenon, namely the interplay and contrast between the pure and brutal passion of the founder Gerardo and the functional and more controlled entrepreneurial passion of the business consultant Antonio.

The case has been selected also because of the particularly good access to the empirical data which was granted to the authors. In particular data was collected mostly through face-to-face interviews (Yin 2014; Johnsen and Ford 2007) and participant observations. The authors also had also access to different sources such as accounting and business reports of the entrepreneur’s company, web-sites and social media tools. The data collection has been developed in real time since informal contacts with the entrepreneur begun right after the start of the business. We also enriched the data through informal conversations and participation to business meetings. These close interactions with the entrepreneur provided a deep

insight on his complex psychology and emotional attachments. Recurrent conversations and participation to business meetings were fundamental also to understand why Mr. Gerardo hired the business consultant Antonio and how the relation between them unfolded.

Data analysis focused on identifying and making sense of the major choices and actions of the focal entrepreneur, especially in relation to the social and economic context in which both the entrepreneur and the consultant have been involved and acting. First, the authors have mapped out the key events in the personal and professional biography of the focal entrepreneur, focusing on the key choices he made and how they affected the development of the winery business. To these events we then added also the specific interactions with the business consultant, which enabled us to extract the more extreme features of the passion(s) which animated the focal entrepreneur. Moreover, the entrepreneur's specific actions and decisions which appeared to have an important impact on his way of starting and developing its business, were discussed among the paper's authors in order to understand their nature and connection to the underlying passion of the entrepreneur.

## **4.4 The Case of "The Winery"**

### **4.4.1 The Broader Context: The Wine Sector in Italy and in the Marche Region**

Italy is the second wine exporter in the world after France, and accounts for 20% of global export values with roughly 48 million hectoliters produced in 2018. The US, the UK and Germany are the three major buyers of Italian wine (Federvini 2019). Moreover, Italy is the European leader for certified wines (Unicredit 2019). Italy's worldwide renowned wine sector includes more than 500 varieties of wine, and relies on the favorable climate, environmental resources and deep knowledge of the manufacturing process. A quick look at the wine industry shows that the production of wine is carried out by small firms usually family owned. Despite their small size, these firms perform all essential steps:

winemaking, bottling and sales. Next to a myriad of smaller firms bringing total number to around 350,000 companies, there are a few hundreds of cooperatives and consortiums who have about 50% of the total production in their hands. In 2017, the Italian wine sector contributed with 10% of the GDP in the whole Italian agribusiness. Next to established actors, who have been in the sector for decades, an important recent change is the emergence of plenty micro-producers who have literally “improvised” their business (Giuliani et al. 2015). These new entrants are retired people or young farmers who desire to produce high-quality products for niche markets. The result is that this sector over the years has become even more fragmented and heterogeneity of the actors is now one of the most distinct features (Presenza et al. 2017).

As for the type of wine produced, Italy is characterized by a focus on producing mid-to-high quality wines: 70% of the entire production is labelled as DOC wines (Denomination of Controlled Origin), IGT wines (Geographical Indication) and DOCG (Denomination of Controlled and Guaranteed Origin). The remaining 30% is considered “table-wines”, which means wines without any particular quality certification or denomination.

The winery of our case study is located in the Marche region (1.5 million inhabitants), located in Central Italy and with strong roots in the agricultural business. Marche has been traditionally considered an agricultural region—although only recently the wine sector has attracted attention, also internationally. In fact, Marche has been developing over years high-quality products, as witnessed by several international awards. Marche’s vineyards cover around 60,000 acres (25,000 ha), and produce almost two million hectoliters of wine annually (roughly 4% of the national production). About 200 producers are spread all over this region (Federdoc 2018) and produce mostly “table-wines” (which boast however a good price/quality ratio) or wines certified as IGT Marche (with higher quality and higher prices). Marche region is best known for white wines made from Verdicchio grapes and for red wines based on Montepulciano variety of grapes.

The wine sector in the Marche region is characterized by many small wineries and a few big players. These big players often commercialize wine outside the region and can reach economies of scales. On the

contrary, small wineries are very strong in creating ties with local communities and customers, becoming the “local wine supplier”, but these organizations are not really prepared to scale up their production and sales.

#### 4.4.2 Gerardo and His Family

“The Winery” is one of these small players, founded in 2012 in the “Small Town” in the Marche region, Italy. The company is run by Mr. Gerardo who was born in the 1970s in the “Small Town”. Gerardo is a wine specialist, cook, farmer and he loves enjoying sparkling white wine (the so-called *bollicine*).

Gerardo attended primary schools in a small class composed only by 11 students. He won several edition of a class gardening competition that was organized every year. Every student got a very small piece of land from the school administration with the goal of transforming the garden into a nice spot full of flowers. This was a very nice experience and Gerardo was fascinated by the art of farming—or at least he found for the first time an interesting thing to do beyond learning grammar, maths and so on.

In 1989 Gerardo was enrolled in a special high school program preparing students to work in the world of restaurants and hotels: five years later Gerardo successfully completed his education and could collect his diploma. Why did Gerardo attend that school? The key reason was not so surprising. Since the mid-1970s Gerardo’s mother and father had been running a small restaurant, “The Restaurant”, located nearby Gerardo’s family house and he was the one in pole-position to hold the reins of the restaurant. Gerardo’s sister, instead, wanted more to support the restaurant activity instead of taking the lead. “The Restaurant” was dreams come true for Gerardo’s parents after they had opened in the early 1960s a small kiosk located in a very good spot, half-way to get to one of the beautiful mountains nearby the “Small Town”. It was the only available food court on the way to the mountain.

“The Restaurant” was established with Gerardo’s parents’ own finance: they sold some of their lands and utilized the revenues to open up the new restaurant business, but they kept the family farmland located near

the “The Restaurant”. The idea was to become the biggest restaurant in that area, specialized in organizing and hosting fancy wedding parties. At that time, weddings were usually held in-house and that’s why the investment carried out by Gerardo’s family appeared risky. Locally the restaurant achieved a good success—the peak was hosting 60 wedding parties in one year—although customers showed up mostly during the summer season.

The first years of operations of “The Restaurant” were riddled with problems because no one in the family was really prepared to run a business: somehow Gerardo’s family had to learn and to adapt rather fast to the new circumstances. The investment proved worthwhile and Gerardo’s father was able to grow his family and buy a new house: it was 1981. Gerardo loves to remember “daddy and mummy did a lot of sacrifices for me and for my sister”.

After the degree and the end of the military service, Gerardo spent three months working in a small factory of wood frames, which was not really a thrilling practice for him: Gerardo stepped into the restaurant in the mid-1990s, at the age of 20.

Actually, Gerardo had always been attracted by the restaurant business since childhood: he enjoyed a lot to attend the restaurant’s kitchen and watch how his parents worked with customers and how the business was run. But the parents often got a bit disturbed by the great attraction Gerardo had for restaurant work; they really hoped to see Gerardo doing other things in his life.

The first thing he proposed when he officially entered the family business in the mid-1990s was upgrading the kitchen equipment, renovating and expanding the interior, and planning for building up a swimming pool. Gerardo’s intention had been to become not only specialized in hosting big wedding parties but the dream was to build a more solid presence in the local territory and improve their visibility: “I don’t want just to run a restaurant but I want to be surrounded by nice people who enjoy to eat stunning food, drink the best red wine and lie down on the shadow under my beautiful big maple.”

Pity that Gerardo didn’t get a big green light from his family, instead he got an unexpected reaction by his parents that were pretty against the new things Gerardo wanted to develop and implement. Gerardo explains:

“At that time I was pretty convinced to succeed with my parents, the idea was super good! But they look still radical and conservative at the same time, they are scared out by me and don’t trust me and don’t delegate anything to me...this is awful...nowadays people are looking for different food, we can’t continue to offer always ‘tagliatelle con ragù’ and loose wine.”

Gerardo first task at the restaurant was to attend and serve customers at the tables: he was appointed by his parents as head waiter. In the meantime, Gerardo took over the responsibility of managing the family’s farmland. Like a baby in a candy shop, Gerardo spent most of his free time driving either a red big tractor or a big yellow D10 Caterpillar. This latter machine had been utilized by Gerardo’s grandpa who ran for a while a small construction company and Gerardo liked very much to drive it.

Gerardo’s grandpa had a big influence on him and transmitted his passion for what Gerardo considers the “amazing world of farms and farmers”. Already at the age of nine Gerardo drove the big tractor, but of course hidden from his parents. Gerardo has always been in love with manual labor, staying outside in the farmland, and over the years he also managed to build up a small facility where his tractors are parked and where he can perform maintenance activities on them. According to him, it’s not possible to rest if you are so much in love with nature.

The experience of driving and, if necessary, fixing a tractor made a big impact on Gerardo and helped him rely on himself and built self-confidence.

#### **4.4.3 The Evil “Wine Coop” and the Beginning of “The Winery”**

Gerardo had a natural instinct for farming and particularly for grapes. The family had a very small grapes production located not far from the place where Gerardo grew up: it was Gerardo’s grandpa who, being very interested in grapes and wine production, started in the 1960s a very small production of grapes, which were sold to one of the biggest local wine producer named “Wine Coop”. But the deal was not really good

for the family and they strongly felt that “Wine Coop” had always exploited the very small local grape suppliers.

It was wonderful for Gerardo to talk about grapes with old grandpa, who unfortunately passed away in the end of the 1990s. It was time for Gerardo to take the baton of the small grape production. Gerardo was happy for that, but also deeply affected by the loss of grandpa. He said: “the death of my grandpa was expected but even more painful than an unexpected mourning. I suffered a lot. But a few days after I was again motivated, again ‘happy’ sort to say. I realized I wanted to properly manage my small treasure, the grapes.” So it was really a key event happening on that very year, when Gerardo approached for the first time the partly unknown universe of wine, since he decided to continue the small business left to him by his grandpa. And this was also a good reason to “unplug” from his parents and from the restaurant business. “The restaurant was extremely demanding and boring. I was looking for something different like a different context where to work. I had money, friends...but something was missing, you know? It’s difficult to explain what I was feeling...but I wanted to enjoy more free time, go around, escape from “Small Town” and deal with new people...and talk about grapes and wines and go to fairs.”

One of the first tasks Gerardo took on was to negotiate better conditions with “Wine Coop”. Until this point “Wine Coop” decided on all the aspects regarding grape supply conditions. Small grape producers like Gerardo were not expected to complain about this situation, but Gerardo tried to undermine the authority of “Wine Coop”. Shortly, in the community, Gerardo gained the nick name of “black sheep” because he was the only one complaining against the giant “Wine Coop”.

Somehow the experience of “Wine Coop” triggered the ambition of Gerardo to become more than a simple grape producer. The next step would be to become wine producer. Gerardo pointed out: “I was very ambitious and motivated to overcome the power of “Wine Coop”. I maybe took a very important decision, who knows? What I felt was a big desire to react to “Wine Coop” and to the whole system. I felt like a prisoner in this economic system. I see money that goes around and never creates opportunities, good value... I decided to do in a different way.”

Gerardo's parents, for the second time, disagreed totally with Gerardo's idea to start a new business focused on producing wine. Several discussions and bitter arguments among Gerardo and his family took place. But Gerardo decided to go on and soon stopped updating his family about the progress of his idea. Gerardo took almost one "year of leave" from his family, from the operations, from the territory, from the "Small Town". He needed time to think. During his sabbatical period, Gerardo travelled a lot in order to understand how to set up a good winery; once he came back home it was the right time to start building his winery.

As a first step, Gerardo identified where to build his winery. The chosen area was, according to Gerardo, stunning from the landscape perspective, but the process to get the permissions for building the facility was stressful and very long. The family was not at all supporting Gerardo. He didn't get them informed, and they never asked about the winery.

#### **4.4.4 "The Winery" Takes Shape in the Heart of Gerardo**

In 2010 the construction of the winery started and Gerardo was personally involved. He relied on a local construction company but took many decisions regarding the whole construction process. He also utilized the old D10 Caterpillar to work on the field: for instance he constructed the entire drainage system of his winery. He took also the lead of the construction workers. Gerardo pointed: "I couldn't delegate to strangers important tasks because they were building my future! The winery is my future!"

After more or less two years and a big investment—the total amount to set up the winery was around Euro one million—the winery was successfully inaugurated.

Gerardo was so impressed by the winery: somehow he managed to create from scratch a real winery! But many issues started to arise and Gerardo soon realized how challenging it was to produce and commercialize his own wine. Gerardo was convinced that managing a winery was not too diverse from running a restaurant. But he was wrong. He realized that the wine business requires knowledge—not only about the product



itself, but also the cultural dimension is very important—a set of specific capabilities and a different mindset. And Gerardo started to get worried. He strongly wanted to show he was able to run his own business and somehow to avenge the lack of trust from his family.

Gerardo was very committed in order to succeed in this new experience. He was convinced that the call of his life was to become a capable winemaker and in his perspective wine was more than just a product. This is witnessed by his own words: “Wine is always present when people are happy and want to celebrate. Happy moments and happy memories often deal with a good bottle of wine. It’s part of our lives: where there is a convivial event with celebration, there is wine! Wine for me it’s like the motorbike for Harley-Davidson people, it’s an essential part of my DNA.”

However, Gerardo realized that running the winery meant dealing with many different tasks, some of which were very boring for him, such as administration (invoices, bills etc.), marketing and communication activities, including also talking with potential customers. Moreover, the first year of activity of “The Winery” ended up with a small production of just 1000 wine bottles. By comparison, “Wine Coop” produced and sold about seven millions of bottles yearly in the same period. And Gerardo got almost depressed by this performance. “I don’t really understand. I’ve probably one of the best products in this area that won several prizes, a lovely new production facility, an outstanding set of new French barrels, I always take care of my beautiful grapes...what’s wrong then?...the price? Should I hire the best wine seller in the world? I only want to make my customers happy! I’m not doing this just for my wallet... I don’t really understand.”

Gerardo was disappointed by these results, but he did not give up and the poor performance turned to be an extra stimulus for developing new ideas. Developing the brand was very important as well as conceiving a strategy for his business. He embraced the idea of establishing a Bed and Breakfast and making further investment to extend the production volume to 40,000 bottles per year. But Gerardo also wanted to continue enjoying the work in the vineyard, driving tractors, making experiments with grapes to discover new tastes.

In order to avoid losing too much time and be able to continue focusing on what he really loved, that is, the grapes and the production of the

wine, he decided to engage a young consultant. This decision was also pushed by the fact that Gerardo's parents were seriously considering leaving the restaurant business due to their age.

#### 4.4.5 The Consultant Comes into the Picture

When Gerardo's parents decided a couple of years later to retire, they firmly but kindly asked Gerardo and his sister "to not screw up the restaurant business". A decision was taken: Gerardo and his sister would jointly become restaurant managers. Gerardo took mainly the responsibility of managing customers and suppliers, whereas his sister became responsible for all the administrative tasks. One day Gerardo pointed out: "The nightmare is back. I don't really have enough energy to manage it. I hope that the restaurant will not absorb all my energies, I need to focus only on my winery!"

The only positive thing Gerardo pointed out was that the restaurant would serve as a "testing facility" for his wines, for proposing new ideas and of course for spreading the tale that the "The Winery" brand was not only about a product but also about a family commitment to winemaking. As he pointed out: "Money is not an issue, at all. I need money for developing my winery, that's it. If I have 1 Euro, I usually spend more. I love the risk, although I should say that the bank cannot refuse to support my future plans—I'm one of their best customers. Let's see if the consultant will turn "The Winery" into a good investment." The restaurant soon became also the major sales channel for his winery.

It was in November 2016 that Gerardo and the consultant Antonio started to discuss what to do: they talked for about two hours and sketched the content of their upcoming collaboration. Antonio was introduced to Gerardo by another advisor who was supporting him to manage the purchasing processes and monitor costs. This person contacted Antonio and pointed out the challenges that Gerardo was facing in setting up the venture: developing marketing and communication tools and procedures appeared as urgent issues. After a short period during which Antonio delved into the context and started digging into the numbers of "The Winery", he elaborated a marketing plan, including also a

specific proposal on how to run the winery in the next few years. Antonio got interest in how Gerardo described his story, the business idea, the winery and the grapes. But, on the other hand, Antonio perceived that Gerardo was perhaps not really attracted by his first proposal. "I haven't really got any comment by Gerardo concerning the marketing plan...he was only interested in cost levels and prices... I guess that the great market report of the Italian wine sector which I made and included in the overall business plan is still laying on Gerardo's desk."

Antonio understood that his life there at the winery would not be easy. For instance, Gerardo was not so used to have meetings with business associates. "It happened very often that I set up a meeting with Gerardo in the morning and he came at least half an hour late" "and Gerardo was maybe available to meet me after dinner time!" It was really challenging for Antonio to set up the meetings he considered extremely urgent and important: "Where has the meeting been arranged? Not at the winery but at the restaurant! Gerardo was more comfortable to meet me there instead of at the winery...and of course I have lost time and money to reach him there (about 23 miles far away from the winery)... and Gerardo often got busy at the restaurant, so I have never got his full attention!"

Therefore, as soon as Antonio realized he was to deal with a stubborn and grouchy person, he decided to change his way of doing and focused immediately in building up a sales network. He thought: "If Gerardo wants to spread his product all over the country I must help him in setting a nice sales organization. Therefore I should go back and evaluate how Gerardo had decided the pricing strategy, and how he dealt with the market positioning of his products."

Even if Antonio managed to obtain only very limited information from Gerardo, he came up with some suggestions in order to set up the sales organization. The consultant's suggestion was that it would be beneficial for the winery to focus on one or two products, which meant to delimit its wide product portfolio, and create then a value offering different from the other small producers.

#### 4.4.6 Dealing with Gut Feeling

One day Antonio pointed out: “This story doesn’t sound very likely.” Building up a sales organization caused disappointment and stress. The “The Winery” brand was almost unknown, but nonetheless Gerardo would never concede discounts or lower prices to any of the potential distributors or restaurants interested in buying his products. Moreover, Antonio received negative feedback from some distributors he interviewed and all of them claimed that they could not rely on Gerardo—he looked more like “an improviser” than a serious entrepreneur. Some of those distributors stated: “Gerardo looks like a small child who pretend to have the best wine ever...and making business with him is extremely difficult.”

Antonio spent considerable time in understanding Gerardo as a person, and often he asked himself why he was dealing with such a complicated person. For instance, Gerardo was totally uninterested in the use of new technologies such as CRM systems and social media, which Antonio considered as fundamental to develop the business of “The Winery”. Gerardo was not keen on using even emails as a promotional channel! Antonio pushed anyway himself in order to deal with Gerardo’s desire of running his business. And after a while Antonio was happy to share with Gerardo a positive result: the company’s turnover increased by 45% in just six months since his arrival. But Gerardo always pointed: “we are not growing enough!”

According to Antonio, the attempt of providing the winery with marketing and communication tools, business strategies and so on was neutralized by the brutal attitude of Gerardo. Soon, Gerardo started taking decisions without involving Antonio and he seemed to prefer tips and suggestions provided by his closest friends than those coming from the consultant he had just hired. “Gerardo was apparently interested in listening to me while talking about his winery. But then often he juxtaposes his friends opinions or his own opinion...sometimes he trusted much more the ‘rumors’ derived from the local wine producers than my suggestions...it looked like Gerardo wanted to protect himself and his comfort zone” “It became clear that Gerardo did not trust me too much when I

realized he followed an unknown logic to define the price level of his products.”

Interestingly, whenever Antonio tried to initiate a professional relationship with Gerardo, the latter was “busy” with something else. As reported by Antonio: “many times I tried to let Gerardo understand how important it is to engage with our customers but he always replied that the ‘fortune favors the bold’.” And in another occasion, it seemed that Gerardo was next to scream out Antonio’s head off: “I have struggled to convince Gerardo that a marketing plan would help him to get fresh information concerning products, competition, distribution...marketing and sales should talk to each other! You know what? When I managed to realize parts of the plan, his mood changed and he got very angry!”

#### 4.4.7 Epilogue

After a while, Antonio got tired and in agreement with Gerardo left. The most controversial aspect of his collaboration was the lack of support from Gerardo himself. “Gerardo just ‘goes ahead’ in the wine business without sharing any view with me! Even worst, he pretends I have to accept positively what he says and put in practice his ideas! Am I a threat or a consultant?” Even if Gerardo was paying Antonio for his service, the latter concluded that “I got the impression that I was his toy, he was only happy to block my initiatives. He wanted to demonstrate that I was wrong and he was right.” In fact, Gerardo did not like to review the material provided by Antonio: for instance, one of the first report Antonio delivered laid on his table for more than one year. Moreover, Gerardo did not like to sit around a table and discuss business-related topics. Although Antonio contributed substantially to increase the company’s turnover, he never received any acknowledgement from Gerardo. On the contrary, on one occasion, Gerardo claimed that Antonio’s compensation was too high! In 2019 Gerardo’s business was still running. According to the company’s website Gerardo was taking part in some national wine exhibitions. Gerardo was still continuing developing his business with persistence and he had recently refused to sell his company to an investor who offered about Euro two million to take it over. From a production and

sales point of view, the winery did not reach the results that Gerardo was hoping for. Although the turnover of the company has been increasing until 2019 and has reached about 130,000 Euro and the produced volumes increased from 20,000 bottles in 2016 to almost 30,000 in 2019, the costs are still higher and entail losses for the winery. As for sales management, the company is still facing troubles: Gerardo decided to develop more and more wine for long-term storage in order to avoid the extra costs for bottling. But this decision does not seem to result in increased sales. It would instead be enough to collect orders in advance, before bottling, to sell the wine in stock, as Antonio suggested many times.

## 4.5 Discussion: Which Passion Drives the Entrepreneurial Pursuit of “The Winery”?

This section discusses the issue of passion appearing in the case of “The Winery” and addresses the two research questions outlined in the introduction. Namely, the questions concerning whether Mr. Gerardo is a “passionate entrepreneur” and the nature of the passion driving him. We are particularly interested in whether Gerardo is driven by “entrepreneurial passion” in the sense of Cardon et al. (2009) or by some other kind of passion.

In the case of “The Winery”, and Gerardo in particular, passion assumes some quite specific and distinctive features, which also entail several manifestations of passion: there is clearly a strong element of self-fulfillment about the construction of the winery where Gerardo personally participated, and even an element of anger when he chose to cope with “Wine Coop”. These facets of passions are clearly difficult to capture by utilizing the notion of “entrepreneurial passion” of Cardon et al. (2009).

The literature points that running a company requires a set of capabilities, skills and knowledge, including analytical and practical abilities to deal with internal as well as external forces in order to develop the business. At the same time, there is evidence that entrepreneurs may ignore the general business practices such as the use of formal documents and

procedures (business plans, etc.) in order to run their business. In these cases, entrepreneurs follow their own logic, constituting a messy path filled by arbitrary decisions. These seem to be the features that characterize also Gerardo’s pursuit of his winery, with the caveat that they assume even extreme contours in the case featured above. Gerardo’s entrepreneurship can be termed “unconventional” to say the least, and unfolds through the interaction between two opposite but perhaps complementary characters: the dreamer, Gerardo, and the business consultant, Antonio.

Therefore, as for the passion driving Mr. Gerardo, he seems to be animated by a great deal of pure and brutal passion in the Diderotian sense, to a point that his passion for winemaking, food and the nature *takes over* his business pursuit in many ways. Mr. Gerardo only barely matches the established definitions of an entrepreneur, and this is only due to the fact that he established a new business and was willing to assume considerable entrepreneurial risks in doing it. Thus, in relation to our first question, Gerardo seems to be clearly more “passionate” than a classical entrepreneur.

But can an unconventional passionate entrepreneur still follow Cardon’s entrepreneurial passion? In the case of Gerardo it appears clear that he may have started a new business, but he seems to be unable and or maybe even unwilling to manage and develop it. Therefore, we can conclude that Mr. Gerardo lacks “entrepreneurial passion” in the sense of Cardon et al. (2005, 2009). An important contribution of this case is accordingly showing *a very clear separation, if not possibly even a conflict within the same individual, between the lukewarm and quasi-rational passion entailed by “entrepreneurial passion” and the brutal and fully emotional passion which animates certain entrepreneurs.*

The business consultant Mr. Antonio, who was involved by Gerardo to orchestrate some activities to materialize his dream of “The Winery”, comes in as the temporary manager. Antonio embodies some elements of “entrepreneurial passion”, even without being himself an entrepreneur in relation to “The Winery”. Moreover, Antonio seems to be in difficulty when it comes to influencing Gerardo’s choices and vision: Gerardo is in some ways blinded by his own gut-feeling and personal passion and refuses to consider the more analytical approach suggested by the consultant. Due to the disciplined and functional contents of “entrepreneurial

passion”, any encounter between this sort of passion and brutal passion suggests a conflict going on within Gerardo, like a meeting between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. Moreover, the story testifies that any potential fruitful interaction between the two forms of passion is hindered by the selfish, stubborn, unfocussed and introvert nature that accompany Gerardo’s brutal passion.

All in all, the entrepreneur’s apparent lack of interest in running the business suggests that he lacks “entrepreneurial passion”. He is purely and brutally passionate about winemaking, and for him the enterprise is just a means to cultivating his passion. Therefore, he needs someone else like the business consultant to take care of the business and the many tasks he considers as boring and disconnected from his pure passion for winemaking.

## **4.6 Conclusions: Beyond or Without “Entrepreneurial Passion”**

The case analyzed in this chapter shows two loci of entrepreneurial action and emotional drive: firstly, the individual driven purely by deep passion for his object of desire (wine making), who is formally the founder and owner of the start-up, but basically does not perform the business management tasks typical of an entrepreneur; and secondly, the individual who is actually trying to run the business through the owner’s mandate and does so driven by a more functionally oriented form of passion for entrepreneurship, even if he remains an hired consultant.

Passion in its more extreme form, in Diderot’s characterization, and also the dark side of entrepreneurial passion, in Cardon et al.’s notion, entails a tendency by the entrepreneur to focus only on the activities that are fully rewarding, generate pleasure and identify with her personality. Consequently, individuals exclusively driven by this kind of dark and extreme passions would not carry out at all those activities which are less pleasant or regard areas of the business that do not match their identity (Cardon et al. 2009).



All in all, the entrepreneur’s apparent lack of interest in running the business suggests that he lacks “entrepreneurial passion”. Rather, he is passionate about winemaking and being a winemaker, and for him the enterprise itself acts as means to cultivating his passion. Therefore, as previously noted, he acknowledges the need for someone else like the business consultant to take care of the business and the many tasks he considers as boring and disconnected from his pure passion for winemaking. The two “entrepreneurs” ideas of the wine, winemaking and of being a winemaker do not align with each other. Actually, this is not an uncommon outcome in many start-ups where passionate inventors are hooked up with venture capital’s management wizards.

So, what other conclusions and thoughts may be drawn and stimulated then?

Our case may seem a bit of an outlier: a not very successful new business in a very traditional market, driven by a very reluctant entrepreneur. At center stage is a man who wants to be in the business of wine, but does not want to pursue it as a business, at least not according to standard frames of how to run a business. A man who wants to be an entrepreneur, but not to commit to entrepreneurial activities, at least not in a business perspective. Who is this character then? Is he just a committed hobbyist aspiring to transform into an entrepreneur, but the idea of wine and of being a passionate winemaker of his region actually hinders entrepreneurship in proper terms?

Can it be that we have a case of entrepreneurial show and pretention, that is, a “fake” entrepreneur, who pretends to be an entrepreneur by hiring business consultants? Or, are we actually discerning something else beyond the veil of traditional perspectives? Maybe Gerardo is an “alternative” entrepreneur—more of an activist and symbolist—maybe a brand entrepreneur—not of the wine as a product but of Gerardo as a brand: he is obviously a man of the Marche region, a *bon viveur*, and defender of the *terroir*.

An important conclusion of our study is that passion, entrepreneurship and business do not necessarily go well together. It is possibly so that their harmonious interplay is a much more unusual event than we would anticipate. We dare even venture a heretical thought: “entrepreneurial passion” is probably a special case in itself, the true outlier among the

flora of all possible combinations “passion-entrepreneurship” that can emerge when lust and desire merge with business aspirations.

Therefore, another actor such as a business consultant or even a surrogate entrepreneur—that is, a person engaged to establish and manage a venture typically to compensate for the original entrepreneur’s missing competence, time or commitment (Lundqvist 2014)—may only under very special conditions fill the gap in the activities purposefully left aside by individuals only partly acting as entrepreneurs due to their extremely passion-driven approach. This other actor would contribute more functional entrepreneurial and managerial skills.

On this note, we may end our investigation by contemplating our previous, ad hoc and counter-intuitive interpretations of our passionate entrepreneur as a warning against uncritically resorting to ready-made constructs. For instance, applying the ready-made “entrepreneurial passion” construct may, instead of shedding more light on the passion-entrepreneurship link, actually reduce it into a black-box that further rationalizes both entrepreneurship and passion. The complex link between passion and entrepreneurship then becomes diluted into a functional relation whereby passion is just a property that ought to be added, balanced and structured to smoothly support the functioning of a business enterprise.

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