

TYPICAL WINE CHOICE AND CONSUMPTION IN APULIA

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ABSTRACT

All products have both tangible and intangible aspects in differing proportions, and wine proves not to be an exception. Firstly, a food or beverage product has few or no intangible characteristics. Despite this, wine is a product with a strong typicality, thus includes both tangible and intangible features. In fact, the purchase decision process seems to be significantly affected by both these categories.

Consequently, especially referring to the buyer of fine wines, consumers purchase more than simple tangible aspects of the wine. Such a consumer shows a complex buying behaviour due to intangible factors, which associates the wine consumption to special occasions, or with fine dishes. In this context, wine drinking experience seems to be compared to the experience offered by fine arts or music. Moreover, the typical wine consumers seek other benefits, such as the belief that they are enjoying quality product, by which a variety of emotions can be experienced. Some issues arise when communicating the benefits related to such complex experiences, especially dealing with wines that could be considered a high intangible content product.

In this paper it has been found that wine consumer's preferences vary by a number of factors, i.e. age, gender, etc. Additionally, wine consumption reasons seem to change depending on both demographic and social characteristics of the consumer. At some points the purchase of a bottle of wine seems to be influenced by the concept of typicality that links the product to its territory of origin (COO).

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1. INTRODUCTION

In modern competitive contexts, marketing strategies are often induced by changes in the consumer and commercial environments. The most important factors that influence consumer behaviour and thus the commercial environment are: i) demographic/social, ii) distribution changes, iii) social issues, iv) environmental. Nowadays, the alcoholic beverages consumption model is changing consistently with the general aging of the population. The progressive growth of low alcoholic product is expected to continue.

Wine consumption has been growing in advanced countries like Italy since the 1990s. The increase in consumption has been associated with an increase in the number of producers competing within the wine industry. The wine sector is very unique mainly due to its size and to the level of its segmentation (Qenani-Petrela, Wolf and Zuckerman, 2007). Moreover, the complexity of the purchase decision process undertaken by the typical consumer seems to be an important issue.

From a theoretical point of view, all products have both tangible and intangible aspects in differing proportions, and wine proves not to be an exception (Edwards and Mort, 1991). Firstly, a food or beverage product has few or no intangible characteristics. Despite this, wine is a product with a strong typicality, thus includes both tangible and intangible features. In fact, the purchase decision process seems to be significantly affected by both these categories. Expert consumers are able to appreciate the colour, smell and bouquet, they can taste the flavour and finally touch the moisture. Consequently, especially referring to the buyer of fine wines, consumers purchase more than simple tangible aspects of the wine. Such a consumer shows a complex buying behaviour due to intangible factors, which associates the wine consumption to special occasions, or with fine dishes. In this context, wine drinking experience seems to be compared to the experience offered by fine arts or music. Moreover, the typical wine consumers seek other benefits, such as the belief that they are enjoying quality product, by which a variety of emotions can be experienced. Some issues arise when communicating the benefits related to such complex experiences, especially dealing with wines that could be considered a high intangible content product.

Thousands of wine producers, variously sized, nowadays compete for a portion of the expanding and profitable wine market. More recently, following the entrance in the market of a number of producers, it is becoming more and more important for companies to recognize

and exactly identify the wants and needs expressed by consumers, in order to survive in such a highly competitive arena.

In this paper it has been found that wine consumer's preferences vary by a number of factors, i.e. age, gender, etc. Additionally, wine consumption reasons seem to change depending on both demographic and social characteristics of the consumer. At some points the purchase of a bottle of wine seems to be influenced by the concept of typicality that links the product to its territory of origin or, as stated by a well documented literature, the so called COO – country of origin (Al-Sulaiti and Baker, 1998; Perrouty, d'Hauteville and Lockshin, 2006).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

'Connoisseurs' and 'aspirational' wine consumers are likely consumers of luxury or high quality wines (Spawton, 1991). Consistently with the Vigneron and Johnson's (1999) categories of luxury wine consumers, connoisseurs would fit the "hedonistic" and "perfectionist" consumer profiles; that is, they seem more interested in the delightful and unique consumption, posing less emphasis on price and more emphasis on quality that derives from the product characteristics and performances. These consumers precisely know what they are looking for or, maybe more frequently, they have clearly identified their needs and wants, thus helping the marketer work. They use to rely on their own judgement and taste, using price as a quality indicator when choosing a product. On the other hand, aspirational consumers show many of the features associated with the "Veblenian", "Snob" and "Bandwagon" consumers, as stated by Vigneron and Johnson (1999). These consumers consider the price as important with a high price being used as an indicator of prestige and consequently quality. They often adopt products that are produced and supplied in a limited number, thus emphasizing the uniqueness and the status associated to such consumption. They also buy products in order to enhance their self-concept or to impress others. Moreover, aspirational consumers also have the financial resources to purchase luxury wines particularly when they associate the product with social standing.

Furthermore, a body of literature does exist on Country of Origin (COO), thus proving that affects consumer perceptions and choices (Lim and O'Cass, 2001; Moon and Jain, 2002). Previous research have focused particularly on tangible and durable products, which can create a narrow vision when analysing fast consumer goods, like food or beverages. The place of origin, as a more specific extension of COO, may present "positioning" opportunities creating a sustainable competitive advantage (Felzensztein, Hibbert and Vong, 2004).

Thode and Maskulka (1998) stated that COO and “place-based” marketing strategies may help agro-food products to compete on international markets testifying a superior flavour, aroma or other quality performance characteristics. Additionally, they also argued that if geographic origin gives a quality differentiation, the producer gains an attribute that cannot be easily imitated by other competitors. On the contrary, more recently Ravazzoni (2006) stated that the more the product is linked and identified with a specific territory, the more difficult is to export and promote it on foreign markets. An exception could be represented by ethnic communities long established abroad, because of their attitude to appreciate the unique features of the typical product strongly linked with their country of origin.

Felzensztein, Hibbert and Vong (2004) have emphasized the importance of COO, concluding that it could well be considered as the fifth element of the wine marketing mix.

In recent years, some scholars (McDougall and Lockshin, 2000; Harpers, 2001) have argued that the wine industry has been shifting its focus from the *old world wines* – mainly from France, Italy, Germany and Spain – to the *new world wines*, typically produced by countries like Chile, California, Australia, South Africa and New Zealand.

However, global changes in the production and consumption of wine and new free trade agreements among countries will influence the future development of this industry (Costa, 2001). Beverland (2000) suggests that wine consumption trends may have significant problems for small producers in the near future, because the number of consumers is progressively going to fall, but at the same time they are willing to pay more for it (Berger et al., 1998). Thus, small sized wine producers have to concentrate on producing high quality and unique featured wines with elevated brand recognition, and thus commanding higher prices. Therefore, brand awareness could be considered as the first and simplest basis of brand equity in wine (Lockshin and Spawton, 2001). Previous studies (Folwell, 1980) rated the brand as the most important factor of wine selection as well advice and positive word-of-mouth of friends or relatives was rated the second most important factor.

Tzimitra-Kalogianni et al. (1999) argued an interesting consumer perception approach, which attempted to identify consumer perceptions about wine and wine attributes in the Greek context. On the other hand, consumer behaviour in wine marketing involves a risk. The major influences of the purchase of wine are perceived as risky. Further factors have been proved to be crucial in consumer behaviour, such as brand, label and price, product experience and knowledge, product consumption situation.

Concerning the consumer choice criteria about wine, there is no wide literature investigating such an aspect. Nevertheless, the attribute *value for money* has played an important role

(Vendimia, 2002). Other scholars have agreed that *price* is an important attribute for wine consumers, especially for those sensible to the COO aspects and to the typicality of the wine (Ravazzoni, 2006). This because price is a good indicator of quality.

However, the maximum price that the average consumer is willing to pay and the point of purchase are can help to lead to the product to the right range of price and

It could be helpful to know the maximum price that the average consumer is willing to pay, in order to guide the product positioning in the right range of price, and the point of purchase to find the best channel to reach the widest number of potential customers.

Also the *grape variety* is a complementary which affects consumer choice of wine (Keown Casey, 1995).

All above considered, the following research hypotheses were formulated:

- ✓ H1: utilitarian factors affect the consumer purchase behaviour;
- ✓ H2: hedonic factors affect the consumer purchase behaviour;
- ✓ H3: territorial brand is more important than company (or producer) brand for the wine consumer.

2.1 Product Typicality

Typical products not only represent an important resource for the local economy, rooted in a delimited area, but also impact positively on the consumer systems to whom they are targeted. Therefore, they are linked in a reciprocal relation with the territory and its economic systems (both production and consumption). So far typicality derives from place specific factors that, in turn, are a source of wealth especially if boosted by the interaction between place governance and local entrepreneurship (Golinelli C.M., 2002).

This kind of goods communicates its own identity, transferring emotions, sensations and tradition. They are also a tool for understanding the local community, its habits, traditions and spatial features; it is more than an economic asset, it is a cultural matter, a way of life.

Typicality can be appreciated in two ways: the production one, that derives from the qualitative peculiarities of the raw materials, their origin, the environmental and morphological conditions of the area, and the know-how of the transformation industry. The consumption direction depends on the relation with the consumer market, on the consumers' perception, who, by identifying themselves in the product ambience, contribute to strengthening the product and the community images (Cardinali, 1998; D'Amico, 2003). Again the reciprocal relation summarised in the word typicality, is obvious.

Typical products result as being the offer of a whole, complex system, that group together the benefits derived from taste, traditions, and place. Being typical constitutes the added value that can differentiate the physical product; in this sense it is no longer important to invest in branding or packaging but in trying to preserve the values through *typical* brand or packaging. That is not to say that marketing actions are not to be used, but the classic marketing thrusts should help to retain and constantly renovate this particular source of differentiation, avoiding all the niche problems that occur.

The more typical the product, in a sense linked to the territory's production and consumption, the more difficult is its success in global competition (Gurrieri et al., 2004). Therefore, in order to change the weaknesses into strengths and exploit the market opportunities boosted by globalisation, a systemic approach (Golinelli G.M., 2000) in the offer management should integrate consumption models and different regional diets, to project/design a unique selling proposition under a collective brand. In fact, the approach now used does not manage to support the growth of typical Italian products, because it does not succeed in customer loyalty, or in turning non resident consumers into regular ones.

The threat is represented by the lack of consumption culture, identified in the link with the territory and its traditions. Therefore global acceptance is an important factor based on local specificities and using a market orientation, product differentiation, brand image, innovation, packaging, and long term relations with a proactive distribution, both in department stores and specialist retailers (Magni and Santuccio, 1999; Malagoli, 2002).

The territorial features assume a key role in order to define and create a product identity. In fact, territorial concerns are linked to several heritage factors, thus increasing or decreasing the tasty perception experienced by consumers. Indeed, consumers seem to pay attention, more than in the past, to the region of origin as well as to the typicality characteristics. On the other hand, it appears fundamental to create a label with the intention of foster the notoriety of the region of origin. Most of consumers often have stereotyped images about countries and such images are used as information cues in judging products from different origins (Lotz and Hu, 2001). Given the growing range of products available in the market-place, marketers can use country of origin cues in order to add value to their products and differentiate them by specific positioning.

Particular imprecision is associated to the brand name as a carrier of country of origin (COO) connotation. The notion of the country of origin as an overall image across product classes may be contrasted with the possibility of a more limited application to a particular product class. Furthermore, the interplay among country of origin, branding and quality has not been

fully investigated. Country of origin and any linked brand names have been shown to have both broad and specific effects on consumer behaviour (Agbonifoh and Elimimian, 1999; d'Astous and Ahmed, 1999; Han, 1989; Hong et al., 2002). The study of country of origin effects seeks to understand how consumers perceive products emanating from (or linked to) a particular country or region. From an information theoretical perspective, products may be conceived as consisting of an array of information cues.

Previous studies have argued that consumers do not value wine based exclusively on their physical characteristics but also on brand, specifically producer's brand rather than retailer's brand. Producer's brand creates a reputation of wine in the consumer's mind which is often associated with quality of region of origin. Both brands and region of origin information are extrinsic cues giving consumers information on expected product performance, also serving to differentiate it from other brands, as well as to help motivate consumers in choosing and purchasing the product, thus making them satisfied and loyal (Johansson and Nebenzahl, 1986; Vranesevicand and Stancec, 2003).

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

In order to understand the consumption behaviour in the wine market and investigate the role of typicality, a questionnaire was submitted to a random sample of consumers (see Table 1), interviewed by trained student volunteers outside selected points of sale (supermarkets, minimarkets, hypermarkets, etc.) in the province in the South of Italy. The data were collected in one month during all day time. 660 customers were contacted while leaving the points of sale, for a total of 302 usable questionnaires. The average response rate was 45.7%, probably due to the short time available for the interviews. Although a quota sample was not used, the distribution of the socio-demographics indicated no conspicuous biases.

To make sure that the interviewees were a suitable target group for wine consumption, they were first asked if they are wine consumers and how often they drink wine.

Table 1: Sample characteristics

Age	Frequency	Percentage	Gender	Frequency	Percentage
18-24	30	10.0	Male	174	58.0
25-39	88	29.4	Female	126	42.0
40-65	127	42.3	Total	300	100.0
More than 65	55	18.3	Frequency of the wine consumption		
Total			300	100.0	
Occupation	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	
Executive or manager	20	6.6	Once or twice a month	66	22.0
Clerk or similar	119	39.7	From 2 to 4 times a month	78	26.0
Free lance	26	8.7	From 5 to 8 times a month	116	38.7
Housewife	29	9.7	More than 8 times a month	40	13.3
Student	20	6.7	Total	300	100.0
Retired	59	19.7			
Unemployed	19	6.3			
Other	8	2.6			
Total	300	100.0			

Table 2: descriptive statistics

	Mean	Std Dev.
density	,54	,751
sweetness	,38	,774
bouquet	,29	,868
scent	,41	,824
taste	,61	1,142
region	2,22	1,660
year	2,45	1,902
packaging	2,01	1,648
info	2,33	1,607
price	2,41	1,762
typicality	1,88	1,613

The questionnaire included items that are primarily drawn from the literature. All the variables were measured using multiple items, as respondents were asked to mark their responses on five point Likert type scales, that ranged from (1) Totally disagree to (5) Totally agree. The measures have reported high reliability with Cronbach alpha ranging from 0.72 and 0.95.

This paper aims to understand which are the key drivers of wine consumption and in particular which is the effect of social bonds. Particularly, social bonds describe the relation between typicality and the customers' life style; indeed, the results of the logistic regression

model show how the life style factors (i.g. occupation, motivation, etc.) are determinants of wine consumers' behaviour.

Firstly, a factor analysis was carried out in order to identify which dimensions are important in wine consumption. Therefore, the respondents indicated the level of importance of each dimension relative to all other dimensions. Secondly, a logistic regression model has been used in order to model the wine consumption as the dependent variable. Following the literature, the model included as explanatory variables, the demographic variables (age, gender, education, occupation, income), buying behaviour (frequency, motivations, point of purchase) and the typicality attributes as resulted from the factor analysis.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis of the sample highlights that frequency of wine consumption, type of wine, gender, education and occupation are crucial factors depicting different buying behaviours and wine consumer preferences.

Since the descriptive analysis highlighted the connections among the variables, a factor analysis was carried out to identify the common variables (see Table 2).

Table 3: Results of the Factor Analysis

	Components	
	1 Identity	2 Materiality
Density	-.268	.643
Sweetness	-.427	.711
Bouquet	-.440	.751
Scent	-.439	.630
Taste	-.645	.215
Region of origin	.806	.336
Year	.805	.311
Packaging	.730	.309
Info on the label	.833	.232
Price	.860	.205
Typicality	.689	.152

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Barlett's tests were also conducted to evaluate the appropriateness of the factor analysis. The KMO measure should be greater than 0.5 for a

satisfactory factor analysis to proceed. A significant result of the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity serves to confirm the significant correlations between question items.

Table 4: KMO’s test and Bartlett’s test of sphericity

KMO’s test		,858
Bartlett’s test of sphericity	approx. Chi-sq.	1335,768
	df	55
	Sig.	,000

Table 5: Communalities

	initial	extraction
density	1,000	,485
sweetness	1,000	,687
bouquet	1,000	,758
scent	1,000	,590
taste	1,000	,461
region	1,000	,762
year	1,000	,744
packaging	1,000	,628
info	1,000	,749
price	1,000	,782
typicality	1,000	,498

The factor analysis highlighted two factors that can be summarised in:

- a) Factor 1: ‘Identity’ for the ‘intangible’ product attributes, as results from a cognitive process and refers to sensations and evaluation of the external factors (or stimuli);
- b) Factor 2: ‘Materiality’ as representative of the ‘tangible’ product attributes, that highlights the importance of the wine qualities that stimulate the consumer senses.

Therefore, a logistic regression has been chosen as the analysis method in order to test the relationships among customer loyalty and the three macrovariables as identified by the factor analysis.

Table 6: Results of the logistic regression model

	B	S.E.	Wald	df	Sig.	Exp(B)
Gender	.146	.300	.235	1	.628	1.157
Age	.620	.288	4.631	1	.031	1.858
Education	.269	.187	2.058	1	.151	1.308
Occupation	.335	.096	12.206	1	.000	1.398
Income	.525	.241	4.737	1	.030	1.691
Frequency	.809	.244	10.967	1	.001	2.246
Motivations	-1.136	.361	9.900	1	.002	.321
Point of purchase	-.142	.242	.345	1	.557	.868
Identity	-1.287	.496	6.731	1	.009**	.276
Materiality	-.848	.375	5.110	1	.024	.428
Constant	-3.907	.899	18.876	1	.000	.020

(***) $p < .001$; (**) $p < .005$; (*) $p < .10$

The results of the logistic regression analysis are interesting, even though the fitting is low (Cox & Snell R^2 is .398 even though the Nagelkerke R^2 is .531). In fact, four factors resulted as being statistically significant, thus positively affecting the wine consumption:

- ✓ Occupation (DEMOGRAPHICS)
- ✓ Frequency (BUYING BEHAVIOUR)
- ✓ Motivations (BUYING BEHAVIOUR)
- ✓ Identity (EXTERNAL FACTORS OR STIMULI)

‘Occupation’ is often linked to other important factors such as income and the level of education. The higher the income and the more prestigious the occupation, the finer the wine consumer tastes.

‘Frequency’ and ‘Motivations’, as factors related to the consumer buying behaviour, mainly concern the ‘when’ and ‘why’ of the wine consumption. This means that buying behaviour is affected by the ‘frequency’ of purchase that indicates how often the consumer buys a bottle of wine, and also by ‘motivations’ that shows the reasons why a consumer chooses the wine. In particular, in future researches, it could be interesting to investigate ‘motivations’ that push the customer to purchase a specific wine brand.

Finally, the ‘Identity’ factor, as indicator of the intangible attributes of the wine, proves to affect the purchase decision process of the wine consumer. This is a complex factor, mainly due to its non materiality characteristic. In such a sense, wine consumption seems to be strongly linked to intangible factors, probably due to its various reasons and occasions of purchase (and consumption).

In the light of the results obtained, it is also possible to argue that wine consumption proves to be related to emotional factors; sometimes consumers may decide to drink wine, or a particular brand of wine, because they aim to remember or forget something or someone. This is also seems to be confirmed in the Eagles' song entitled "Hotel California" (1976), when they sing:

So I called the Captain: "Please bring me my wine"

He said: "We haven't had that spirit here since 1969"

This Eagles' verse proves once more that wine consumption could be associated to the consumer's desire to remember or forget something, or to live again a particular emotion. In the context of the cited song, depicting lights and shadows of the Californian dream, the Captain's response is interesting: they haven't had that wine since 1969, since the summer of love, the summer of freedom from possessions. A good memory for someone, a poor one for somebody else, recalled by "my wine" in both cases.

Furthermore, in a wine marketing context, the geographical pinpoint defend to use a regional identity supported, also, by national and international regulations. Thus, the European Community has acknowledged the importance of geographic product origin as a source of competitive advantage in trade marketing. The territorial aspects play a main role, in order to create a link between consumers and purchase decisions. The identification of countries, regions or areas, allowed to generate and believe in a territorial brand which could be understood and recognised by consumers (Papadopoulos and Heslop, 2002). Previous studies, highlighted how geographical origin plays a direct role in defining consumer behaviour; that is for its symbolic and affective roles as well as ethical and normative consequences linked to purchase and consumption effects (Verlegh and Steenkamp, 1999). Indeed, as Von Alvensleben (2000) suggests, the consumers' emotion are associated to the region of origin. During the purchase process, consumers are influenced by wine features that create an (almost) hedonic pleasure. Several works tend to underline the cognitive effect of the region of origin as a quality cues. In fact, the regional products are more successful when their characteristic match the consumer's image in term of natural environments or human factors (Van Itteresum, Candel, Maulemberg, 2003). Yet, previous marketing literature has shown that the consumer behaviour may vary significantly either in terms of motivation to purchase or in shopping behaviour criteria (Vranesevic and Stancee, 2003).

As far as regional specialties are concerned, the affective dimensions relate to the sense of identity and belonging to the region of production or to the evocation of past experiences and emotions such as those experienced in occasion of holidays spent in the area (Van der Lans,

Van Ittersum, De Cicco, Loseby, 2001). Another affective aspect refers to the sense of tradition and authenticity conveyed by any reference to the region of origin of the product (Bell and Valentine, 1997).

Following the classification provided by Schifferstein (2001), three alternative methods to elicit sensory preferences can be identified depending on the information set available to individuals: blind taste, expectation and labelled tests.

However, actual sensory perceptions are not independent from sensory expectations derived from extrinsic cues. When the process characteristics refer to the geographical origin of the product it has been reported that consumers are indifferent between two products in the blind test, while showing a strong sensory preference for products produced in specific areas in the labelled test (Guerrero, 2001).

5. CONCLUSIONS

Given the aestheticisation of life (Featherstone, 1991; Szmigin, 2006) and the post modern life styles, wine consumption is much more than the purchase of products. It is a way of self expression, individual identity formation, creativity, or even art (du Gay, 1996; Gabriel and Lang, 2006).

Wine consumption seems to be influenced by several variables mainly grouped into 2 categories: tangibles and intangibles. It has been shown how non material features of wine influence the buying and consumption models of consumers. In such a context, wine could be considered more than a physical good. Therefore, buying and consuming a good wine does not only satisfy the consumer's main senses; there is something more related to emotional aspects, something that pushes to consider wine consumption as a mean to live (or live again) certain emotions. In the case of COO, the consumer aims at remember his or her country of origin, to re-breathe its air and atmosphere.

Literature (Keller, 1998) considers products as a bundle of product-related attributes, which are essentially defined as the components of the core product function sought by consumers, and non-product-related ones, which are external to the function or process of the product/service offering. In choosing the wine, its attributes mainly influence the purchase, given the elevated influence of intangible factors. Thus, wine specific variables differentiate consumer usage motivations.

The 'total' wine experience results in the active construction of meanings associated with the behaviours, thoughts, and feelings that occur during consumption, which consequently impact on consumer perceived brand image.

Future researches should attempt to assess the brand effect, investigating a number of brand dimensions such as price (in terms of value for money), brand name, experience with brand, word-of-mouth, distinctiveness, credibility, reliability, identification, social belonging and image.

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