

An Assessment of Wine Knowledge Amongst Global Consumers

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Introduction

Product knowledge is an important variable in consumer behaviour research because it has been found to affect the entire consumer decision making process. This multi-national study sought to understand consumer product class knowledge with regards to the specific product of wine. The three dimensions of consumer product class knowledge (i.e. objective knowledge, subjective knowledge and familiarity) were measured in this study.

Research Hypotheses

Based on a review of previous product knowledge literature, the following six hypotheses were developed:

- H1 The level of objective wine knowledge is positively associated with the level of subjective wine knowledge.*
- H2 The level of objective wine knowledge is positively associated with the level of wine familiarity.*
- H3 The level of objective knowledge is not related to the consumer's nationality.*
- H4 The level of objective knowledge is not related to the consumer's gender.*
- H5 The level of objective knowledge is positively associated with the consumer's level of education.*
- H6 The level of objective knowledge will be associated with the store choice.*

Research Method

Consumers who were in the act of purchasing wine were surveyed in six cities in New Zealand, Australia, the UK and the US by means of an interviewer administered questionnaire. The interviews were conducted in various supermarkets, general liquor stores and specialty wine stores over a 7-day period in each city. Data was collected over a period from May to October 2007 and a total of 399 interviews were completed (an overall response rate of 62%).

A test was developed to measure objective wine knowledge whilst items from previous studies were adopted in order to measure subjective wine knowledge. The consumer's familiarity with wine was measured using Likert scales to record the frequency of wine drinking and wine purchasing behaviour. The collected data were analysed in SPSS using a series of one-way analysis of variance tests.

Results

Consumers' who self-assessed their subjective level of wine knowledge to be high were also found to have a correspondingly high level of objective wine knowledge, thus supporting *H1*. Similarly *H2* was supported as the consumer's level of familiarity with wine was found to have a positive relationship with their level of objective knowledge. *H3* was only partially supported, as the objective wine knowledge of Australian consumers was found to be significantly higher than that of New Zealand, British or American consumers. Males were found to have significantly higher wine knowledge than females, thus *H4* was not supported.

A significant positive relationship between the consumer's level of education and their objective wine knowledge was found, supporting *H5*. Consumers who purchased wine in specialty stores were found to have significantly higher wine knowledge than those who purchased it in supermarkets or general liquor stores, thus partially supporting *H6*.

Implications

This paper has advanced theoretical knowledge by confirming that the three constructs of consumer product knowledge (i.e. objective knowledge, subjective knowledge, and familiarity) are correlated, at least with regards to the product class of wine. One of the key findings was the identified relationship between the consumer's self-ascribed wine knowledge and their objective knowledge. The majority of previous research has only measured the single construct of subjective knowledge to indicate overall product class knowledge, and this finding provides empirical evidence that such a methodology is acceptable. In addition, the findings also confirmed a relationship between objective knowledge and product familiarity. This finding suggests that the measurement of familiarity could also be used in future studies as an equally acceptable indicator of wine knowledge. A positive relationship was also found between the frequency of wine drinking and the level of wine knowledge was identified, but the direction of this relationship was not examined in this study.

Other findings may have practical implications for wine producers and marketers. For example, the provision of detailed oenological information on wine labels may be more appropriate for consumers in some international markets than in others, and may also be more suitable for male wine consumers than for females. Similarly, wine retailers should tailor the information and advice they offer to match the typical knowledge level of the wine consumers who shop in their particular type of store.