A cross-cultural comparison of choice criteria for wine in restaurants

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Summary

When adressing the question of cultural differences in consumption behavior, researchers face both conceptual and methodological difficulties, particularly when it comes to defining the relevant "culti unit" (Douglas & Craig 1997) to be taken into account. The authors of this paper discuss these two difficulties and propose the Best-Worst method as a tool for comparing data from a cross-national survey on a sample of wine consumers from Australia (n=283), the UK (n=304) and France (n=147). The comparison concerns the choice criteria that are used when picking a wine in a restaurant. Results show differences between the countries, with a clear contrast between the French, on the one hand, and the Australians and Brtitish, on the other. They confirm the idea that the country, frequently used in cross-national surveys, may be a valid "culti unit" in cross-cultural research.

Key words : Cross-cultural research, choice criteria for wine, wine choice in restaurants, best-worst, Max Diff
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The internationalisation of markets reaches its limits in what are commonly called "cultural differences". This observation is particularly true in the field of food, in which countries considered as being culturally close (European Union) show pronounced differences in their diet habits and practice (Askegaard and Madsen, 1995;). Many authors have shown experimentally the extent to which individuals' eating habits and preferences are constructed from birth through to adulthood (Fischler, 1990; Rozin, 1990) under the influence of the different social groups to which they are exposed: familly, school, clubs, groups of friends and others..Food choices are also choices of identity, and are therefore markers of these cultural differences (Askegaard and Madsen, 1995; Rozin *et al.,* 1999, Trompenaars and Hampden Turner, 2007), which no doubt explains the considerable inertia of diet models and continuing cultural differences In food preferences.

Wine is an emblematic example of a product for which consumption is marked by local culture. Wine is a part of Judeo-Christian culture and has been a source of poetic and musical inspiration since times immemorial, being the subject of much literature and iconography since ancient times. According to Bartoli and Boulet (1989), "quality" of wines is a "social construction" in which producers, the trade, consumers and the state all play a part. In this respect, we often talk of the opposition between wine culture *à la Française* and that from the New World. In the crisis hitting the French wine sector in recent years, much has been made of the straightforward approach of British or Australian producers and the (overly) complex approach of their French counterparts.

Can cultural differences be measured through the choice criteria used by consumers in these three countries? It is known that choice is very much determined by the consumption context, and in each of these countries, studies show that choosing a wine is indeed a difficult task which is largely dependent on that context (at home, in a restaurant, in a bar, with an ordinary meal, with a socialised meal) and that consumers make use of quality indicators which are pretty much the same in most countries (Aurifeille *et al,* 2002). To make relevant comparisons, we therefore propose to study the choice of wine in a restaurant situation corresponding, in each of the three countries, to a convivial moment of sharing involving comparable expectations.

The hypothesis underlying this empirical study of 734 consumers in Australia, the UK and France, is that national belonging is strong enough to be an important explanatory factor of wine choice behaviour in restaurants, along with other major factors such as gender, age or the consumption frequency of individuals.

The method that has been chosen is therefore based on the classical attribute choice model of Fishbein and Ajzen (1975). The main objective of the study is to highlight noticeable differences in the relative importance given to these attributes by consumers in the three countries. The method used is the "best worst" method which offers advantages in comparing unmatched samples. Indeed, to highlight differences between groups, it must first be ensured that the measuring instruments are used in the same way for the results to be comparable.

This paper is organised as follows. The first section addresses the question of defining "culture" and the way of applying its traits and limits operationally. The second section presents the "best - worst" method, as yet little used in cross-cultural studies, and the results

of the surveys conducted in the three countries. The results are then discussed and conclusions are proposed, not only on the method but also on the managerial interest of this type of study.

Theoretical framework

What is meant by culture and cultural difference, and how can we account for them? What are the components, signs, processes and players involved?

Hofstede (1980) proposes two levels of definitions. The first defines culture as qualifying the state of "knowledge" applied to the domain of art and literature, on the level of an individual or a group.

The second acception refers to all the simple and human activities of everyday life – "greeting, eating, expressing or hiding feelings, keeping a certain distance from people, making love, respecting hygiene rules"…. Hofstede specifies that this is mental programming resulting from ongoing learning processes that are not always conscious in the different social environments to which individuals are exposed. We find here the notion of *habitus* defined by Bourdieu (1980); in the words of the sociologist, habitus is a set of durable, transposable dispositions resulting from the incorporation of experience, with this incorporation enabling the individual to act and to interpret the social world. The role of primary (childhood, adolescence) and secondary (adult) socialisation is very important in structuring the habitus. It is this second acception of culture that we will take as our reference here.

For Bourdieu, like for Hofstede, "programming" is done in milieus that are marked notably by socio-economic differences (the "social classes" of Bourdieu), regional particularities, family habits, institutional and public discourse.

The question is then raised as to the operational use of this cultural/habitus component. What is the most appropriate level for defining a homogenous sub-group of consumers, in particular in our societies with their multiple influences, and in which consumers are led to refer to several cultural models at the same time? There are many ongoing criticisms of cross-cultural studies. On the occasion of a literature review covering an eight-year period, Albaum and Peterson (1984) noted that, apart from the difficulty of setting up international protocols (and making them sufficiently explicit in the studies) most of the studies suffered from a lack of conceptualisation. Douglas and Craig (1997) took up the criticisms of Albaum and Peterson, and proposed to bring up the notion of the *culti unit,* defined on the basis of ethnic, racial, demographic and socio-economic characteristics, and within which a set of "memories, myths, values and symbols woven together in the popular consciousness" are shared (Featherstone 1990).

The *culti-unit* can be situated on the "macro" level, aggregating broad groups encompassing several countries (linguistic regions, north and south, developing, industrialised, etc…). These units can also be defined on the national level, with the country forming the culti-unit, on condition that we remain aware of the inter-penetration of cultures and the role of "micro cultures", as well as of the fact that consumers increasingly belong to diversified micro-cultures.

In this way, many studies aim to detect the points of convergence or divergence between countries or groups of countries. On the subject of beef, for example, Grunert (1997) noted that the model of perception of quality by French, German, Spanish or British consumers was

relatively homogenous, although the French stood out from the three other nationalities on certain points. Olsen *et al*. (2007) explored the relationships between fish consumption and the perceived convenience of consumption in Poland, Spain and the Netherlands. They showed convergences regarding the attributes used to define fish quality, but differences in particular concerning the focus on perceived convenience. A study by Bredhal (2001) compared attitudes to GM products in four countries (Denmark, Germany, UK and Italy), and seemed to show a difference in this respect between Italians and consumers in the northern European countries.

What stands out in particular in these studies, is the choice made by researchers to define the country as the culti-unit, no doubt justified by the convenience of the definition and of implementation of the survey protocols. It is also due to the national approach to markets which is preferred by companies, with the underlying question being whether supply should be adapted to each different country or not.

Wine is a product that can lend itself to interesting cross-cultural analyses. Influenced by the Bourdieu-style structuralist approach of French society, Bartoli and Boulet (1989) showed the extent to which wine consumption was the result of a collective learning process which has marked the French deeply and lastingly, associating the question of wine quality with product origin and the values attached to this notion: local agricultural and climate specifics, winemaking traditions and collective management of the asset of the regional appellation. One result of this collective learning process has been to define the quality of the product on the basis of its production attributes, rather than referring to its purely market qualities.

Although this "French model" may have imposed itself on the worldwide market, it is having difficulty remaining competitive today in countries that do not produce commercial quantities of wine (such as the UK) or have recently become producers (such as Australia or California). Consumers in these countries are more and more interested in wine, but have not been exposed to this "culture" of the *terroir*.[1] Their model tends to be that of intrinsic product quality as testified by its consistency of style and identified by the brand, merchantable quality and value for money. This diverging vision of food quality is so strong that it leads to major clashes in international negotiations at the WTO. On the one hand, there are the advocates of *terroi-based* quality, with France in the front line, and on the other the proponents of the commercial brand, generally headed by the English-speaking countries who consider the argument of the *terroir* as obstructing fair competition.

A few cross cultural studies on consumption and attitudes toward wine bear testimony to this cultural particularity of the French, which seems to remain present among younger age groups. For example, young French students express greater actual and self-perceived knowledge of wine than their German or American colleagues (D'Hauteville et Goldsmith, 1997).

We can therefore expect to find pronounced contrasts in the importance given to wine choice criteria between French consumers and those in English-speaking countries.

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[1] Indeed, it is interesting to note that this word is used in French, and does not have a precise translation in other languages.

Methodological choices

The restaurant as the field of study

We have elected to compare the choice of wine by consumers in the situation of meals in restaurants.

Although this is an increasingly frequent consumption situation,[2] restaurant consumption is a subject that has been somewhat neglected by studies which tend to focus more generally on the rise of out-of-home consumption or of fast food. Some studies have been dedicated to the experience of out-of-home consumption, however, reaching beyond the dichotomy between the "meal as a pleasure" and "meal as a chore" to take account of all the diverse consumption situations: Warde and Martens compared the satisfaction derived from a meal in a restaurant and at a friend's house (Warde and Martens, 1998), and showed, for example, that going to different restaurants could respond to a desire for social distinction, with those people with great economic and cultural capital having particularly varied behaviour when it came to going to restaurants (Warde and Martens, 2000). Fantasia (1995) and Badot (2000) showed that it was the search for something different, to break away from traditional meal codes, that could explain the taste among young people for fast food. Sirieix and Filser (2003) proposed a typology of the components of the value of out-of-home consumption by combining the three value dimensions proposed by Holbrook (1999) and the theories of variety-seeking and re-enchantment; they showed the diversity of the forms of valuation of the restaurant eating experience that could be identified.

The restaurant has also been included in general studies covering, for example, the exploratory behaviour of consumers, as one of the environments in which choices are made (Raju, 1980).

Finally, while several descriptive studies have identified factors of satisfaction or dissatisfaction in restaurant experiences (Andersson and Mossberg, 2004) or of loyalty to restaurants (Clark and Wood, 1999), few academic studies have been conducted into the choices made in the restaurant. Baumgartner and Steenkamp simply included the item "When I go to the restaurant, I find it safer to order dishes I am already familiar with" in their scale of exploratory behaviour tendencies (Baumgartner and Steenkamp, 1996). In particular, to our knowledge, only one academic study (Durham *et al.,* 2004) has looked into wine choice in restaurants. However, the restaurant is an interesting context to study because it is very different from the sale outlet context: the choice is limited by the wine list, consumers generally do not see the bottle before it is opened, and the choice may be individual or collective depending on social interactions with the waiter or other people at the table.

Choice of the best-worst method

Measurements of attribute importance based on individuals' declarations on scales of the "not very important at all – very important" type have the advantage that administration is easy. They are familar to the respondents and make it possible to implement the classical attribute model quite conveniently. Through combining the importance of the attribute with its performance, we should be able to predict consumer preference. However, many authors have stressed the limits of this approach, and the criticisms are many. In particular, this type of

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[2] In France in 2006, for example, 59% of people had lunch out of the home (98% in Paris) and food services represented turnover of €74.5 billion (Gira Sic Conseil, Néo-Restauration, May 2007)

scale can be subject to cultural bias, as certain respondents or groups of respondents may have a particular tendency to give higher or lower scores than others (deJong et al., 2007).

Many alternative methods have been proposed to improve the discriminant and predictive value of the measurements. In a recent article, Chrzan and Golovashkina (2006) made a comparative evaluation of six methods for measuring the declared importance of attributes in the light of four criteria: administration time, ability to discriminate between attributes, ability to segment groups of individuals and predictive value. Of these methods, the Maximum Difference (Max Diff) or "best worst" choice of extremes (Finn and Louvière, 1992) appeared better than the others on all criteria other than administration time, which is distinctly longer. Cohen and Neira (2003) tested this approach by comparing it with a classical method of attribute importance measurement in a cultural context, and confirmed its superiority. Goodman et al. (2005) applied it interestingly in a study into preferences in wine. This method has been shown to remove cultural biases, since repondents choose the "best" and "worst" attributes wothout utilizing any scales.

Main results: importance given to the different criteria by the best-worst method

The sample of respondents (Australia *n*= 283, UK *n* = 304, France *n* = 147) corresponded to a convenient selection of a population that had been to the restaurant at least once in the previous month. The instructions given to the investigators were to respect a balanced proportion of men and women and of age groups.

Table 1 : Structure of Sample

		France	UK	Australia	total
Gender	M	93	151	134	378
	F	54	153	138	345
	Unknown			11	11
Total		147	304	283	734
Age	18-24 yrs	29	0	30	59
	25-40	43	76	91	210
	41-55	44	75	92	211
	56-64	19	77	50	146
	Over 65	12	76	20	108
Total		147	304	283	734

Thirteen choice criteria were compared by the persons being surveyed, using the best-worst method, on the basis of their last experience in a restaurant (Table 2). These criteria were chosen based on interviews and pre-tests of attributes in choosing wine in restaurants.

Table 2 : Wine choice criteria at a restaurant

1 Alcohol level below 13°	*6. Suggested by another at the table*	*11. Promotion card on the table*
2 Waiter recommended	*7. Available by the glass*	*12. Available in half bottles (375ml),*
3 I matched it with my food	*8. Try something different*	*13. I read about it, but never tasted*
4. I have had the wine before and liked it	*9. Varietal*	
5. Suggestion on the menu	*10. Region*	

Initially, these criteria were produced and validated on Australian consumers. A balanced incomplete block design of type (13,13, 4, 1) was adopted to distribute the attributes into several groups of choices presented to the consumers. In this way, the 13 attruibutes were used to construct 13 tables (blocks), each comprising 4 criteria. Each attribute appeared the same number of times, which is to say four, and each pair of attributes appeared the same number of times, which is to say one.

The consumers had to choose from each table, representing one of the thirteen choice tasks, the criterion they considered most important in their choice of wine, and the least important criterion. Table 3 presents an example of a choice task.

Table 3 : Example of a choice task

Least important	*Choice criteria*		*Most important*
☐	*1*	*Variety*	☐
×	*2*	*Alcohol content level under 13°*	☐
☐	*3*	*I have read about the wine*	☐
☐	*4*	*Suggestion on the menu*	×

Analysis by criterion

The level of importance of each choice criterion is the result of the difference between the number of times the criterion was chosen as being the most important (best) and the number of times it was considered as being the least important (worst). Figure 1 offers a descriptive view of the (B-W) scores of each choice criteria for the three samples.

Fig.1 : The relative importance scores of choice criteria

This raw score depends on the number of respondents and the frequency with which each attribute appears in the sets of choices. It is therefore preferable to use a standardised score to compare groups of respondents that are different in terms of the number of individuals in them.

The level of importance of each attribute equals to the total BEST minus total WORST (total Best-Worst) of the attribute. The standardised score of the attribute was obtained by dividing the total Best-Worst by the number of respondents and by 4, the frequency of appearance of each attribute in all choice sets. The standardisation allows different groups of respondents to be comparable.

The positive and negative scores are merely interval level differences on the same scale. The higher the number, the more important, the lower the number the less important. The range of scores also varies from one country to another. For each country, we therefore calculated a weighted standardised score going from 0 for the score of the item chosen the least often to an upper value of 100 for the item chosen the most often. This standardised score now represents the probability of an item being chosen as 'best'.

Table 4 Standardised scores of choice criteria

	Australia (*n* =283)			UK (*n* = 304)			France (*n*=147)		
Rank	items	B-W std *	Std weight **	items	B-W std *	Std weight **	items	B-W std *	Std weight **
1	(4) Tasted before	.572	100	(4) Tasted before	.592	100	(3) Match with food	.634	100
2	(3) Match with food	.354	81.4	(3) Match with food	.300	71.2	(4) Tasted before	.427	81.6
3	(8) To try a different wine	.276	74.7	(5) Suggested by another	.225	63.7	(13) I read about it	.236	64.8
4	(13) Read about the wine	.186	66.9	(8) To try a different wine	.131	54.5	(2) Waiter recommended	.172	59
5	(10) Region	.136	62.7				(7) Available by the glass	.167	58.6
6	(5) Suggested by another	.126	61.9				(5) Suggested by another	.09	51.8
7	(9) Variety	.034	53.9						
8	(7) Available by the glass	.001	51.1						
11							(9) variety	-.238	8
12	(12)Available in half bottles	-.458	11.8	(12) Available in half bottles	-.275	14.4	(1) Alcohol content under 13%	-.264	4.1
13	(1) Alcohol content under 13%	-.596	0	(1) Alcohol content under 13%	- .421	0	(5) Suggestion on the menu	-.291	0

* : individual score "Best – Worst for the attribute : (B-W)/n*, n=number of respondents,

** Standardised score (Std weight) with lowest score as the base and the highest score = 100

Important attributes for all groups

Items 3 (*Match with food*) and 4 (*Already tasted it*) were deemed to be the most important criteria in all three countries. Items 6 (*Proposed by someone at the table*) and 13 (*Read information but never tasted it*) were also criteria with a positive score in all three countries. The *Match with food* criterion got twice the score in France that it had in the United Kingdom or Australia. In contrast, respondents in the latter two countries gave much more importance than the French to the fact they had already tasted the wine they chose. The Australians and French attached greater importance, meanwhile, than respondents in the United Kingdom, to the fact they had read information about the wine. The British preferred the fact that the wine had been proposed by one of those at the table.

Attributes rejected by all the groups

Items 1 (*Alcohol content under 13°*), 5 (*Suggestion on the menu*) and 12 (*Available in half bottles*) were considered the least important choice criteria in the three countries. However, there was a difference between the groups once again: the French considered even more than

the other respondents that the *Suggestion on the menu* criterion was not important. The Australians attached even less importance than those in the other countries to the fact that the wine should be available in half bottles.

Attributes evaluated differently depending on the groups

Two items were considered important by the French: the fact that the wine was available by the glass and the recommendation of the waiter. The former item was neutral for the Australians and without importance for the British, and the latter without importance for both the other groups. However, the Australians and British alike valued item 8 (*To try a different wine*), unlike the French.
Another item opposed the French even more sharply than the other two groups: item 9, *Grape variety*, which got a very negative score in France, while being slightly negative in Australia and slightly positive in the United Kingdom.
Finally, the French and the other two groups were also opposed on two other criteria, rather surprisingly: the region seemed to have very little importance for the French, compared with the other two groups, and a wine being indicated on the table as a promotion had a slightly positive score in France, in contrast with the other two groups.

Factor analysis

A principal component analysis was run with a varimax rotation to see which of the attributes might be related. Five factors with an eigenvalue greater than 1 explaining 61% of variance The first three explained 43.6% of the variance (table 5).

Table 5 Factor loadings

Factor Loadings

	1	2	3	4	5
1_Alc Level < 13%	0,020	-0,097	-0,113	-0,771	0,176
2_Waiter reccomend	0,070	**0,743**	-0,072	-0,056	0,093
3_Matching Food	-0,677	0,028	-0,310	0,201	-0,070
4_Tried before	0,038	-0,245	-0,160	**0,617**	**0,489**
5_Suggest in Menu	0,244	**0,664**	-0,300	0,163	-0,024
6_Suggest by another in table	-0,168	0,247	0,008	0,104	**0,736**
7_Available by Glass	**0,351**	-0,662	-0,177	-0,124	-0,101
8_Try something different	0,090	-0,116	**0,757**	0,080	-0,204
9_Varietal	-0,369	0,010	0,064	0,180	-0,613
10_Region	-0,492	-0,012	0,029	0,099	-0,440
11_Promotion Card on Table	**0,804**	0,040	-0,118	0,113	-0,037
12_Available half bottle	0,192	-0,387	-0,278	-0,569	-0,054
13_I read about it	-0,032	0,002	**0,778**	0,084	0,083

Interpretation of the factors

F1 (Promotion) opposes a "rational choice" dimension (*Match with food(-0.677)*, *Region (-0.492)* and *Variety (-0.369)*) with a practical, economic dimension (*"Promotion" card on the table (0.804)* and to a lesser extent *Available by the glass (0.351)*): on the one hand, there are the consumers who give importance to the meal and the wines, and on the other those who want their choice to be simplified for them, or do not want to consume too much wine, or spend too much on it.

F2 opposes the "looking for a recommendation" dimension (*Recommendation from the waiter (0.743)* and *Suggestion on the menu (0.664)*) with an "available in small formats" dimension (*Available by the glass (-0.662)* and to a lesser extent *Available in half bottles (-0.387)*): on the one hand are the consumers looking for an opinion or advice, and on the other those who prefer to consume less (for health or financial reasons).
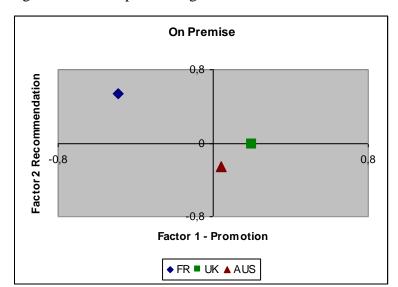
Fig. 2 : Countries positioning on F1 and F2

F3 (correlated with F1 in France and the UK) is mainly defined by the "looking for something new" dimension (*Read information but never tried it (0.778)*, and *To try a different wine (0.757)*), opposed to a dimension composed of two low-weight criteria: *Match with food (-0.31)* and *Suggestion on the menu (-0.30).*
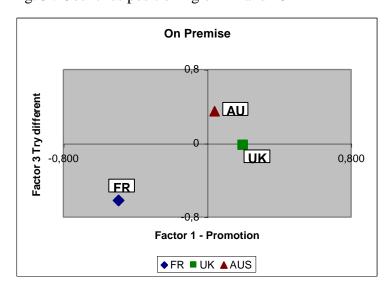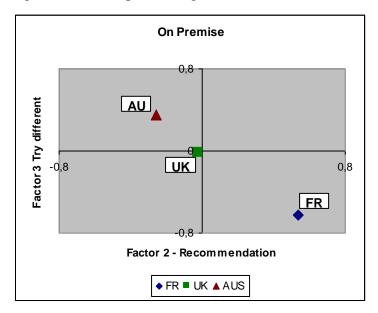
Fig. 3 : Countries positioning on F1 and F3

Fig. 4 : Countries positioning on F2 and F3

F4 seems determined by a "not drink too much" dimension (*alcohol content <13°* and *Available in half bottles*) opposed to looking for a wine that has already been tried and enjoyed (item 4). Finally, F5 opposes mainly the suggestion made by someone at the table and a rational choice based on the *Grape variety (-0.613)* and the *Region (-0.440)*.

Position of the different countries

Analysis of the position of the different countries was carried out on the basis of their weights on the various factors. Large differences appeared between the groups, and more precisely between France on the one hand, and Australia and the United Kingdom on the other (Fig 2, 3 and 4).

France was clearly positioned on the "rational choice" dimension for factor 1 (*Match with food*, *Region* and *Grape variety)*, on the desire for a recommendation dimension for factor 2 (*Recommendation by the waiter* and *Suggestion on the menu*), and on the two dimensions mentioned previously for F1 and F2 on factor 3: *Match with food* and *Suggestion on the menu.* On average, the French seemed to emphasize choosing a wine to go with the dishes that had been chosen, and recommendations (those of the waiter in particular).

The weights in the United Kingdom were generally low: on the practical, economic dimension for F1 (*"Promotion" card on the table* and *Available by the glass*) the weight was 0.2 and on the other two factors, the weights were close to zero. An analysis taking account of different individual variables (age, income, consumption frequency) will show whether individual differences appear within the United Kingdom group.

Australia was positioned on the looking for something new dimension of F3 (*Read information but never tasted it* and *To try a different wine*), and to a lesser extent on the available in small formats dimension of F2 (*Available by the glass* and *in half bottles*).

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Influence of individual-based variables

> ➢ Influence of consumption frequency

The results showed no linear relation between low, medium and high consumption frequencies. In France, those people with low consumption frequency gave very similar answers to those with the highest consumption frequencies. They placed the same emphasis on the "rational choice" and "looking for a recommendation" dimensions. Those people with medium consumption frequency had the highest scores on the dimension comprising the *Match with food* and *Suggestion on the menu* criteria, and avoided novelty. In the United Kingdom, the people with medium and high consumption frequencies had similar answers on the practical, economic dimension of F1, and there was no difference on the other factors in relation to frequency. In Australia, the people with high consumption frequency had the highest scores on the practical, economic dimension of F1, and the people with medium frequencies on the available in small formats dimension of F2 and on looking for something new.

> ➢ Influence of income

Three income groups were created in each country, based on the mean income in each of them (below mean income, mean income and above mean income). Once again, the results did not show a linear relation between low, middle and high incomes.

In France, the people with the highest income placed the emphasis on the "rational choice" dimension, and less on the dimension encompassing the *Match with food* and *Suggestion on the menu* criteria than the other groups. However, the lowest and highest incomes both gave importance to the "recommendation" dimension, unlike the middle income group.

In the United Kingdom, the low and middle incomes had similar profiles on the practical, economic dimension (*"Promotion" card on the table* and *Available by the glass*) and the highest incomes privileged looking for something new.

In Australia, a linear relation appeared on the practical, economic dimension: the higher the income, the less important this dimension. The low and middle incomes also gave greater importance to the available in small formats dimension.

> ➢ Influence of age

Several differences appeared between the age groups (18-24, 25-40, 41-55, over 55).

In France, getting a recommendation was important for the under 55s, but not for older consumers. In the United Kingdom and Australia, the practical, economic dimension was more important for young consumers. In Australia, the oldest consumers were those who were the least attracted by looking for something new and who were looking for smaller formats (glass or half bottle).

> ➢ Influence of gender

The gender differences were large. In particular, Australian women were closer to British women than to Australian men on the first factor.

Discussion and conclusion

The hypothesis of a contrast between the French and consumers in the English-speaking countries would appear to be confirmed, in the light of the criteria emphasized by the different

groups. The supposed cultural difference of the French therefore finds interesting empirical validation in this study, and it does therefore provide validation of the national level as culti-unit.

The explanation of the differences shown between the countries could be the subject of several hypotheses. The first concerns the weight of restaurant-going practices: in France, a recommendation by the waiter seems an important factor, while the choice tends to be that of the client alone in the English-speaking countries. These results confirm those of the study by Durham *et al.*, (2004) observing that in the United States, the first factor in the choice of wine in restaurants is the menu, while interaction with the waiter is infrequent. Ultimately, the differences observed on the wine choice criteria would seem to be a reflection of the social rituals involved in situations as particular as those in a restaurant. Besides, the nature of the restaurant may have an impact on choice. It might be the case that choice attributes are affected by the social environment of the restaurant. Future research could compare several types of restaurants.

A second hypothesis concerns the structure of the offering: rejection of the grape variety as an important criterion in France is related not only to the power of signs of quality, but also to relatively limited supply of varietal wines there, unlike in Australia and the United Kingdom. A recent study of a representative sample of the French population showed that only a small minority of French people were familiar with the varietal concept. Only 17% of respondents were capable of citing one or several varieties correctly (Aurier *et al.,* 2007).

However, this study does not quite escape the criticisms already made by Albaum and Peterson (1984) and Douglas and Craig (1997) concerning the question of the choice of attributes: the list was validated in Australia. Are the relevent attributes the same for France and the United Kingdom? This question is all the more important in that the result could be sensitive to the collection of attributes proposed (Sharma and Weathers, 2003). The non-equivalence of measurements could then limit the general validity of the results. The problem is partly resolved by the "best-worst" method regarding each individual attribute, but not necessarily when all the attributes as a whole are taken into consideration.

Also, the best-worst method does not avoid the bias inherent to declarative methods: difficulty of translating items when making cross-cultural comparisons, or of comparisons between samples with structures that are not comparable. Nor does it eliminate the question of "desirability" biases.

It should also be emphasized that while the empirical approach to the cross-cultural question can give interesting results in the framework of marketing research, explanation of the differences that are observed refers to interpretations of the history and collective learning processes of the cultural groups being compared, requiring knowledge and skills that may be outside those of the researcher's discipline. It could therefore be suggested that cross-cultural studies should be carried out by multi-disciplinary teams including managers, historians, sociologists and anthropologists.

In conclusion, this study has shown a hierarchy of wine choice attrributes in restaurants in three countries, revealing large differences relating to the nationality of the samples. However, it seems necessary to us to compare these results with accounts of restaurant

consumption experiences coupled with observations, to reach a better understanding of wine choice criteria in restaurants and their combination with each other.

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