# LESSONS FROM ITALIAN YOUNGSTERS: HOW TO DEAL WITH WINE COMPLEXITY BY MARKETING MANAGEMENT[1]

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**Abstract**

Factors and constraints affecting wine purchasing decisions are numerous, since wine is extraordinarily rich in both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, material and immaterial characteristics, as well as functional and symbolic traits which influence the quality perceived by consumers. These conditions reflect themselves in the complexity of consumer purchasing behaviour for wine. The main objective of this study is to outline the traits of the cognitive complexity of wine, with the aim of understanding the awareness of young Italian wine and beer consumers and to examine their consumption and purchase habits. Using both qualitative and quantitative research techniques, the findings highlight that, even if wine belongs to the country culture heritage and represents an inherent element of people life, young consumers are quite confused about it and a cognitive mismatch reduces their capability to grasp the meaning of all product information attributes provided by wine producers and marketers. The survey highlights that the product-related "cognitive complexity" may prevent young consumers from buying and drinking wine compared with other "easier" alcoholic beverage, such as beer. The results suggest that wine producers and marketers should invest more in the "cognitive simplification" of the product to convey young consumer preferences toward wine, and eventually increase sales.

## 1. Introduction

Numerous studies (Garber et al., 2003; Gil et al., 2000; Grunert, 1995 Grunert et al., 1996; Ismail et al., 2001; Issanchou, 1996; Nielsen et al., 1998; Prescott and Bell, 1995; Prescott et al., 2002; Sollheim and Lawless, 1995; Torjusen et al, 2001) have emphasized the complexity of variables characterizing the purchase and consumption of both food and beverages, as well as the multiplicity of attributes influencing the quality evaluation process of consumers. Far from considering only the organoleptic characteristics, consumers evaluate the quality of food and beverages also on the basis of non-physical dimensions. They are in fact driven by health-related, cultural, social, environmental, hedonistic and ethical concerns that go beyond the judgement on mere product texture and refer to its cognitive and symbolic dimensions.

Several studies (Chaney, 2000; Charters and Pettigrews, 2006; Howard and Stonier, 2002; Jenster and Jenster, 1993; Koewn and Casey, 1995; Lockshin and Hall, 2003; Mattiacci et al., 2006; Orth and Krška, 2002; Zampi, 2003; Zanni et al., 2005) have highlighted the complexity of consumer purchasing behaviour for wine and have pointed out a variety of factors which influence consumer quality perception and preferences. Factors and constraints affecting wine purchasing decisions are numerous, since wine is extraordinarily rich in both intrinsic and extrinsic attributes, material and immaterial characteristics, as well as functional and symbolic traits. The paper focuses on the informative attributes of wine and how they affect the purchasing behaviour of young consumers.

## 2. Literature review

Quality has been found to play a major role in the consumer purchasing behaviour for wine (Hauck, 1991). Due to inherent difficulty in defining quality univocally (Garvin, 1984; Steekamp, 1989), the comprehensive management/marketing literature has concentrated on factors which determine the formulation of a qualitative judgement on the part of consumers (Garvin, 1984; Olson and Jacoby, 1972), as have scholars devoted to studying the wine business.

Consumers evaluate products based on intrinsic and extrinsic cues (Grunert, 1997; Olson and Jacoby, 1972; Zeithaml, 1988). While the former belong to the substance of the product and may be revealed exclusively through processes which alter its physical texture (in the case of wine, for example, sugar content), the latter do not constitute its substance, since they are physically separated from it (typically, in the case of wine, the label) (Orth and Krška, 2002).

Literature shows how consumer behaviour is deeply influenced by extrinsic cues. These are signs used by consumers to make their comprehensive quality judgement on goods. They influence both expected quality – formed in the pre-purchase phase – and quality perceived after consumption (Rao and Monroe, 1989). The usefulness of these signs lies in their informative content and the quality-predictive value they have for consumers (De Magistris, 2004). In conditions of imperfect information about product quality, consumers use extrinsic cues, mostly when intrinsic ones are difficult to ascertain, such as in the case of food products (Fotopoulos ad Krystallis, 2003; Grunert et al., 1996; Nosi and Zanni, 2004) and beverages, and so it is with wine (Zanni et al., 2005).

According to a well know taxonomy (Nelson, 1970), product attributes may be classified as research, experience and trust. Research attributes can be defined as informative stimuli that consumers associate with product quality and which may be ascertained through the senses before purchase (colour, labels, price, brand). Experience attributes can be ascertained exclusively after purchase (flavour, taste). Trust attributes cannot be ascertained at all or only at high costs (chemical composition, transformations undergone during production processes, etc).

Wine belongs in the same measure as any other food-stuff or beverage to the category of "experience goods". That is, consumers' capacity to assess quality prior to purchase is limited; since most product attributes can be assessed only during consumption. This means that, in the decision-making process of wine purchase, trust (or credence) cues prevail. Such a condition has spurred producers to turn trust attributes into search attributes to be conveyed to consumers (Zanni et al., 2005). Numerous information cues play a major role in purchasing behaviour for wine; packaging (front and back labels, bottle, cask, etc) (Charters et al., 2000; Gluckman, 1986; Orth and Malkevitz, 2006; Santini et al., 2006); price (Jenster and Jenster, 1993; Koewn and Casey, 1995) place of origin (Balestrini and Gamble, 2006; d'Hauteville et al., 2006; O'Neil and Whatmore, 2000; Orth et al., 2005; Thode and Muskulka, 1998); sales material (Chaney, 2000); brand (Beverland, 2004, 2005; Lockshin et al., 1997; Novak et al., 2006).

Furthermore, since the quality-predictive value of credence attributes is based on the credibility and reliability of information which the consumer is able to gather before and during the purchase process, wineries endow their offerings with further external information (denominations, certifications, traceability labels, medals, etc.). These attributes are related to evaluation processes carried out by third parties, without a lucrative interest in the business activity of the producer. The more the consumers trust and rely on the information source, the more the information influences their quality expectations, and therefore their purchasing decision (Grunert et al., 2000). Hence, control organisms on production codes, consortia, specialized press, expert jury panels, wine guides, etc. increase their importance. In the wine industry, they represent a more and more relevant informative tool for inexpert consumers who appear to be highly confused by the multiplicity of available products. Previous studies have postulated the relevance of such information cues on wine consumer behaviour: awards (Orth and Krška, 2002); wine guide ratings (Odorici and Corrado, 2004); denominations (Barham, 2000).

However, despite the multiplication of sources consumers can use to reduce their information asymmetry, a cognitive gap persists. The attempt of wine producers and marketers to confer multiple information contents to products ends up in confusing and discouraging purchase.

Gluckman (1986) has pointed out that consumers fail to differentiate wine brands and tend to mix them up with other product attributes such as grape variety or region. This holds true especially for the young consumer who, according to our study, seems to be perplexed in the face of the many cognitive aspects of wine. As underlined henceforth, they confuse product brands with winery brands, grape varieties with denominations, places of origin with producers' names, and so on.

## 3. Objectives and Methodology

The main objective of this study is to outline the traits of the cognitive complexity of wine evidenced in the literature, with the aim of understanding the awareness of young Italian wine and beer consumers and to examine their consumption and purchase habits. In order to achieve this goal, we have investigated the following aspects:

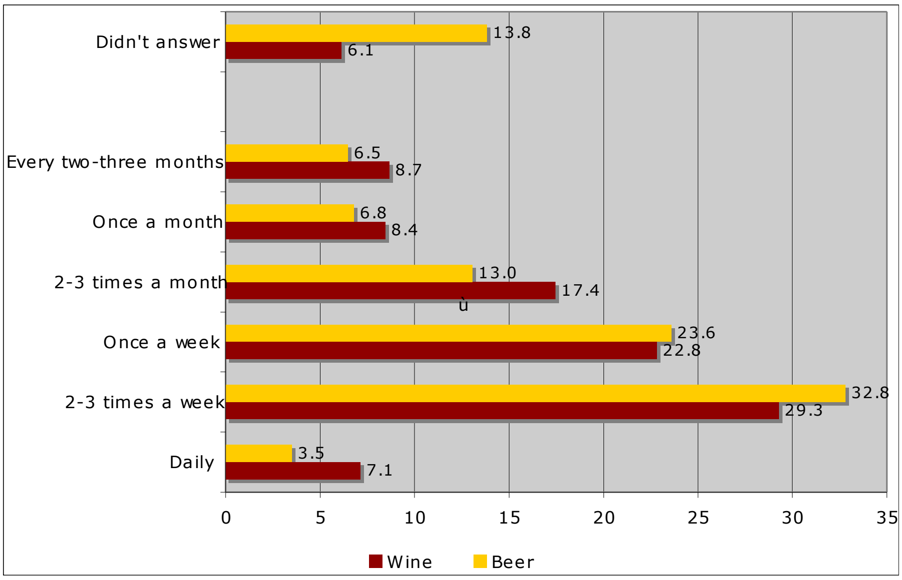
| **Investigated aspects** | **Items** |
|---|---|
| **General beverage** | Consumption frequency and perceptions of most appropriate occasions for drinking wine and beer |
| **Consumption places** | Perception of most appropriate places for drinking wine and beer |
| **Awareness** | Awareness of beer/wine brand, type, region of origin |
| **Price** | Price perception of wine |
| **Appeal** | Age-related appeal of wine |

To have a better understanding of the investigated object and work out the questionnaire used in the following step of the study, we first carried out a qualitative research based on focus groups and 100 face-to-face interviews (Prattala et al., 1985; Palojoki and Tuomi-Grohn, 2001). Then, we designed an extensive quantitative research, distributing a semi-structured questionnaire to students (19-29 years old) attending 15 Italian different universities[i]. The aim of this research phase consisted in examining young people habits and perceptions about wine. Few authors have adopted analogous survey methods in order to investigate the perception of new product quality (Bogue and Ritson, 2006) or to examine the importance of branding in the wine industry (Vrontis and Papasolomou, 2007).
The interviews were carried out in lecture hall under guidance: the young people involved in the survey answered the questionnaire autonomously with each question being carefully explained first, in order to limit the risk of personal interpretations and distorted answers to the questions.
We used a convenience sample: the 1,289 students who participated in the survey were volunteers chosen in collaboration with their marketing professor. Of these, 377 declared they basically didn't drink alcoholic drinks (wine and beer)[ii] and so the number of useful questionnaires was reduced to 912. The useful sample is made up of 48% male and 52% female with an age concentration between 19 and 23. The main region of origin is Lazio (17.4%), followed by Piedmont (14.5%), Friuli Venezia Giulia (12.5%), Sicily (8.5%) and Abruzzo (8.4%). Even if all Italian regions are present in varying concentrations.
Following the interviews, we carried out a re-examination of the students taking part through proportional weight of the total number of those enrolled in the faculties consulted (data Miur, enrolments 2005-2006)[iii].

## 4. Youngsters and wine: main results

The consumption of wine and beer seems to be particularly widespread among the youth interviewed: **consumption frequency** of these drinks is rather high, with slightly higher values for beer over wine: 63.1% of the interviewees in fact declared they drank wine at least once a week (half of these also two or three times a week), whilst the percentage for beer rises to 69.4% (with 42.1% more frequently).

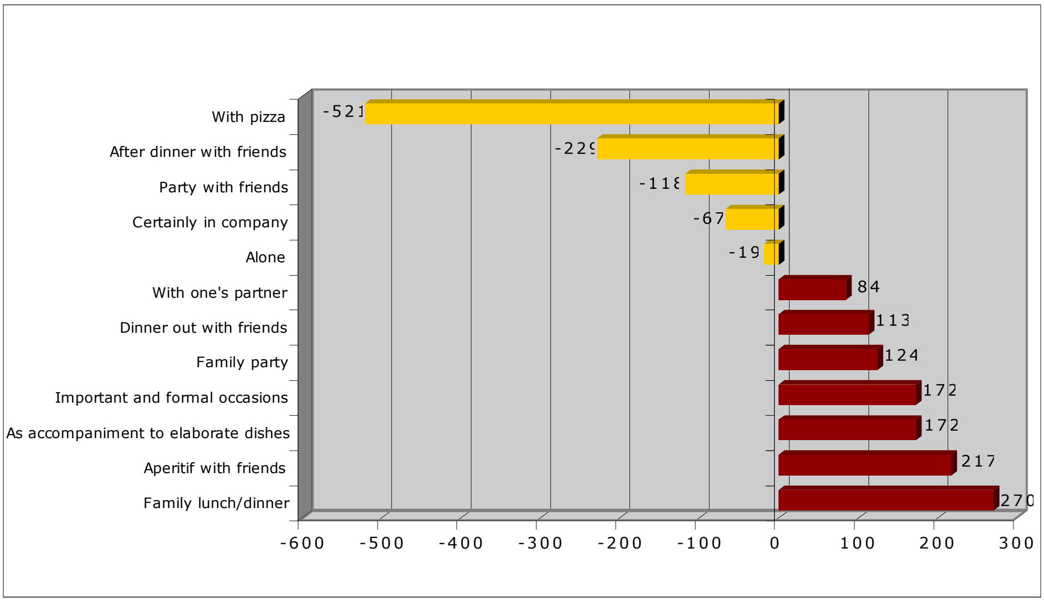
**Figure 1 - The frequency of consumption of wine and beer** *(% value, no = 912)*




This relatively high level of consumption could lead to think that interviewees have a certain familiarity with wine and beer and thus a clear knowledge of the brand, place of production and sales point, also of the quality of the drink and its use on certain particular occasions. However, as we can appreciate from the following, only some of these dimensions seem clearly outlined, while others seem to have marked confusion.

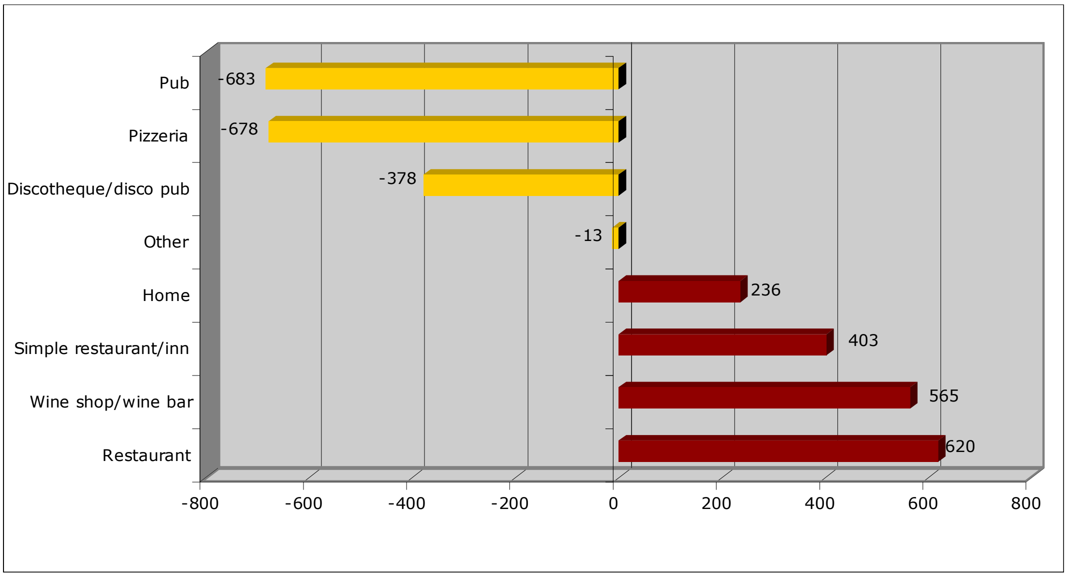
Considering the former (clearer concepts in consumer perception) we can consider **the situations and occasions of wine and beer consumption**. According to the analysis of absolute frequency differentials, it's possible to point out the existence of context and sales points which are more indicated for the consumption of one or the other beverage. In particular, the combination beer/pizza clearly emerged, while wine seems more suitable than beer for family meals and formal or important occasions.

**Figure 2 - Contexts for the consumption of wine and beer** *(frequency differential cited wine/beer)*



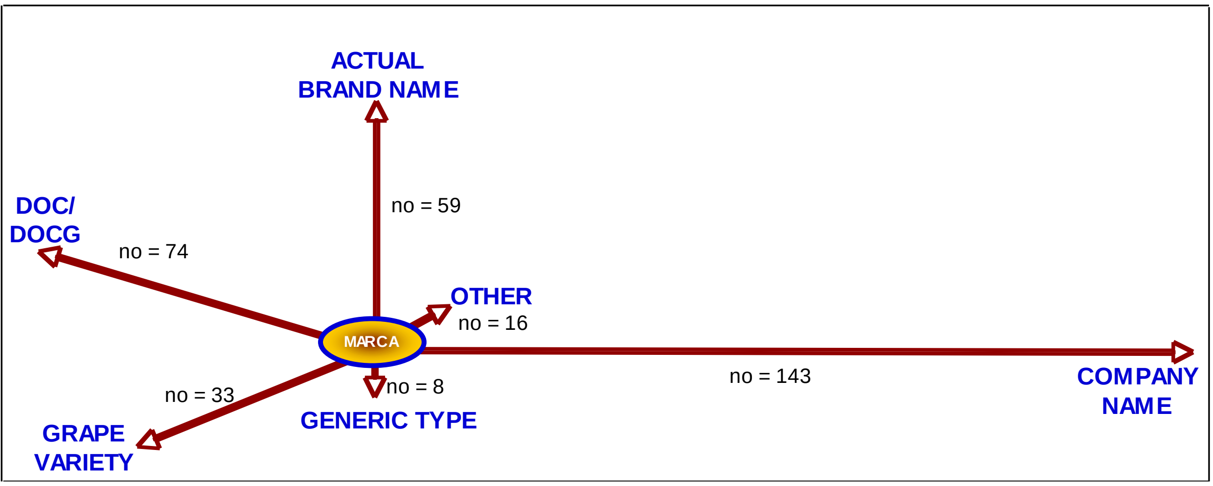
One particular aspect should be noted. Both from the analysis of frequency in absolute terms, and as differential value compared to beer, the use of wine presents a greater versatility in terms of context. In fact, wine is preferable not only on important and formal occasions but also as an aperitif or during dinner with friends; beer, on the other hand, characterises more informal situations.
There seems to be a clear polarization regarding places of consumption. If the places for beer consumption are the pubs and the pizzerie (which confirms the previous data on the consumption context), the preference for wine falls on restaurants, followed by wine shop/wine bars and then, followed at a certain distance, by simple restaurants and inns.

**Figure 3 - Places for the consumption of wine and beer** *(frequency differential cited wine/beer)*




On the basis of this data, we can confirm that interviewees have a good knowledge of the occasions and above all of the places for wine and beer consumption.
There is a totally different picture however for the analysis of **brand awareness**. From examination of the answers, notable confusion has appeared as to the memory of the brand which in some cases is associated with the company name and in others to the name of the wine or still to the grape or the denomination. As a consequence, based on the perception of interviewees, we can suppose that **the brand in the wine industry is characterised by a distinct multidimensional character**.
As was perceived, also in the light of the literature reviewed (Gluckman, 1986), many “names” were cited (no=333), which in the minds of interviewees represent wine “brands”. On the basis of these citations, we have had to make a distinction in order to indicate different dimensions associated with the brand.

**Figure 4 - The "brand-system" in wine**




In particular, in the wider brand system we have recognized the following declinations;

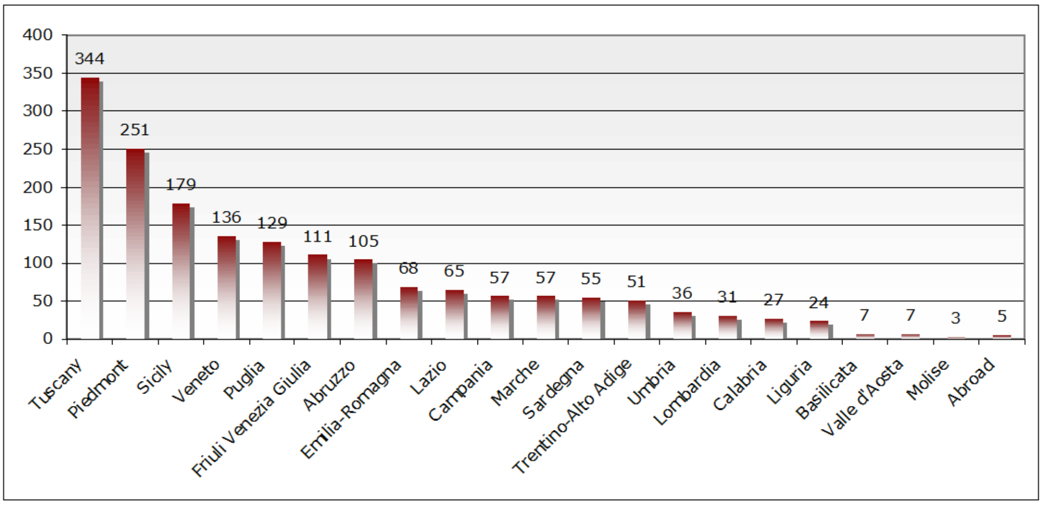
1. **company name** (no=143): the names of the producers and cellars fall into this category (e.g. *Donna Fugata, Antinori, Zonin, Banfi*);
2. **actual brand name** (no=59): actual real names of products, for example: *Tavernello, Ciro' Librandi, Sangue di Giuda;*
3. **Denomination** (no=74): DOC (e.g. *Lambrusco, Primitivo di Manduria, Cannonau*) and DOCG (*Chianti, Brunello di Montalcino, Barolo, Greco di Tufo)* fall into this group;
4. **grape variety** (no= 33): for example *cabernet, sauvignon, aglianico*;
5. **generic type** (no=8): included in this category are *brachetto, fragolino, Malaga,* etc;
6. **other** (no=16): this is a residual category which includes the names that didn't fall into the previous categories either because they are not known (e.g. *Col Reto, Biancole, Rotarsi* ) or because they refer to sale points (e.g. *Enoteca Pinchiorri*).

Going into the quantitative analysis of brands, we underline the **great variety of names cited**, many of which – 148 – were quoted by only one interviewee. The first ten brands mentioned take 40% of the total. The top of the mind goes to two Tuscan denominations – Chianti (no=265) and *Brunello di Montalcino* (no=194); also two denominations from Piedmont – *Barolo* (no=143) and *Barbera* (no=79) – were cited by numerous interviewees and resulted respectively as third and seventh in the brand awareness classification.

The only brand in the "traditional" sense of the term – the company name which identifies the producer – cited among the first ten (in eighth place) is *Tavernello*, a mass consumption wine, whose notoriety can be probably traced back to the important investment in advertising rather than to its high quality.

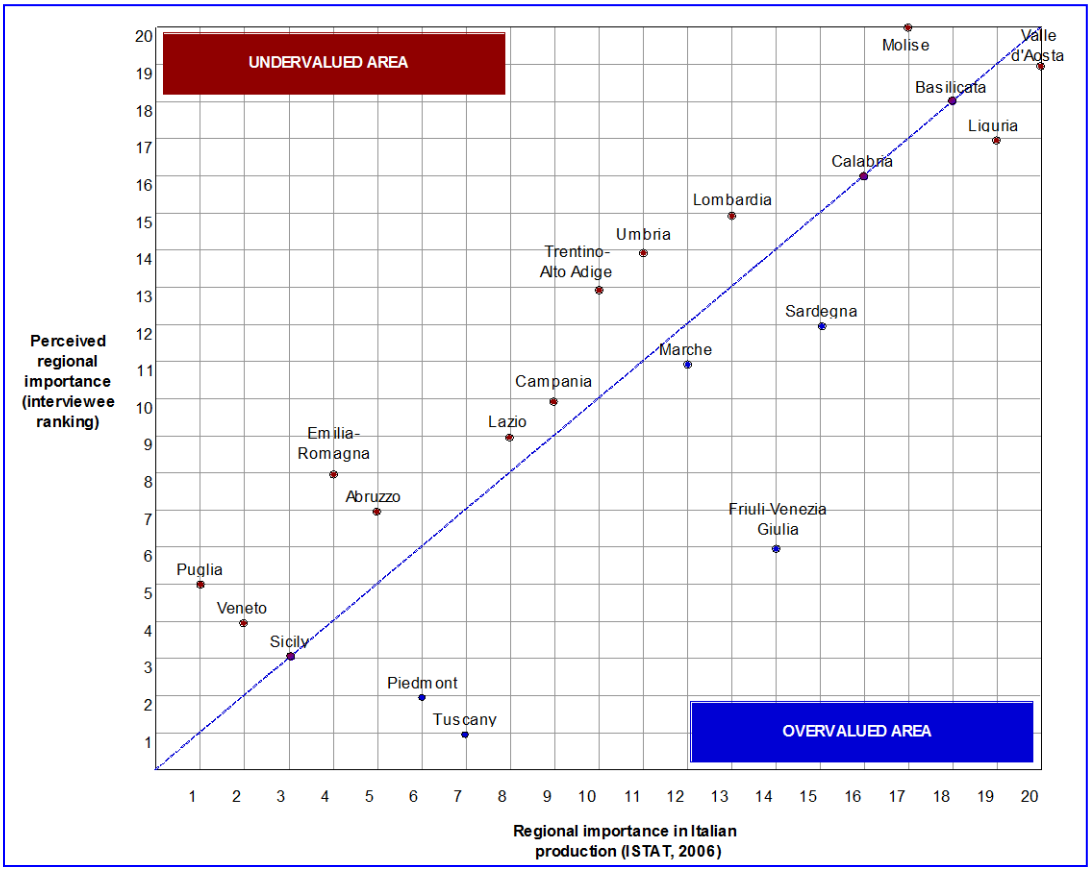
We investigated the notoriety of the region of production of the wine as perceived spontaneously by the interviewees, which resulted in the classification illustrated in the following figure:

**Figure 5 - The notoriety of Italian regions in wine production** *(absolute values)*




As previously mentioned concerning the top of the mind brands, the most important Italian region in wine production in the perception of those interviewed was Tuscany, followed at a distance by Piedmont and Sicily.

**Figure 6 - The importance of Italian regions in wine production**




Nevertheless, if we compare the ranking which emerged from the interviews with data of wine and must production in Italian regions (Istat, 2006), we easily realise that the importance attributed by the interviewees to the different Italian regions does not rest on the “quantity” of

production. Differences, sometimes quite marked, in fact exist between the two dimensions as is demonstrated in the following table:
In this way, two areas emerge:

- an *undervalued area* where we find regions which are important from the point of view of production numbers (like Puglia), but which don't enjoy high notoriety among consumers (probably because they concentrate the volume on cut wines);
- an *overvalued area* where we find regions which the interviewees consider of greater importance than their actual wine production would indicate.

In the light of these considerations, we consider that the notoriety of a production region is not based on the volume of production, but essentially on the more qualitative characters, probably connected to the notoriety of the brand of that particular territory. Reconstructing the 'geography' of the brands cited spontaneously by the interviewees, we have formulated the following table[iv]:

**Table 1 - Geographical origins of the cited brands**

| | Brand | | | Denomination (Doc-Docg) | Regional total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Company name | Brand Name | Total | | |
| Tuscany | 16 | 10 | **26** | 11 | **37** |
| Friuli Venezia Giulia | 32 | 3 | **35** | 2 | **37** |
| Sicily | 14 | 9 | **23** | 3 | **26** |
| Veneto | 18 | 1 | **19** | 7 | **26** |
| Piedmont | 11 | 0 | **11** | 10 | **21** |
| Abruzzo | 13 | 5 | **18** | 1 | **19** |
| Campania | 5 | 5 | **10** | 7 | **17** |
| Puglia | 7 | 5 | **12** | 4 | **16** |
| Marche | 6 | 0 | **6** | 6 | **12** |
| Lazio | 4 | 4 | **8** | 4 | **12** |
| Lombardia | 6 | 2 | **8** | 2 | **10** |
| Umbria | 5 | 2 | **7** | 2 | **9** |
| Emilia-Romagna | 2 | 3 | **5** | 2 | **7** |
| Trentino | 0 | 3 | **3** | 3 | **6** |
| Sardegna | 1 | 1 | **2** | 3 | **5** |
| *FRANCE* | 1 | 2 | **3** | 2 | **5** |
| *SPAIN* | 1 | 0 | **1** | 4 | **5** |
| Calabria | 0 | 3 | **3** | 0 | **3** |
| *PORTUGAL* | 0 | 2 | **2** | 0 | **2** |
| Liguria | 0 | 0 | **0** | 1 | **1** |

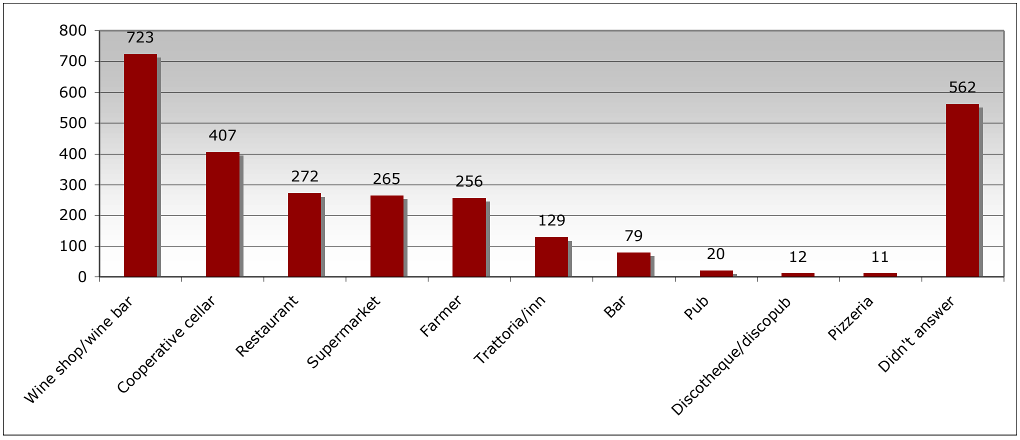
The table shows that the relevant data for regional importance in wine production as perceived by the interviewees can be associated, at least partially, with the notoriety of the brands produced in them. In this way, the importance attributed to Tuscany becomes obvious, affirming the most cited "brands" and denominations (known all over the world) and to Friuli-Venezia Giulia, which above all is famous for the producers' names (like for example *Zorzettig*, *La Tunella*, *Angoris*, *Castelvecchio*). In our opinion, the high ranking of Piedmont can be attributed – exclusively in terms of quality - to the fact that this region has been fundamental in the history of Italian wine making[v].

If we examine **brand awareness of beer**, a completely different picture emerges. In this case, in fact, *the memory of the product is connected exclusively to the name of the brand and the*

*producer*. Naturally, this can be attributed, at least at first sight, to the greater investment in advertising by beer producers compared to wine.
This affirmation is also confirmed by the analysis of spontaneous notoriety of the brands: at the top of the list we find those brands that principally adopt a pull strategy. 127 brands were cited by the interviewees, among the first we find: *Heineken* (no=486), *Moretti* (no=369), *Peroni* (no=352), *Ceres* (no=303), *Beck's* (no=287), *Nastro Azzurro* (no=274), *Guiness* (no=266), *Corona* (no=263), *Bud* (no=240), and at a great distance *Tuborg* (no=82). It seems opportune to mention that the first nine brands alone make up 75% of the citations and that fifty names are cited only once. Also in this case there is considerable variety, even though it is not so great as for wine.
As to the importance of the producing nations, the interviewees perceive Germany as a clear leader (no=672), followed at a distance by Italy (no=389), Ireland (no=203) and Holland (no=178). The predominance of Germany is not confirmed in the ranking of spontaneous brand awareness where we find a Dutch brand (*Heineken*) and two Italian brands (*Moretti* and *Peroni*) as the leaders. The leadership of Germany could be attributable to various factors: the greater variety of labels remembered (25 against 16 from Italy), the importance on the international scene in terms of production (*Assobirra*, 2006) or also the organisation of events which have a wide echo worldwide that are linked with such a product (just think of the *Oktober fest*).
The comparison between the interviewees' knowledge of wine and beer clearly shows the greater difficulty of reconstructing a clearly defined universe for the former compared to the latter, which rests on the memory of the brand tightly linked to the name of the producer. The confusion which we find around wine brands probably makes purchasing more difficult, above all on the part of the young, not very expert, consumer who doesn't find the necessary identification or recognition in the brand which would thus simplify the choice.

Such confusion about the brand is also confirmed in *the knowledge of the price of wine which appears confused and in some cases wrong*, especially in bottled wines. This is slightly surprising given that the bottle represents the form which is mostly purchased by the interviewees[vi].
With reference to this format, we have found great similarity between the **average lowest price of a bottle of white and of red wine in a wine shop** (12 euro on average), as does the average maximum price appear similar for both types: in this last case, the difference in price between a bottle of red (68 euro) and white (66 euro) is shown at two euro, a difference which is too little given the characteristics of red wine which involve ageing and production techniques which make it typically more expensive than white. The distorted perception of price is then confirmed in an indirect way from the range of maximum prices cited by the interviewees: the extreme low (1euro) is decidedly too low and the high – the same for both whites and reds at 3,500 euro - is excessively high, above all for whites.
There is an analogous situation for wine by the **glass in the wine shop** with a substantial alignment of minimum (3 euro) and maximum prices (8 euro) for red and white wine. Also in this case, the range in price variation seems wrong with the extreme low too low (0.50 eurocents) and the high too high. We should underline that from the analysis of the extreme high a clear superior price for red wine emerges, which according to the interviewees can reach 200 euro against 100 euro for a glass of white.
This confusion about prices in the wine shop is surprising considering that it is the place where most interviewees acquire good quality wine.

**Figure 7 - Purchasing points for wine**




To better understand the world of the young consumer in relation to wine, we felt it opportune to reconstruct the first experience of consumption and the first remembered purchase of this beverage.

**Table 2 - The "first wine"**

| | THE FIRST CONSUMPTION | THE FIRST PURCHASE |
|---|---|---|
| *WHEN?* | Aged 14-16 | Aged 16-18 |
| *WHERE?* | At home | Supermarket, restaurant and wine shop/wine bar |
| *WHAT?* | Mostly home produce (followed by Prosecco) | Chianti, Nero d'Avola, Barbera |
| *WHOM?* | With parents and relatives | With friends |

The home environment seems to be the most widespread for the first approach to wine which mainly occurred between the ages of 14 and 16 for those interviewed, within the home itself. The first purchase, usually between the ages of 16 and 18, takes place with friends and progresses from home grown wine typically drunk within the home to the better known labels[vii].

One last aspect which deserves mention is that in a country with a strong wine making culture like Italy, in which wine is both tradition and culture, close family seem to play an important role in leading the young person to try wine and also in transferring a first basic knowledge of wine. It is not surprising to find 53% of the young people interviewed state that parents (40%) and grandparents (13%) are the best means to the introduction of wine, followed by friends (23%). According to those interviewed, advice given in an wine shop/wine bar (7%) plays a minor role, as does participating in a wine tasting (7%).

## 5. Conclusion

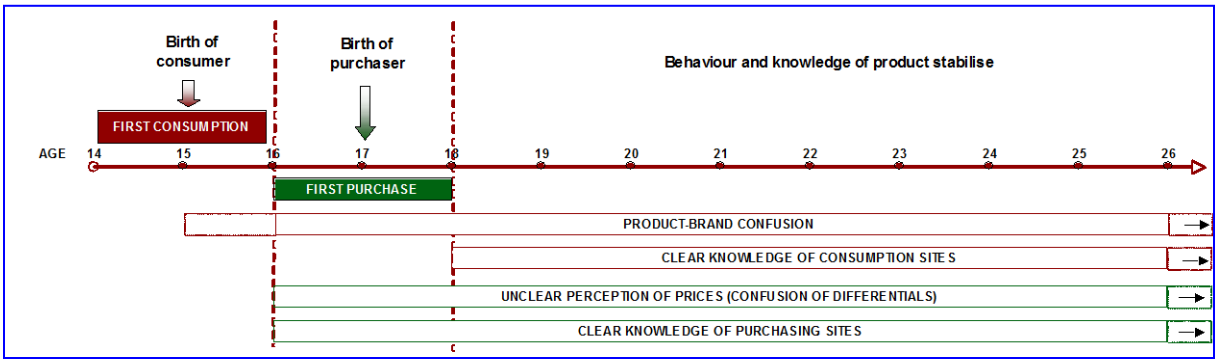
Data collected in the field, in the light of provided literature references, offer a rich information base, which allows the proposal of a new reading of consumer marketing in wine companies. Obviously, we have to read them carefully, because they are based on a convenience sample and cannot be taken as statistically representative.

There is no doubt that in the so called Old World producing countries, wine is not merely a product, but a part of the culture and of social rituals. If culture and social rituals are a phenomenon which concern all the members of a given community, it's obvious that they expose each person to a passive learning pathway towards various products: in the specific case of wine, people learn to consume it from an early age, within the home, together with members of the family day by day, and also in situations of specific rituals.
This field research has allowed us to understand that the individual learning process progresses with time, modifying in two directions:

- in *form*, the consumer ceases to learn only passively and becomes active, seeking to broaden his personal knowledge through deliberate cognitive efforts;
- in *content*, "passively" acquiring a certain competence in the use of the product, the consumer begins to explore the variables which form the product-system.

The above is illustrated in figure 8, where we have attempted to synthesise the thesis which has emerged during the research, concerning the early years of mature life of the individual consumer.

**Figure 8 - Temporal evolution of the cognitive profile of the wine consumer**




This representation, which certainly reflects the limits of our field, is useful to highlight some aspects which qualify the cognitive profile of the wine consumer and his evolution over time. We will see in conclusion that the consequences for marketing management are of marked importance.
Fundamentally the time-line highlights the way in which the individual changes his role in the course of time:

a) **the beginning of wine consumption (within the family home) between the ages of 14-16:** the individual acquires knowledge of the product thanks to the purchase choice of other people. It's logical to think that these products act as a benchmark at the moment in which the individual becomes the purchaser;
b) **becoming the active purchaser for the first time between the ages of 16-18:** the first autonomous purchase occurs in conditions of little knowledge and awareness of the product, but with fairly clear ideas about consumption: the places, the occasions, the right company to drink wine are very clear in the mind of the consumer and totally different to that of beer;
c) **a clear dichotomy between wine and beer emerges in the Italian cultural context**. Right from the beginning of the personal history of purchase and consumption, the Italian consumer experiences the two alcoholic drinks in a completely different way: notoriety of the brand and products, places for purchase and consumption, occasions and so on are very different;
d) **the pathway towards learning about the product especially concerns offer variables and the outlet plays a decisive role.** As the years pass we see the consumer

actively engaged in facing the cognitive complexity of the product. One reads from field surveys an attempt to simplify product-system, basically seeking the necessary support information at the place of purchase.

It is quite evident that the cognitive profile of the wine consumer in his youth bears the very strong imprint of what has been passively learnt in the family-friend context.

The clear ideas shown in the system of consumption *against* the total confusion of the product system we feel is a sign that non personal consumption models are repeated. The presence of this sort of *cognitive heritage*, at least in countries like Italy, certainly constitutes a specific challenge for wine companies who are obliged to confront consumers whose starting point is induced externally.

Only with age, and with basic information support from the outlet, does the individual timidly begin to make the necessary efforts to learn the product-system.

All this allows us to present a vision of wine as a cognitive product which we believe has a marked impact on the marketing behaviour of wine companies:

*product which maintains an intrinsically complex value offering,*
*which expects a considerable cognitive knowledge by the consumer,*
*fruit of a mixed learning process, both passive and active.*

The literature initially quoted underlined the principal dimensions of *value offering* – product, packaging, brand systems, etc. - and their complex impact on the choice process, lacking however to propose a unitary vision of such complexity and above all omitting a dynamic interpretation.

However, in our opinion, placing the interpretation of the consumer's choice in cognitive terms and variable in time, you can overcome the fragmentation of the analysis and you can more easily identify the marketing priority of the companies.

The logical way is simple and linear: (i) in a market context where wine is part of popular culture, all the influences on choice are learnt over a long time and sometimes intuitively; (ii) the young consumer becomes important as he finds himself between a passive situation and one of subjective choice: it is extremely important for companies to intercept this evolution, because they can sustain him on his path, simplifying the interpretation of the offer (iii) analysis of the time and methods of learning the product-system is thus fundamental because it supplies information which can then be introduced into marketing.

**It seems to us that the above provides the basis on which a vision of marketing management oriented towards *simplification* rests, based on three strategic axes**:

1. *Relations with the trade*. The centrality of the outlet in the cognitive formation of the consumer is unquestionable, both in off and on trade. The producer must dialogue with the seller so that: the variety of offer is within the client's cognitive capacity; the method of proposing the offer be agreed and oriented towards emotion and the discovery of something new; the prices be ordered in a wide range giving the sense of the difference in product to each band, paying great attention to value for money;

2. *Market-driven innovation*. The cognitive complexity of wine is mostly due to the excessive self-referencing of producers, who have wildly increased their brands and products, with a differentiating detail which is unmanageable by the consumer. Innovation of the product-system is necessary on the market, simplifying the offer package, rationalising the brand into wide categories and sales/consumption channels;

3. *Construction of consumption expectations*. There is no doubt that the intrinsic emotional content of wine is very high, above all in virtue of its great variety: grape variety, preparation, year, producers, are all elements which make each wine

potentially different from another. Marketing must take this opportunity to form the idea that wine offers ever new expectations for the consumer. The natural desire for discovery and exploration which characterises the young consumer can only favour operations which take this direction.

In conclusion, we believe that wine companies must dedicate priority attention to target the young, knowing that in the 16-26 age range the basic knowledge of the product is formed which then in later life becomes the cognitive heritage of the consumer.
Supporting the formation of product expectations in the early years in which the individual is more open to suggestion can in fact be decisive for market assurance. The guidelines for marketing management can be summed up in one word: simplification.

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## Endnotes

[i] The data/observations were carried out in the Economics Faculties of the following Universities: Turin, Bergamo, Venice, Udine, Parma, Siena, Viterbo, Rome, Perugia, Cassino, Macerata, Lecce, Pescara, Palermo and Naples (Capua).

[ii] The consumption of alcoholic beverages basically represents the filter question of the questionnaire, for the interviewee to be an eligible target for the research. Basically, people who don't drink such beverages declared themselves abstemious or said they didn't appreciate the flavour of wine or beer.

[iii] Note in particular the site www.statistica.miur.it.

[iv] We would like to underline that the interviewees were not directly asked to connect the brand they remembered with the relative region of origin; we made these connections in the elaboration of the data. This work was only carried out for the company names, brand names and denominations; for other dimensions of the identified "brand" we didn't consider the same reasoning significant (consider the grape variety which, with the exception of a few cases, can not easily be reduced to a single production region).

[v] We reaffirm that two "brands" of Piedmontese origin – *Barolo* and *Barbera* – are among the first ten cited by the interviewees.

[vi] 69% of those interviewed (no=879) usually purchase bottled wine, whereas almost 20% by the glass.

[vii] We would like to underline that only few of those interviewed (no=143) remembered the experience of the first consumption and first acquisition which makes this reading qualitative.