

Building restaurant wine lists: a study in conflict

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Abstract

While the situation in which a consumer makes a wine consumption choice has previously been examined the influence of those providing the range of choice at a restaurant has not been fully explored as part of the context of consumption. This qualitative study, based on interviews with restaurant wine list managers, investigates wine list creators' perceptions of customer interaction with the wine list. The findings show that how restaurateurs perceive their customers' desires will influence their wine list offering. However the findings from this study uncover a struggle that the restaurateurs face in creating a wine list, reflecting business and emotional needs, in the face of their perception of a customer's desire for safe but varied experiences. This study has implications for, and informs the understanding of, those who market wine for sale through the restaurants. It furthers understanding of how those who are gate keepers of wine lists take perceived customer expectations as a guide to create a wine list which contributes to a unique customer experience. A greater understanding of the motivation of the restaurateurs, as they seek to meet customer needs, allows wine marketers to engage in targeted marketing decisions for specific wine types and brands.

Introduction

“What would you like to drink?” It can be the opening question posed by the floor staff as they present the menu at a restaurant. But just how did that wine selection make it onto the wine list?

Selecting from a wine list within the restaurant environment is an experience that highlights the boundaries and importance of context for consumer behaviour. Restaurateurs provide a subset of choices. How and why those in positions of influence in creating a restaurant wine list make their choice of the wines to present to consumers, impacts on the consumer's final decisions. How a restaurateur creates and manages the restaurant wine list is therefore worthy of investigation.

Consumers are faced with many choices when deciding with whom to spend their hospitality dollars. In Australia at the end of June 2004 there were 13,286 cafe and restaurant businesses (ABS, 2005). The number of wineries in Australia producing finished wine increased from 1,197 in 1999 – 2000 to 1,814 in 2003-2004 (AWBC, 2004). This represents a large range of wine choices even before considering the multiple wine types and brands produced by each winery, imported options and the subsequent multiple permeations in wine lists that could result.

This study provides a starting point for understanding the restaurant wine list structure. This may lead to further research on the nature of consumer behaviour within the restaurant environment and develop greater understanding of why consumers make specific wine selections within that context.

Literature Review

The selection by a customer of a bottle of wine to consume at a restaurant is, if Belk's (1975) approach is applied, a specific consumption event that ties together the situation, (that is, the location where the wine is consumed) and the object, the specific bottle of wine.

Understanding the motivation of this consumption behaviour requires recognition of the total environment within which the decision is made. The variables can include factors such as physical location, social interaction, or consumer mood (Belk, 1975). These factors interplay and highlight that occasions are often unique and always changing. All consumers operate within a “multiplicity of environments” (Groves, Charters, & Reynolds, 2000); that is their needs at different occasions will vary, irrespective of their wine knowledge. At a restaurant this means that a consumer will not always select the same type of wine, rather choosing to experience a variety of consumption options.

When considering consumer wine selection at a restaurant, it must be acknowledged that the range from which the selection can be made is a situational variable. It is created and managed by the restaurateur as part of the offering to the customer. Hence the understanding of consumer behaviour requires investigation of factors beyond the consumer. As Demoissier (2004) notes “A crucial element in wine drinking is the context in which it takes place”.

The wine list is a revenue generation stream for the business; the Australian Bureau of Statistics found that in the period June 2003 to June 2004 the sale of alcoholic beverages accounted for 16% of income for restaurants and cafes Australia wide (ABS, 2005). Additionally, the wine list contributes to and helps frame the customer experience of the restaurant.

The search for an experience

As Aune (2002) notes, the restaurant occasion can transcend the individual parts, causing restaurateurs to consider their wine list as part of a whole customer experience. These components of the experience start prior to an actual event. For instance, expectations of a fast food experience can be different from those a customer may have of a fine dining establishment (Hanefors & Mossberg, 2003). This may affect what price and style of wine customers anticipate encountering on a wine list.

Hanefors & Mossberg (2003) also found that both pre-and post-occasion events combined to created the final customer experience. A pre-event experience may include prior consumption a particular wine. A pleasurable experience with that wine could positively affect the consumers’ selection at the restaurant while a less than enjoyable experience may prevent a consumer from selecting that wine.

When constructing their wine lists restaurateurs consider the expectations of their customers, who may view wine selection to be a risky proposition (Mitchell & Grotorex, 1989). A wine may not suit the consumers’ tastes or the meal it was selected to complement. In a social sense incorrect wine selection, that is wine that does not meet approval from those it is shared with, can impact negatively on the selector’s credibility within that group (Mitchell & Grotorex, 1989). Mitchell and Grotorex (1989) and Batt and Dean (2000) highlighted how prior experience in the form of previous trial or consumption of a wine was a favoured risk reduction strategy. This was an important way for consumers to reduce the risk involved in the purchase decision.

Consumer confidence may also have an impact on the level of risk reduction required when making a wine selection. Consumers must be confident that their selection will meet their needs (Olsen, Thompson, & Clarke, 2003). Olsen et al. (2003) found when assessing wine

consumers' confidence levels across a range of purchase situations a variation in confidence was apparent. They attributed this variation to the risk that each situation presented.

The pleasure of seeking out different experiences within a product category, such as wine, may be a driving force for some consumers (Chaney, 2000). However Chaney (2000) found that if the amount of effort to become a knowledgeable consumer is felt to be too high, a consumer will default to using price and taste as the guide to selection. Although focused on the retail buying environment rather than restaurants, discussion of wine with others was noted by Chaney's (2000) respondents as a key way of collecting knowledge prior to a purchase decision. The ability, at a restaurant, for a consumer to access guidance from floor staff in an immediate, direct way may provide the additional knowledge required to make a decision outside default parameters.

Wine selection influences within restaurant settings

Wine selection is not the only decision that consumers are faced with in a restaurant setting. In fact, a journey to a particular restaurant in itself may be motivated by a range of factors, creating consumer expectations of what may be on offer. Aune (2002) explains the emotional pull of restaurants and the experience they offer in terms of enchantment, including the influence of wine in that process. On the other hand Sparks, Bowen & Klag (2003) are more concerned with the impact that food has on motivating food and wine experiences.

In many cultures the coupling of food and wine provides a rationale for social interaction, with wine perceived to enhance the food and social setting (Hall, Shaw, & Doole, 1997). Restaurants provide the setting and the tangible product, food and wine. There is a hierarchy of decisions for consumers as they move from restaurant choice to decisions on food and wine. Hall et al. (2001) noted the complexity of the models for consumer behaviour within the wine sector, focusing their examination on the impact of the age of the consumer within a hospitality setting. They identified that a wine selection may be motivated by a combination of both the physical characteristics, for example white or red wine, and the image of the wine. Based within one consumption location the study (Hall et al., 2001) highlighted the range of factors that consumers may consider to ensure a positive wine experience while in a visible and socially interactive environment. They discuss these factors in terms of personal values rather than product attributes, noting for example that business diners required wine selections that reflect security while an intimate dining experience focused on creating a warm relationship with others. They proposed (Hall et al., 2001) that restaurateurs should focus on the reason for a customer's visit so as to more aptly provide guidance in the customer's wine selection. Product attributes, such as taste, region and variety are often the triggers wine suppliers use to describe wine but they are not always considered by consumers.

A notable impact on wine selection within restaurants is the influence of the group dynamic in the selection process (Ariely & Levav, 2000). As Ariely & Levav (2000) note what may be an individual selection decision can be influenced by the group and the order in which group members may make their preferences known. A negotiated group decision may be required to accommodate a range of individuals. In wine selection the knowledge of the group may also be a factor, especially in achieving a wine choice to appease all group members. This can be where wine types from areas known for particular wine styles perform better on wine lists (Durham, Pardoe, & Vega-H, 2004). There may also be a need to examine the impact of geographic location of the restaurant. Consumers may choose a wine from a geographically

close region for a variety of reasons. This may be part of managing their risk through limiting exposure to unfamiliar wine varieties from unknown regions.

Summary

Within a dining environment customer experience is contradictory. Consumers wish to control their dining environments and wine selections, yet have a narrow range of choice once they have made a selection on a dining, and subsequent wine consumption, location.

In short, customers and restaurants are in conflict, with customers searching for a varied, yet safe, experience within an environment of limited choice. A consumer's best choice may depend on several situational variables. How one of these situation variables is presented may have an impact on consumer behaviour with regard to wine selection. While consumer motivation and wine selections have been considered the creation of the wine list, an important situation variable has often been overlooked.

Methodology

The project involved data collection from those acting as "gatekeepers" to the consumers' choice of wines within a restaurant setting. That is, the focus was on interviewing people who create and manage the wine list from which customers make a selection.

Due to the exploratory nature of the study a qualitative approach was determined to be appropriate. The goal was to understand respondents approach to wine list creation. This could be addressed by the holistic nature of qualitative methods and the way in which they allow relationships within environments to be explored (Janesick, 2000).

Interviews, using open ended questions, are able to provide a way of capturing information which can help understand complex behaviours and social interactions without limiting the areas of interest that may occur with the setting of narrow questions (Fontana & Frey, 1994). This interview technique was used with identified elite informants, respondents able to provide specific insights into the area of research (Mays & Pope, 1995).

A total of six interviews were conducted in Perth, Western Australia. The respondents represented a range of businesses, including local suburban restaurants, mid-range bistros and high end restaurants and wine bars. The roles of the informants included: specific wine list consultants working with restaurants, owners of restaurants, restaurant floor managers and distributors selling wine to restaurants. Excluding those working as distributors, all were responsible for wine selection for the particular establishment with which they were involved. The appendix gives a complete list of interviewees with a summary of their roles.

Purposive sampling, with a non-random yet relevant sample population, was employed. In this way a general sample was available with like concerns, but with varying experiences which could be compared and considered (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Data collection methods consisted of an in-depth interview with each subject. A range of open-ended questions asked the respondent to consider business requirements and customer expectations in relation to their current wine list.

As this was an exploratory project ensuring a variety in restaurant style was considered important to inform understanding rather than predict outcomes (Janesick, 2000). Given the range of both the interviewees' backgrounds and the establishments with which they are

involved the small sample provides for no level of redundancy within the data. The limited geographic location of one major city within one country and number of restaurants, combined with the restricted restaurant types, are limitations that could be expanded in future studies. The impact of the location and the subsequent legislative environment may also influence the findings.

Interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The overlap of the interview and transcription period, combined with ongoing observation of interviewees reaction to various topics, provided for the subsequent coding and analysis to take place within a grounded framework (Pettigrew, 2000). Analysis of the transcripts compared responses for common themes across interviews. This allowed for the development of an interpretive framework (Spiggle, 1994) looking particularly at the motivations and conflicts that the interviewee's described actions reflected.

Findings

The selection and consumption of a bottle of wine in a restaurant can highlight a range of conflicts that exist for the restaurant owner and between restaurant and consumer. The findings show that how restaurateurs perceive their customers' desires will influence their wine list offering. However the findings from this study uncover a greater struggle that the restaurateurs face in creating a wine list, reflecting business and emotional needs, in the face of their perception of a customer's desire for safe but new experiences.

The restaurant environment

The various specific types restaurants involved in this study represented various options of how wine could be purchased or consumed. While differences in specific supply alternatives reflect the legislative environment in Western Australia, it additionally provides a range of establishments to review for common approaches amongst wine list gatekeepers.

Within the six interviews four wine lists were specifically discussed reflecting the range of restaurant styles and ambience selected to inform the discussion. In addition to respondents from these specific locations, two respondents were responsible for sales of wines to restaurants, known as on-premise sales within the industry. One of these on-premise sales managers had been, and continues to be, a consultant wine list advisor to various prominent restaurants. A summary of respondents is at Appendix A. The following provides a summary of the establishments discussed.

Restaurant one is a suburban, moderately priced theme restaurant that is fully licensed offering cocktails, beers and wines. The wine selection is divided by white, red and sparkling with 13 white wines, 11 red wines and two sparkling represented. Three of the wines are house brand labels and are permanently on the list. Excluding one white, one red and one sparkling wine all wines are from Western Australia, the location for the study, with two of the three non West Australian wines coming from New Zealand. No other countries are represented. Selling price is from \$22.50 to \$37.50 per bottle, a range of \$15. (All prices quoted are in Australian dollars.) The wine list was printed, laminated and left on the table for ease of ordering. No specific staff member was responsible for discussing the wine list although all were briefed on the list as it changed each quarter and were aware of the sales incentives available to them for high sales of particular wines.

Restaurant two is a chain of three suburban pub restaurants with value-for-money priced food and beverages and live entertainment options on some evenings. Beer, wine and spirits are available. The wine list is compact, with 7 white wines, 6 red wines and 2 sparkling offered. All wines are West Australian except for one house wine in each category. A branded house wine is also included in the selection. Price spread on bottled wine was a small \$10 with per bottle prices ranging from \$17.50 to \$27.50. At the venue the wine list is printed on a sticker attached to an empty wine bottle and left on every table. All floor staff take wine and food orders and no staff member is designated as the “wine expert”.

Restaurant three is a bistro-style restaurant offering French and Australian wines to complement French styled food, with medium priced offerings in food and wine. Wine prices range from \$26 to \$120. The wine list offers 5 sparkling wines, 13 white wines, 19 red wines and 2 dessert wines. Wines are predominately from Australian and New Zealand wine regions with 9 wines from France. A simple two page, A4 size, black and white print out was used as the presentation format. The restaurant manager is responsible for the wine list and in most instances is available to discuss a wine selection with the customer.

Restaurant four is a wine bar that offers both bar dining and restaurant service, with a focus on providing a wine list with an extensive range of choices. There are over 650 wines on offer with a wide price variation, although prices are predominately in the \$60 to \$120 range. The focus of this wine bar is on providing wines from outside Australia. A comprehensive list divided by country, region and type, this specialist setting has well briefed staff and a dedicated sommelier on duty.

In all cases it is interesting that wines were divided into categories reflecting basic wine characteristics, such as white or red wine, with occasional acknowledgement of region or country divisions. Across the board this is a simplistic approach to presentation; depending on customer knowledge to understand regional wine styles or customer confidence to request more information of staff. It is an approach that does little to help consumers who may find wine selection to be a stressful decision (Olsen et al., 2003), who may relate more to sensory wine characteristics (Durham et al., 2004) or who are interested in the food and wine experience (Aune, 2002). There was no evidence that the recommendations such as WineQuest in the United States (WineQuest Solutions Inc., 2006), on the simplification of the wine offering by using ‘progressive wine lists’ was considered.

Capturing your customer

Recognition of the nature of the marketplace in which they offer their service was noted by the respondents.

Our customers are other people’s customers as well

Jamie, Local Pub Manager

They respect the need for their customers to choose to visit their restaurant, whether a relaxed local pub or a high end wine bar. Respondents acknowledged the need to use the wine list as part of the creation of the ambience and mood of their restaurant. The style, price and format of the list contributing to the overall customer experience that a venue offers.

An experience greater than the sum of the parts

As noted by respondents, a restaurant is a business which seeks to gain financial return from the service that it offers its customers. Wine sales are part of the revenue generation model for a restaurant. This may create a conflict between the need for a wine list to contribute in a positive way to the overall ambience of the restaurant, while at the same time add directly to the return that is required to sustain the business.

A way in which the wine list can be used to contribute to restaurant style and ambience is illustrated by the suburban bistro that specialises in French cuisine. The restaurant ensures that it offers the choice of some French wines on its list.

You have to have some French wine; otherwise you can't be a genuine experience of a French restaurant.

Pascal, Bistro owner

A wine list can also be used to reflect the venue's business philosophy, clearly delineate its style of offering and help set customer expectations.

...We are providing West Australian wines... we want to give the little guy a chance...[it is part of] our strategy to promote small, unknown West Australian wines.

Jamie, Local pub manager

While monetary considerations may influence such approaches, local wines often being more accessible and profitable within a region, in general, respondents spoke in terms of a "positive experience". The goal of the venue was that customer's walk away satisfied rather than reflecting positively one specific aspects of the occasion in isolation.

Respondents noted a variety of factors, including wine flavours, wine region and price which they would consider when adding a particular wine to their list. Inevitably they nominated slow sales as the overwhelming reason to remove a wine from the list, ignoring the contribution it may make to the restaurant ambience and customer experience.

If a wine is selling very slowly, and we've done several things to move it a little quicker, and that hasn't happened, then that would make us change the list.

Jamie, Local pub manager

A wine may gain a place on a list because it adds to the customer's experience in some way. However a poor sales performance, which is not necessarily linked to the contribution it makes to the restaurant ambience, is what will see it banished from the wine list. This is a single, profit-motivated consideration by a restaurateur who had previously given weight to factors external to revenue when building the wine list. It may be that the lack of sales is a reflection of a poor response from customers to a range of qualities of that particular wine and further investigation of consumer behaviour at a restaurant is required to fully understand this.

For those trying to maintain a wine on a restaurant list, such as an on-premise sales manager, this conflict can be difficult to resolve. Sales managers try to present a wine list as a balanced tool, contributing to the customer experience, rather than a sales race.

You're going to replace the one that doesn't sell. Now, I think if that is one of my wines I may be telling you that, although that wine doesn't sell a lot, you need that wine on your wine list to give you depth and balance. It might not be a wine for everybody but it is a wine that you should carry to offer choice, otherwise you are going to replace all your wines with chardonnay and sem-sauv-blanc.

Peter, wholesale distributor

Restaurant Managers, however, are faced with the daily reconciliation of wine sales and the logistics of stock control and storage often outweighed more esoteric concerns.

Should I take a chance?

While those putting together a wine list are taking risks in how it may contribute to venue, ambience and style and to the business bottom line, they are often aware that their customer may be selecting with the goal of risk aversion. While a limited sample, every respondent commented that in some way safety was a key factor considered by customers when making their wine selection. A wine that had been tried before was perceived to be, for customers, a "security blanket", providing an option that they knew they would like.

Interestingly, it is not just the more main stream establishments that took this into consideration. The comfort level of the customer and their ability to recognise styles and brands was also a factor that influenced the wine list selection in the higher end restaurants and wine bars. One respondent responsible for a high end establishment's wine list said that for his customers "anything that they can't pronounce struggles a lot".

At the same time as they acknowledge the need to provide a product that the consumer recognised and was comfortable with, respondents also noted the need to provide a choice of product in general. This could be seen as providing a perception of choice to manage consumer behaviour, while allowing the business to operate within confines such as limited ability to hold large stock levels, but still using the wine list to contribute to the ambience and customer experience. How wines could be presented, to more closely match the way in which consumers considered wine selection, was not taken into account by the wine list creators.

For the wine list managers their perception, based on limited interaction and feedback from customers, of what the customer expected from their establishment had a direct bearing on how they approached selection of a wine for the wine list. Those restaurants which provided a specialist wine list, with wine part of the total experience, looked to customer expectations of that promised wine experience as a guide when developing the contents of the wine list.

We are supposed to be exclusive and we are supposed to be high quality.

Philip, wine list consultant

They saw their customers as seeking change within a guided framework. Restaurants which sold a customer experience based on comfort and presented an image as a local restaurant

tended to see the wines they presented as part providing that safe environment There was an acknowledgement that variety of wine styles was not as important as choice between different known brands of the same wine type. Additionally, these types of restaurants felt that customers would often avoid the cheapest wine on the list, being happy to pay a small premium for a known wine.

They go for the names they know, that they trust.

Erica, suburban restaurant

Bring your own wine: The struggle for control

How the wine is sold, either by glass or bottle, whether Bring Your Own alcohol (BYO) is permitted and whether food is served are all decisions that the restaurateur makes. Historically, Australian state-based liquor licensing laws have restricted the service of alcohol, including wine. This has allowed the development of BYO at venues, such as restaurants, which in other countries would only sell alcohol. BYO provides another option for wine consumers in where they purchase their wine selection. Restaurants offering BYO generally charge some type of fee to customers to reflect the costs involved in wine service. Although restaurant liquor licenses provide for all restaurants to offer BYO not all choose to allow the practice.

BYO allows customers to pre-select a wine they are familiar with, possibly, as noted by respondents, as a safe option. However, the pressures of business meant that restaurateurs often tried to offer wines beyond the known brands. Some restaurateurs were often reluctant to use well known brands on their list because of the ability of their customers to calculate the profit margin. That is, a customer could easily compare the cost of the wine in a retail environment against the cost of the wine at the restaurant.

I try not to have too many wines on my wine list which are represented in bottle shops. It is a very simple explanation for that, the price.

Pascal, Bistro owner

Once BYO is permitted the practice can simultaneously devalue the importance of the wine list as part of the customer experience while returning control over a key decision to the customer, potentially improving their overall experience. Respondents who did not allow BYO, such as the wine bar, had the perception that customers were coming for a total experience, including the wine that the venue was able to offer. On the other hand, respondents who cited customer demand as the principle reason for allowing BYO had reduced revenue as the option was exercised. The restaurant in this situation was often trying to provide a wine list that competed in both price and style against what a customer may source from retail wine suppliers.

The principal reason restaurateurs gave for their perception of why customers used BYO was price, or more specifically to save money. However in taking a wine to a restaurant a customer may be taking steps to minimise the risks associated with wine selection choices, as they can take a wine they have previously enjoyed. The practice may not just be motivated by monetary savings but by the need for a safe choice. Restaurateurs acknowledge this customer need but are unsure how to deal with it. They do not wish to compete with wines available in high volume at low prices in retail outlets.

As the provider of the total ambience of their restaurant, of which the wine plays a part, restaurateurs wish to maintain a level of control over the customer experience. At the same time they see that customers, while wishing to feel comfortable, are stepping outside everyday boundaries when they choose to visit a restaurant. Several respondents noted that a way to provide a memorable experience was through variety, and seemed perplexed when variety in a wine list did not garner as positive response as they had hoped.

Restaurateurs wanted to see their customers enjoy the wine choices they provided, perhaps as evidence that the intangible positive experience had been achieved. Additionally, they appeared to value customers who approached BYO with the same sense of adventure.

I do allow [BYO] but I will probably only do Tuesday and Wednesday next year. Unless someone calls me and says I have got a bottle of 1955 Chateau Latour, and I will say “yes, you can bring it” and I want to taste [it]!

Pascal, Bistro owner

Restaurateurs are keen to have their wine list be part of the restaurant experience and want their customers to engage with the wine list. The anomaly of BYO wine shows that the restaurant wine list is not a simple game of restaurant, keen to make profits, against customer, staunchly trying to pay the lowest price. A customer who brings wine which is deemed to be interesting and challenging, in a sense respectful to the restaurant, is welcomed. A customer who is motivated solely by the cost saving that BYO wine can provide is seen as stealing profits. A wine list can add colour and life to the customer experience, something a restaurateur wants to do, but not at the expense of profit.

For those that were involved heavily in the development of wine lists there was recognition of the large commitment of time and resources involved.

You can certainly do it, you can certainly source wines that are hardly in retail, which show great quality, and you can list them. You can buy them at a reasonable price, because of the amount of wine in the market. So, you can make your margin, and they sit on your wine list at the right price. That's got to take a dedicated person to invest a lot of hours doing that.

Peter, Wholesale distributor

This time investment may be worthwhile as it provides a revenue return. The wine list in this way can provide customer experience, through variety and comfortable choices, while contributing to the business.

Discussion & Conclusion

Risk reduction has been acknowledged as impacting on consumption decisions (Mitchell & Grottel, 1989) but there has been limited further discussion of why consumers feel compelled to actively seek out ways to reduce perceived risk when purchasing wine. Within the restaurant setting there appears to be a perception by restaurateurs that customers expect the availability of a safe choice amongst those provided. At the same time there is also acknowledgment of the consumer's need to engage with the total experience of restaurant dining (Aune, 2002; Hall et al., 2001) which may take their wine selection beyond the parameters of risk aversion behaviour.

However, just as risk reduction is not the only influence on the consumer's wine selection behaviour nor is profit margin the only factor considered by a restaurateur building a wine list. Restaurateurs in this study appeared to use their wine list as part of the creation of the venue's ambience. They consider customer expectations of their venue and provide wine choices that fit within their interpretation of the customer boundaries. They often appear to develop wine lists with the wish that customers will engage in exploratory wine experiences, providing selections that offer variety and challenges. BYO wine provides the customer control over this exploration or the ability to choose not to explore by bringing a bottle they have tried previously.

In addition to contributing to the customer experience a wine list is also a revenue generation tool for a restaurant and the choices that are presented to consumers on a wine list are selected, by those creating the list, with an expectation of financial return. A conflict remains between revenue and providing a recognisable selection, allowing the consumer to maintain a feeling of security. Respondents noted that a wine may not make their wine list because it could not fulfil both criteria to enough of an extent to make a particular wine a worthwhile risk on their list. In this study the response to the ability of customers to BYO wine is perhaps the most telling in highlighting the dilemma the restaurateur faces. The restaurateur can triumph if they resolve, for the customer, the conflict between variety and security.

This study is based on wine list creators' perceptions of how customers interact with the wine list, an area which has not been fully explored in previous literature. Work to expand the range of restaurant types considered and develop a typology to reflect restaurant and wine list styles in relation to the restaurateurs' perceptions of their customers would further expand this area of understanding. Addressing this particular limitation with the data collection, especially in considering a broader spread of restaurant types and multiple geographic locations, with varying liquor licensing laws, would enhance the results. The nature of this research is exploratory and further work is planned, to investigate the customer's motivation in selecting a particular wine at a restaurant, and this will increase the understanding of this dynamic..

However, the initial findings of this study have implications for, and inform the understanding of, those who market wine for sale through the restaurants. It furthers understanding of how those who are gate keepers of wine lists take perceived customer expectations as a guide to create a wine list which contributes to a unique customer experience.

Restaurateurs wish to provide wines that create an experience and generate revenue. Customers want to select wines that they know or that they are comfortable trying. At times the inherent conflict becomes too much and the customers, if given the option, may simply make the decision outside the restaurant and bring their own wine. The process remains a challenge, as one restaurateur commented, "on paper, wine lists are very easy to do".

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Appendix: Summary of Respondents

Erica, suburban restaurant

Erica is the manager of a suburban restaurant that specialises in seafood. She is responsible for the daily contact with wine distributors sales managers and customers. She handles stocks control of the wine for the restaurant and wine list changes which occur quarterly to fit menu and printing schedules.

Jamie, local pub manager

Jamie is the wine manager and on the tasting panel for wine selection for a chain of 3 pub restaurants based in Perth suburbs. The wine list is reviewed every three months with a panel tasting. He is involved in the ongoing management of the wine list as well as specific promotions. These occur in conjunction with West Australian based wineries. As a business decision West Australian wines are the only ones presented on the wine list.

Peter, wholesale distributor

Peter is the sales manager for a wine distribution company that offers a portfolio of over twenty wine brands to restaurants for what is termed on-premise sales. He manages the contact and sales to a range of establishments from small venues to major icon restaurants reflecting a wide variation of wine list philosophies.

Pascal, bistro owner

Pascal is both the owner and front of house manager for a bistro based in the Perth suburbs. He is the sole decision maker when creating the wine list, although he works in tandem with his chef. As the wine list is produce on demand (printed in house on a laser printer) it is constantly under review and wines can change regularly with Pascal seeing wine sales representatives four to five times a week.

Philip, wine list consultant

Philip has a background wine education and tasting. He provides his expertise on to a wine bar through constructing and maintenance of their wine list. The business provides profit parameters and budget targets while Philip's wine knowledge allows him to select wines to enhance the wine bar's reputation as a premier wine venue.

Stephen, wine list consultant

Stephen runs his own wine distribution business representing a select portfolio of wines. Additionally, he provides consulting services to wine bars and selected restaurants to construct wines lists. These wine lists may include but are not limited to wines represented by his distribution company.