



Effective Mind Maps

Analyses of business mind maps by Chuck Frey, author of the Mind Mapping Software Blog

Type of map: Steps to marketing wine map

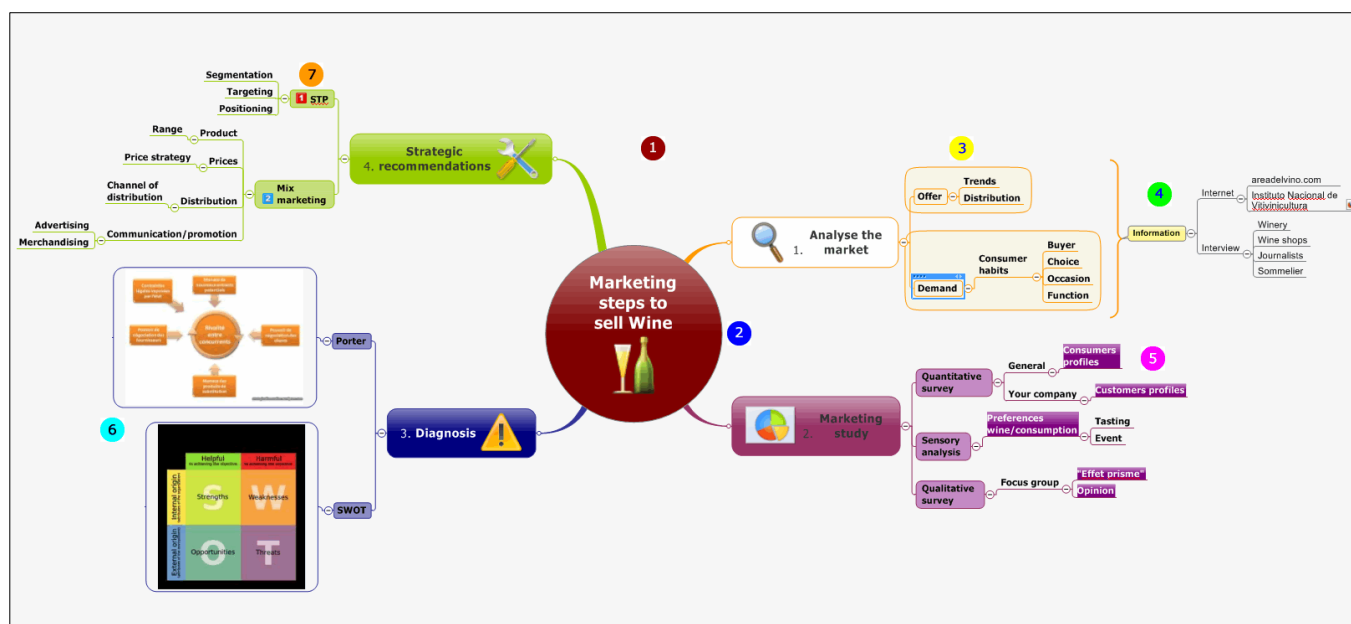
Software used to create: MindManager

Source: Mindjet's Maps for That gallery

URL: <http://www.mapsforthat.com/map.php?m=1463>

Overview

Once in a while, you see a mind map that makes you go, “Wow – that’s cool!” For me, this is one of those maps. It features an elegant design that communicates with impact, but doesn’t overwhelm with too much detail or too many adornments. Its content is clear and unambiguous, which makes it possible for anyone to look at it and immediately understand what it means. In this report, we’ll look at what works well in this excellent mind map, as well as a few areas where it could be improved.



1 Overall design

An effective mind map must do many things very well: First, it must contain a logically-arranged collection of topics and sub-topics that have a natural “flow” to them. They should use color and images in a way that supports the main message or topic of the map. If the map is intended to describe a process, that should be very clear to anyone viewing it that “this step comes first, this one is next,” and so forth. And, as I previously mentioned, its content and meaning should be abundantly clear to its intended audience. This mind map is a winner on all counts!



Often, it's the subtle details that make one mind map stand out versus another. In the case of this one, the author has wisely selected a burgundy color for the central topic, which is very close in color to a red wine – and excellent choice!

2 First-level topic images

Images add a lot to a mind map. Ideally, they are relevant to and reinforce the topics they're associated with. They draw attention, but not too much. For the most part, the images this map author selected are spot on.

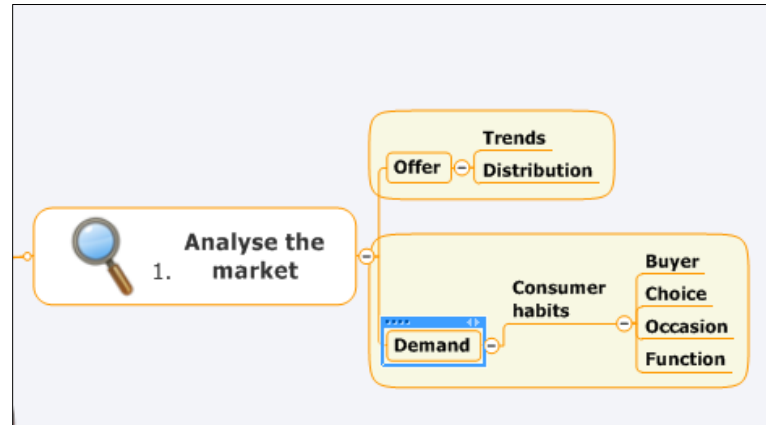


The one possible exception is the topic in the lower left section of the map entitled, “Diagnosis.” It uses the image of a caution sign. I would prefer something more like a doctor’s stethoscope or something else that does a better job of communicating the concept of “diagnosis.”

On the other hand, if the data in the charts displayed in this section of the map showed some significant signs of weakness in the market positioning of the company’s wine products, then the “caution” sign would be very appropriate.

3 Appropriate use of boundaries

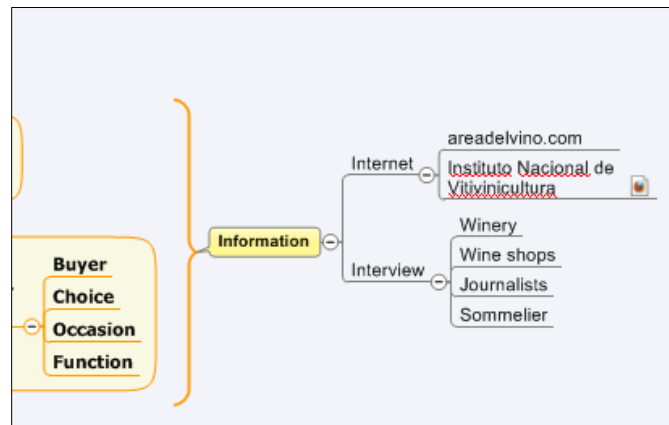
Boundaries should be used to draw emphasis to a specific section of a mind map. In this section of the marketing wine map, the “offer” and “demand” get this treatment, signaling to the reader that they are of key importance. What’s nice here is that the map author has used boundaries very selectively. As I’ve told you in past



reports, the worst thing you can do is to over-use them. This tends to confuse the reader, because he or she doesn’t know where to look first. When everything is emphasized, then nothing is. Fortunately, this map author uses boundaries wisely in this mind map. A little goes a long way.

4 Bracket used to depict additional information

In this section of the marketing wine mind map, the author had some additional information he wanted to share, but apparently thought it was of secondary importance. So he treated it as a floating topic, and then added a bracket to give it additional visual emphasis. Nicely done!

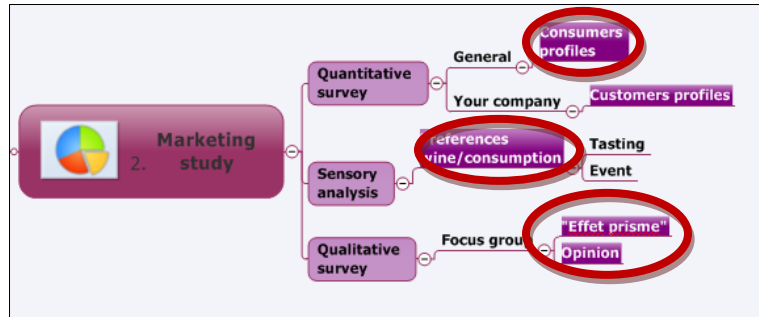


I only have one question about this treatment: Why couldn’t this be

incorporated as another subtopic of “analyse the market?” What I’m getting at is this: If you plan to use a floating topic in your mind map, be sure that you’re clear in your mind what your reason is for doing so, and – more importantly – that your target audience will understand it, too!

5 Inconsistent topic styling

In this section of the mind map, some subtopics are formatted with a purple background color and the topic text in white (see the examples circled in red), while others are lines with the topic words upon them. I looked at it closely, but couldn't figure out why

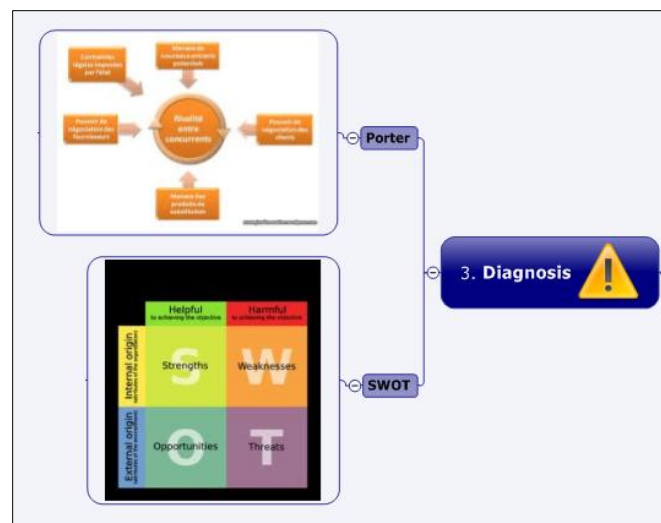


the map author would do this. It seems random to me. Therein lies one of the principal challenges of sharing mind maps with other people. The author may have had some reasoning for formatting these topics in this way, but we can't see his thinking. The context is lost, and so any embedded meaning he was trying to create by formatting these topics in this way is lost upon us.

It's always a good idea to include a legend with your mind map (as a floating topic) that explains what specific icons, symbols and topic shapes mean. That way, your intended meaning is preserved when other people look at your mind map.

6 Great use of images to provide supporting data

This branch of the mind map displays two images: One of a "Porter" analysis (Porter's 5 Forces, a framework for industry analysis and business strategy), and a SWOT diagram, which is used to analyze a business' strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. This is an excellent example of incorporating external data in a mind map visually, in a very attractive way.



This treatment serves to remind me to be aware of the possibilities of integrating external data – charts and graphs, for example – into my mind maps as images.

7 Priorities are clearly communicated

I like the way this map author used icons to clearly show that STP – segmentation/targeting/positioning – is the preferred approach to marketing wine, compared to mix marketing. The icons are colorful but don't command attention.

Just one suggestion for improvement: This section of the mind map tells us which marketing strategy has the highest priority, but it doesn't explain WHY. An additional subtopic or a note could be used to provide a brief explanation.



Always remember: When you're preparing a mind map, you have access to the context, the thinking behind each element of it and why you designed it the way you did. Your target audience can see only the map content. The context is almost totally lost upon them. You need to put yourself in their shoes, to think about it as someone in your target audience would. What assumptions can you make about what that person knows about the topic of your mind map, and the information it contains? What should you explain or elaborate upon?

I know a lot about marketing. But I have no idea why STP is a better strategy than mix marketing in the wine business. Perhaps there are some reasons that are very specific to the wine industry that makes STP work better. It would be nice to know that.

Questions?

Please contact Chuck Frey at chuck@innovationtools.com.

Please [visit the Mind Mapping Software Blog](#) for all of the latest news, trends and resources related to visual mapping.

You can also [follow Chuck Frey on Twitter](#) for even more insights and ideas.