Consumer Socialization of U.S. Wine Consumers

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ABSTRACT

This study examined how four different cohorts of core wine consumers, the Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalists, were first introduced to wine, their current wine consumption preferences, and their attitudes about wine and its image. All four cohorts prefer dry reds, dry whites, and champagnes. All four cohorts associate wine with relaxation and drink it regularly with meals at home and in restaurants. Traditionalists, more often indicated they viewed wine as healthy. This suggests that one of the major reasons older consumers drink wine is for perceived health benefits. The younger drinkers - -both Gen Xers and Millennials, were more apt to agree with the statement that they perceived the image of wine as a sensual and sophisticated drink. This suggests again, a difference in motivations, and therefore, a needed difference in marketing and advertising to tap into the stimuli of these different cohort groups.

INTRODUCTION

Consumer socialization refers to the longitudinal processes by which consumers first learn the skills and attitudes that allow them to participate in the marketplace (Ward, Klees and Wackman, 1990). As marketers within the wine industry seek to understand their customers in more depth, the socialization processes that influence consumers to adopt wine in their life are a natural concern. Questions such as how the consumer was first introduced to wine, by whom, the setting, the type of wine, and their reaction to wine reveal answers that may explain why the consumer has or has not adopted wine into their life today.

Though research on consumer socialization has occurred in other industries (Moschis and Smith, 1985), very little research has been conducted in the U.S. wine industry. In general, wine marketers understand the basic demographics of their target consumer segment, but not the socialization process by which they became wine consumers. Access to this type of data would provide several benefits to wine marketers. The first is more accurate data to develop advertising and promotional materials to match identified socialization situations, and thereby attract more consumers. The second is a forecasting method to assist in predicting the demand for specific varietals based on knowledge of consumer preferences over time (Wilson, Lockshin and Rungie, 2005).

Based on this need for more information on wine consumer socialization in the U.S., a research study was designed to understand the processes by which adult consumers first encounter wine in their lives and the impact on consumption in later life. A survey methodology was employed, which consisted of an online questionnaire. The number of consumers completing the survey was 5939. This paper describes the supporting literature, methodology, results, and implications of this study.

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

In a review of the literature for this study, there are three areas, which are useful to explore. These are: 1) general research findings and benefits of understanding consumer socialization processes for marketing purposes; 2) international wine marketing research related to consumer socialization; and 3) U.S. demographic data on consumer segments. Each of these areas is described more fully in the following sections.

The Consumer Socialization Process

Through the socialization process, families teach the cultural meanings of society, subcultures, and social class to their children (Ward, Klees, and Wackman, 1990). Most consumer socialization research examines how children acquire knowledge about products and services and various consumer decision-making skills (Moschis, 1985). Younger children acquire much of their consumer knowledge from their parents, but adolescents also learn from their peers. Research has shown that as children age they become more sensitive to, and try more to conform to, the opinions of those in their peer group (Meyer and Anderson, 2000). Children and teens also learn about products and shopping skills from social institutions such as TV, magazines and advertising (Churchill and Moschis, 1979).

As adults, husbands and wives or significant others, can influence each other's consumption behaviors. Consumption behaviors are also influenced by friends, co-workers, and "experts" in the product category. Therefore, consumer socialization can occur throughout life as people continue to learn consumer decision-making skills and acquire product knowledge (Peter and Olson, 1999). In the marketing literature there is a great deal of research on the influence of family and reference groups (group influencers other than family) on consumer behavior.

A reference group involves one or more people that an individual uses for comparison or a point of reference in analyzing a situation and making decisions. A referent person or reference groups may be tangible, people the person actually knows, or intangible and symbolic, such as a movie star. Reference groups may be described as a combination of formal or informal, primary or secondary, membership, aspirational, or dissociative (Peter and Olson, 1999).

Formal reference groups have a clearly specified structure, such as co-workers or business clients. Informal groups constitute peers and family. Primary reference groups involve direct, face-to-face interactions; secondary groups do not. People typically become formal members of membership reference groups, such as church, civic, and professional associations. Aspirational reference groups are those that individuals aspire to join or emulate and dissociative reference groups are avoided or rejected. Reference groups can have a positive or negative influence on consumer decision-making. People identify or avoid particular reference groups for three reasons: to gain useful knowledge, to obtain rewards or avoid punishments, or to acquire meanings for constructing, modifying, or maintaining their self-concepts (Peter and Olson, 1999).

According to Bearden and Etzel (1982), reference group's influence on product and brand purchases is thought to depend on whether the purchase is a necessity or a luxury (Bearden and Etzel, 1982), or a publicly consumed good or a privately consumed good (Brinberg and Plimpton, 1986). Reference group influences for product categories are strong for public luxuries (airplane, golf clubs) and private luxuries (trash compactor, ice maker), and weak for public necessities (wristwatch, automobile) and private necessities (mattress, refrigerator). For

specific brands, reference group influence is strong for public luxuries (Gulfstream Jet, Calloway Golf Clubs) and public necessities (Rolex Watch, BMW Automobile).

Relating to wine consumption, the argument can be made that wine is both a public (restaurants and clubs) and a private (home) luxury. Therefore, reference groups would be an important influence in the decision to drink or not drink wine. This premise is partly supported by a study conducted by Simone Pettigrew (2003). Pettigrew found "that the apparent preference of females for wine over other forms of alcohol is contrived by the social environment in which Australians live and consume, as is the tendency for many men to avoid wine consumption in particular informal contexts".

Murphy (1999) found that most Americans have established their drinking preferences by the age of 40. If this is truly the case, then wine researchers need to develop a better understanding of the importance of reference groups when people first are introduced to wine. Beverland (2001) conducted research on Generation X consumers (born between 1965 and 1980) in New Zealand and found that they placed a high degree of importance on the recommendations of friends when deciding on a wine. This is consistent with findings by Hoffrichter, Wildes and Parks (1999), who stated that Generation X places a high degree of importance on the views of their friends, more so than on the views of their families. These findings about Generation X point out the importance of understanding not only reference group influence on wine consumption, but also understanding the importance of reference group influence by generation.

International Research on Wine Consumer Socialization

As mentioned previously, very little research has been conducted on wine consumer socialization in the United States, but there are a few examples existing in the international wine marketing literature. In most cases, these research studies have grouped consumers into groups called "cohorts," which can be defined as "those persons born in the same time interval and aging together" (Ryder, 1965, p.844), and is related to the concept of reference groups as described above. The definition of cohort is useful, because in most countries consumers are often grouped by generation or age and the events they experience together, such as going through a war or growing up with a certain type of technology, impact their perceptions and behavior. According to Ryder (1965), this usually results in one cohort group responding differently than other cohort groups. This is often witnessed in generational responses to products and advertising, which must be changed and updated to appeal to different consumer groups (Neuborne, 1999; Thach and Olsen, 2005).

A key study conducted around the concept of cohorts and wine consumption was completed in France. The study compared 20-24 year olds in 1980 with the same age group in 2000 (INRA and ONIVINS, 2001). They found that in 1980, 70% of the 20-24 year old cohorts consumed wine regularly and maintained that level of consumption for the next twenty years. However, the wine consumption rate of 20-24 year olds in the year 2000 was only 43%. This shows that there is a difference in consumption rate between generations; however the reasons as to why this occurred are not clear.

A more recent study on wine consumption and cohorts was conducted in Australia with a panel of 56 wine consumers who were asked to recall their wine consumption behavior over a number of years for white, red, fortified and sparkling wine, as well as beer and spirits (Wilson, Lockshin and Rungie, 2005). Respondents were sorted into age cohorts. The results showed that wine consumption cohorts were found in every category, with the strongest being fortified wine drinkers currently over the age of 50. This study substantiates the cohort concept for wine consumption.

Additional research has been conducted on the concept of cohorts, but not specifically in relationship to wine – rather other types of alcohol. For example, a study in the U.S. examined cohorts of beer drinkers, and found that women born prior to 1940 and men born between 1946 and 1965 were more apt to drink beer regularly, however as they aged, their consumption decreased (Kerr at al, 2004). A similar study in Japan examined sake consumption between age groups, and discovered that older consumers drink more sake than younger consumers, with the younger cohort preferring beer (Mori et al, 2000).

These studies support the concept of the cohort in terms of consumer socialization of wine and other alcohol. One issue with age cohorts, however, is the difficulty of coming to agreement on the dates, which form the boundaries for the cohort, grouping. Experts do not always agree on the cut-offs that are applied to different generations (Lancaster and Stillman, 2002). Another complication is that generations may differ by geographical location and cultural influence. For example, currently wine consumption in the 21-30 year old age range in France is decreasing, while it is increasing for the same age cohort in the U.S. (Thach and Olsen, 2005). Likewise, within the U.S. population of 21-30 year olds, the Hispanic segment has different wine consumption patterns than the Asian or African-American segments (Gillespie, 2005). Therefore, the concept of an age cohort often needs to be broken down into more precise segments with clear definitions for research purposes.

Demographic Data on U.S. Wine Consumer Segments

The most frequently used wine consumer segmentation in the U.S. is that espoused by the Wine Market Council (2003). It segments the U.S. population into 4 major groupings based on their wine consumption levels: 1) core drinkers, 2) marginal drinkers, 3) non-adopters, and 4) non-drinkers. Each of these groups may then be further broken down based on gender, age, ethnicity, and other segmentation variables such as income and education level.

Core Drinkers drink wine the most, usually several times a week, or at least 3 times a month. Currently, there are about 25.4 million U.S. consumers who are core drinkers, or about 12.5% of the population who fit into this category. This group is very important to wine marketers as they drink 88% of the wine sold in the US (Wine Market Council, 2000). The percentage of core consumers, who drink wine at least once a week, has grown 38% since 2000 (Penn, 2006). Market research has shown that 60% of core consumers are women, 85% ethnic background is white, and 71% are over age 40. This market segment tends to be better educated and more affluent than the average American.

Marginal Drinkers are wine drinkers who enjoy wine but they drink it less often, usually once or twice a month, or at least once a quarter. Wine is usually a beverage that they associate with a special occasion instead of a beverage they would enjoy with a regular meal. Currently, about 14% of the American population, or 28 million consumers fall into this category. In terms of their demographic characteristics, marginal drinkers are very similar to core drinkers, only slightly younger on average, 59% are women, 84% are white, and 58% are over 40.

Non-Adopters drink alcoholic beverages but do not drink wine. Consumers in this group often say that they do not like the taste of wine because they prefer beer or sweeter drinks. People in this category tend to be much younger on average; most are between ages 21 and 39. This group is predominately male at 55%. **Non-Drinkers** do not drink alcohol at all. This is a large group of consumers in America, with 43% of the population, or close to 90 million consumers. There are many reasons why people avoid alcohol, including, their religious beliefs

that advocate abstinence, health issues which they face, such as interactions with medicines, allergies, pregnancy and recovery from addiction behavior.

A second popular segmentation method used by marketers from many other consumer products companies is generational or age cohorts. This is also used in conjunction with the U.S. Wine Market Council consumption segmentation (Gillespie, 2005). This process groups U.S. consumers into four major generations: 1) Traditionalists, 2) Baby Boomers, 3) Gen Xers, and 4) Millennials. Though experts often disagree on the exact cut-off dates for these four generations, the most commonly accepted dates are provided by Lancaster and Stillman (2002). Figure 1 below illustrates the size of the four generations.

Figure 1: U.S. Population Based on Generational Cohorts
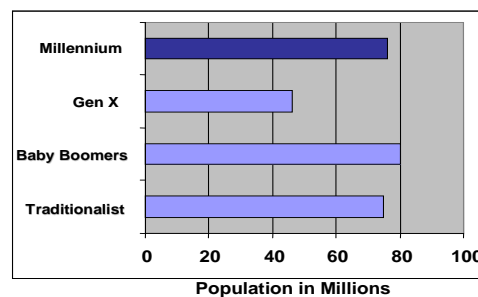
Traditionalists are considered to be born between 1900 and 1945 and include approximately 75 million people. They grew up during World War II and are considered to have a good work-ethic, are more conservative, and save their money. They believe in working towards a common goal, have a strong respect for authority and believe in a top down style of management.

Baby Boomers are typically considered to be born between 1946 and 1964 and total around 80 million people. They are the "me" generation that hit its stride in the "wild 60's" and were strongly shaped by the Vietnam War, human rights movements, and the OPEC oil embargo. They grew up with television and mass advertising. They are considered to be a very optimistic and competitive generation, focused on getting ahead and making money.

Gen Xers are usually considered to be born between 1965 and 1976 and total around 46 million people. They are a much smaller generation than the Baby Boomers, and are often referred to as skeptical or cynical. They exhibit a strong distrust of major institutions and frequently question advertising messages. They grew up during a time in which many new technologies were introduced, such as cell phone, email, fax, computers, and videogames. They are considered to be very resourceful and independent.

Millennials are usually considered to be born between 1977 and 1999 and total nearly 76 million people. Often referred to as the children of the Baby Boomers, Millennials grew up with the Internet at their fingertips and are very technology savvy. They are as optimistic as their parents, but also have a strong practical streak and look for value in products and brands. Furthermore, they value diversity, are environmentally and socially conscious, and seek balance in their lives between work and leisure. They are considered to be the largest consumer group in the history of the U.S. with annual incomes currently totaling $211 billion – even at their young age (Harris Interactive, 2001).

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In the most recent Wine Market Council research combining the generational cohort segmentation with the wine consumption segmentation, Wine Market Council (2003) found that, currently, Baby Boomers continue to be the major consumers of wine in the U.S., with Traditionalist consumption decreasing as they age. Gen Xers tend to prefer other spirits to wine and their consumption rate is lower than Baby Boomers. Millennials, on the other hand, are quickly adopting wine as a favorite beverage and wine consumption is up within this age cohort (Gillespie, 2005). Indeed, a recent Gallop Poll (2005) identified this population as part of the reason for the increased popularity of wine in the U.S., with predictions that wine consumption in the U.S. will continue to increase. A recent study conducted for France's Vin Expo suggests that by 2008 U.S. consumption is expected to be 25 percent of world production (Long, 2005).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The overall goal of the study is to explore the wine consumption preferences of four different cohorts of core wine consumers, the Millennials, Gen Xers, Baby Boomers, and Traditionalists. Specifically, the research investigates differences between the cohorts on how they were first introduced to wine and what their wine preferences were when they started consuming wine, what their current wine consumption preferences are in terms of wine style and varietal, and their attitudes about the image of wine. Given the exploratory nature of the research, formal hypotheses are not proposed here rather the following 6 research questions guided the empirical section of the study.

1. How were the respondents first introduced to wine? Is there a difference between the cohorts in the reasons why they started to consumer wine?

2. What were the favorite wines when respondents first started drinking wine? Were there differences among cohorts in the wines they consumed when they first started to drink wine?

3. What are the styles of wine respondents are drinking now? Are there differences among cohorts?

4. What are the specific varietals that respondents have recently consumed? Are there differences among cohorts?

5. What are the situations in which wine is now consumed? Are there differences among cohorts in the situation in which they consume wine?

6. What is the image that respondents currently have of wine? Is the image of wine different among the cohorts?

METHODOLOGY

In order to address the research questions, an online survey was used to obtain data. The survey was administered by Wine Vision, a trade organization devoted to promoting U.S. wines. The number of responses to the survey was 6715 and of these, over 90% were considered core wine drinkers, drinking one at least once of week or more. The core drinkers were selected for

inclusion in this study and the resulting usable sample size was 5939 respondents. Of this number, 793 were Millennials, 1783 were Gen Xers, 2313 were Baby Boomers, and 1050 were Traditionalists. The overall sample was 51.2% male and 48.8% female, however, gender balance differed among cohorts. The Millennials were 34.6% male, Gen Xers were 42.5% male, Baby Boomers were 55.6% male, and Traditionalists were 68.9% male. As expected, the income levels increase with the age of each cohort. Although the sample was primarily Caucasian, not Hispanic (88.4%), the 2 youngest cohorts were slightly more ethically diverse with 86.5% and 85.1% Caucasian, not Hispanic respectively.

In the questionnaire, the attitudinal questions were measured on a 1 to 5 point scale, where 1 was completely disagree, 2 was somewhat disagree, 3 was neither agree nor disagree, 4 was somewhat agree and 5 was completely agree. Behavioral questions asked respondents to indicate if they had purchased the specified wine or consumed the wine in a specific location in a given time frame, either 1 year or 90 days, depending on the question. The responses were coded 0 for no and 1 for yes therefore the mean provided in the tables represents the percentage of the respondents that said yes. The image of wine was measured by asking respondents if they associated wine with the specified descriptor. Again the replies were coded 0 for no and 1 for yes and the mean reported represents the percentage of respondents indicating yes.

RESULTS

One-way ANOVA was used to test for significant differences in the mean for each group. Duncan's ranges were then used to identify which group means differed from the others. The results of the statistical tests are presented in the following 6 tables and the discussion of the findings follows in the next section of the paper. Table 1 presents the results to the question, how were the respondents first introduced to wine and is there a difference between the cohorts in the reasons why they started to consumer wine.

Table 1: Introduction to Wine, Differences among the Cohorts

Variable	Overall Mean	Mean Cohort 1 Millennials	Mean Cohort Gen Xers	Mean Cohort Baby Boomers	Mean Cohort Tradition-alists	F	Sig.	Duncan's Ranges
Wine fit better with food	3.91	3.92	3.90	3.91	4.05	4.22	.001	1,2,3 from 4
Liked the taste better than beer or spirits	3.81	3.66	3.83	3.81	3.89	5.53	.001	1 from 2, 3, 4
Friends, family or coworkers drank wine	3.71	3.98	3.82	3.63	3.52	30.86	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Classier, more sophisticated than beer	3.42	3.58	3.49	3.40	3.23	13.20	.000	1 from 2,3, from 4
Enjoyed the feeling	3.41	3.70	3.44	3.38	3.22	25.60	.000	1 from 2,3, from 4
It was less filling	2.92	2.88	2.93	2.96	2.85	1.97	.116	
Able to drink slower and less	2.73	2.68	2.66	2.75	2.84	4.87	.002	1,2 from 4

Saw articles about wine	2.58	2.67	2.54	2.56	2.61	2.19	.087	1 from 2
Boyfriend or girlfriend drank wine	2.56	2.55	2.62	2.59	2.42	5.16	.001	1,2,3 from 4
To reduce heart disease	2.21	2.31	2.14	2.21	2.23	3.88	.009	1 from 2, 3
Only beverage available	1.91	1.96	1.95	1.93	1.78	5.62	.001	1,2,3, from 4
Doctor recommended wine	1.72	1.74	1.64	1.74	1.79	5.87	.001	1,3,4 from 2

Table 2 shows the results to the second research question, what were their favorite wines when respondents first started drinking wine and were there differences among cohorts in the wines they consumed when they first started to drink wine?

Table 2: Types of Wines Drunk at First Experiences, Differences among the Cohorts

Variable	Overall Mean	Mean Cohort 1 Millennials	Mean Cohort Gen Xers	Mean Cohort Baby Boomers	Mean Cohort Tradition-alists	F	Sig.	Duncan's Ranges
Dry Red Wines	.39	.54	.38	.32	.43	45.79	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Sweet Sparkling Wine	.33	.20	.30	.40	32	38.34	.000	1 from 2, 4 from 3
Fruit Wines	.30	.29	.22	.41	.23	73.47	.000	2, 4 from 1 from 3
Dry White Wines	.29	.39	.31	.24	.28	24.72	.000	1 from 2, 4, from 3
Sweet White Wines	.29	.21	.27	.31	.32	12.34	.000	1 from 2 from 3, 4
Wine Coolers	.28	.33	.45	.21	.11	173.82	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Champagne	.28	.34	.30	.24	.28	11.92	.000	1 from 3, 4 and 3 from 2, 4
White Zinfandel	.27	.29	.34	.24	.19	30.35	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Port or Sherry	.12	.09	.09	.11	.21	38.60	.000	1, 2, 3 from 4
Sparkling Fruit Wines	.07	.15	.08	.06	.04	30.22	.000	1 from 2, 3, 4, and 4 from 2, 1
Fortified Fruit Wines	.07	.06	.06	.09	.07	4.89	.002	1, 2 from 3

The findings for the third research question, what are the styles of wine respondents are drinking now and are there differences among the cohorts, are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Wines Consumed in the Past Year, Differences among the Cohorts

Variable	Overall Mean	Mean Cohort 1 Millennials	Mean Cohort Gen Xers	Mean Cohort Baby Boomers	Mean Cohort Tradition-alists	F	Sig.	Duncan's Ranges
Dry Red Wines	.96	.96	.97	.96	.95	2.97	.031	1, 2 from 4
Dry White Wines	.90	.89	.91	.90	.89	1.57	.195	
Champagne	.80	.83	.83	.79	.76	5.91	.001	1 from 2, 3 from 3, 4
Port or Sherry	.62	.61	.64	.62	.62	1.66	.173	
Sweet White Wines	.58	.72	.63	.52	.48	51.76	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
White Zinfandel	.28	.34	.27	.28	.25	5.67	.001	1 from 2, 3, 4
Sweet Sparkling Wine	.17	.28	.17	.15	.12	28.99	.000	1 from 2, 3 from 3, 4
Coolers	.06	.09	.04	.05	.05	9.46	.000	1 from 2, 3, 4
Sparkling Fruit Wines	.05	.09	.04	.04	.04	10.24	.000	1 from 2, 3, 4
Fruit Wines	.03	.08	.03	.02	.02	31.04	.000	1 from 2 from 3, 4
Fortified Fruit Wines	.02	.06	.02	.01	.01	27.16	.000	1 from 2 from 3, 4

Table 4 presents the findings for the fourth research question, what are the specific varietals that respondents have recently consumed in the past 90 days, and are there differences among cohorts?

Table 4: Varietal of Wines Purchased in Last 90 Days, Differences among the Cohorts

Variable	Overall Mean	Mean Cohort 1 Millennials	Mean Cohort Gen Xers	Mean Cohort Baby Boomers	Mean Cohort Tradition-alists	F	Sig.	Duncan's Ranges
Cabernet Sauvignon	.88	.89	.88	.87	.88	.95	.414	
Merlot	.83	.85	.81	.83	.83	2.46	.061	1 from 2
Chardonnay	.79	.79	.78	.79	.80	.83	.479	
Shiraz/Syrah	.78	.78	.82	.77	.77	5.62	.001	1, 3, 4 from 2
Pinot Noir	.76	.75	.75	.76	.75	.42	.738	
Sauvignon Blanc	.64	.61	.64	.64	.65	.972	.405	
Red Zinfandel	.61	.57	.62	.62	.62	2.24	.082	1 from 2,

								3, 4
Pinot Gris	.59	.60	.58	.59	.59	.338	.798	
Chianti	.44	.45	.46	.43	.42	2.37	.068	2 from 4
Riesling	.34	.38	.35	.34	.31	3.34	.018	1 from 3, 4
Gewürztraminer	.33	.37	.32	.33	.32	2.50	.057	1 from 2, 3, 4
Chenin Blanc	.20	.20	.21	.19	.21	.82	.480	
Beaujolais	.20	.21	.20	.19	.20	.50	.686	
White Zinfandel	.11	.13	.09	.12	.11	4.18	.006	2 from 1, 3, 4

Table 5 presents the finding of the fifth research question addressing what are the situations in which wine is now consumed and are there differences among cohorts in the situation in which they consume wine?

Table 5: Situations Where Wine is Consumed, Differences among Cohorts

Variable	Overall Mean	Mean Cohort 1 Millennials	Mean Cohort Gen Xers	Mean Cohort Baby Boomers	Mean Cohort Tradition-alists	F	Sig.	Duncan's Ranges
With meals at home	.98	.98	.98	.98	.98	.88	.450	
With meals at restaurants	.96	.96	.97	.96	.96	1.53	.204	
Relax after work	.83	.89	.87	.84	.71	51.37	.000	1, 2 from 3 from 4
At formal celebrations	.80	.86	.82	.78	.75	16.95	.000	1 from 2 from 3, 4
Outdoor parties	.73	.65	.75	.76	.68	17.43	.000	1, 4 from 2, 3
Cocktail parties	.66	.71	.72	.63	.60	20.62	.000	1, 2 from 3, 4
At a bar	.63	.67	.72	.63	.45	74.20	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
At a sporting event	.09	.09	.10	.10	.06	3.95	.008	1, 2, 3 from 4

Finally, the findings for the sixth research question, what is the image that respondents currently have of wine and is the image of wine different among the cohorts are presented in Table 6.

Table 6: The Image of Wine and Differences among the Cohorts

Variable	Overall Mean	Mean Cohort 1 Millennials	Mean Cohort Gen Xers	Mean Cohort Baby Boomers	Mean Cohort Tradition-alists	F	Sig.	Duncan's Ranges
Relaxation	.80	.83	.81	.80	.75	7.37	.000	1, 2, 3 from 4
Healthy	.63	.56	.58	.67	.69	22.33	.000	1, 2 from 3, 4
Sensual	.61	.69	.66	.60	.48	39.30	.000	1 from 2

								from 3 from 4
Sophistication	.60	.72	.67	.56	.48	58.18	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Natural	.59	.52	.55	.62	.63	14.12	.000	1, 2 from 3, 4
Casual	.57	.56	.58	.59	.55	2.08	.101	
Moderation	.48	.36	.42	.53	.59	49.34	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Sexy	.43	.64	.51	.39	.24	124.86	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Upper Class	.31	.41	.35	.28	.23	33.82	.000	1 from 2 from 3 from 4
Formal	.29	.36	.32	.27	.24	13.96	.000	1 from 2 from 3, 4
Hip	.25	.35	.32	.22	.14	52.27	.000	1, 2 from 3 from 4
Cool	.25	.32	.29	.25	.16	27.75	.000	1, 2 from 3 from 4

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study supports the premise that there are differences between age cohorts in terms of wine socialization, consumption practices and motivations; however it also shows that there are some similarities in certain contexts. Furthermore, the results support the importance of reference group theory and cohort influence in wine marketing situations. In discussing the implications of the six research questions, this becomes more apparent.

Reasons Respondents Started Drinking Wine

The first question, regarding the reasons that respondents started to drink wine, illustrates that the top 3 motives across all four cohort groups were: 1) wine fit better with food; 2) they liked the taste of wine; and 3) their friends, family and coworkers drank wine. Interestingly enough, these findings match those identified in a qualitative research study on Millennial wine drinkers in which the two top reasons Millennials drinks wine were because they like the taste and it goes well with food (Thach and Olsen, 2005).

Though these three reasons had the highest means, there were differences among the individual cohort averages. For example, all groups agreed that wine tastes better with food, but the Traditionalists were more likely to agree. Though there may be many reasons for this, one possibility is that this group grew up during the time when it was more common to have cocktails and martinis before dinner, at a bar, or at a party, but once dinner was served, wine was the common beverage served with food. Therefore, they may have been conditioned to believe that wine with food was the most appropriate combination. Indeed, later responses to the questionnaire regarding when they drink wine (Table 5) support this assumption, because Traditionalists were least likely to drink wine at a bar or cocktail party of the four cohort groups.

All four groups agreed that they like the taste of wine better than beer or mixed drinks, but the Millennials were less likely to agree with this statement. A reason for this may be that this

group is younger, and wine is often an acquired taste. Furthermore, among this age group, the flavored vodka drinks are highly popular, and these types of drinks are often sweeter. Indeed, the Millennials also scored quite high on currently enjoying sweet white wines (Table 4).

Another area in which Millennials scored differently was drinking wine because friends, family, and coworkers drank wine. Though all four cohort groups scored high in this category, the Millennials were more likely to agree with the statement. Again, this may be because they are younger and more influenced by reference groups such as friends, family, and co-workers. Likewise, they scored highest on the rationale that wine is more classy and sophisticated than beer. This also supports their strong preponderance to be influenced by reference groups and the desire to drink wine because it makes them appear more classy and sophisticated.

It is important to note that in the results of this question support the relevance of reference group theory described earlier in the literature review (Pettigrew, 2003; Beverland, 2001). Though it appeared as the third most importance factor in explaining why respondents first started to drink wine, it still appeared in all four cohort groups which emphasizes the importance of reference group theory.

A final area in which there were differences between cohort groups was agreeing with the statement that they drank wine because they enjoyed the feeling they got from drinking this. The Traditionalists were the least likely to agree with this, while the Millennials were most likely to agree with the statement. Again, this supports the earlier qualitative research study conducted on Millennial wine drinkers, which showed that the fourth reason they drank wine was because "they liked the buzz" it provided. Traditionalists, on the other hand -- most well into their 60's -- may not be as interested in this benefit of wine. In fact, later in the questionnaire (Table 6), they scored highest on perceiving the image of wine as being healthy. The remainder of the items for this first question were below the 3.0 mean, which suggests they were not that important for any group in influencing their adoption of wine.

Type of Wines Respondents Drank in the Beginning

The second research question regarding the types of wine they first started drinking shows many differences among the four cohort groups. The Traditionalists and the Millennials both started drinking dry red wines – even though they are generations apart; whereas the Baby Boomers started drinking sweet sparkling wines such as Asti Spumante and Cold Duck, as well as fruit wines such as Boone's Farm and Annie Green Springs. Gen Xers), on the other hand, were more apt to start drinking wine coolers, such as California Cooler and Bartles and James.

The answer to these differences, in most cases, probably has to do with the types of wine that were popular and most commonly available during the time when these cohort groups first started drinking wine. With the Traditionalists, now primarily in their 60's, if they began drinking in the early 20's, wine coolers, fruit wine, and white zinfandel would not have been invented yet. However, with Millennials, who are currently in their 20's, these types of wines have primarily fallen out of favor and are not as available in the U.S. supermarkets. Instead dry white and red wines dominate the shelves. Therefore, it is likely that both of these groups started drinking what was available and fashionable when they first started drinking wine.

The Baby Boomers were a key generation to be targeted by fruit wine marketers, and therefore, it is reasonable to expect that they would have started off drinking this type of wine. Likewise, the Gen Xers, now in their 30's, were of legal drinking age just as the huge marketing push towards wine coolers was heating up. Therefore, it is expected that this might be an entry point for their respective wine consumption patterns.

Overall, with this question, the highest scoring mean was for dry red wine (.39) as an entry-point; however, this was skewed heavily towards the Millennials at .54. This supports other current research that shows that the Millennial generation is one of the first generations to begin drinking red wine, verses white or sweeter wines as an entry-point (Gillespie, 2005; Wine Market Council; 2000; Thach and Olsen, 2005).
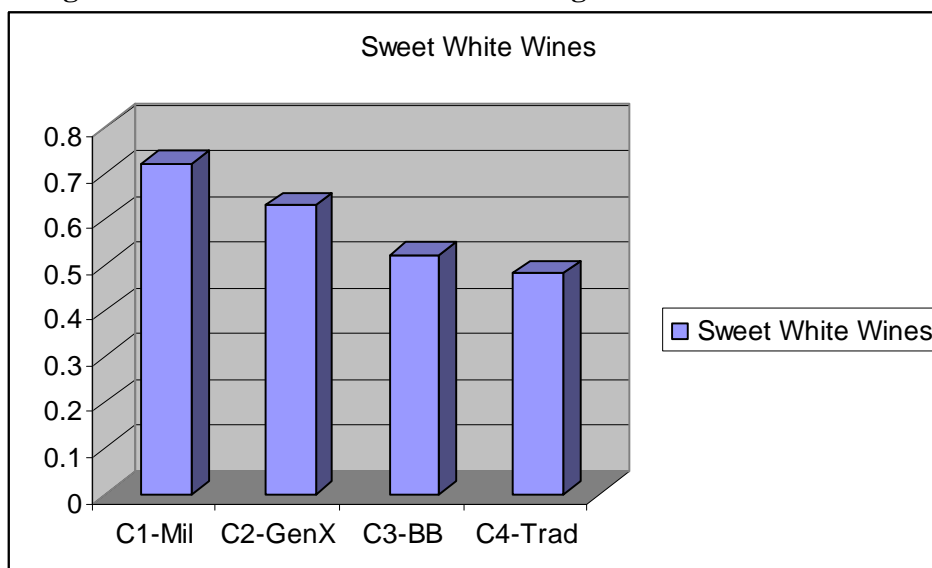
Type of Wines Respondents are Drinking Now

Probably more interesting than the entry wine question is the third question regarding the type of wine they are drinking now. Here there are strong similarities between all 4 cohort groups. Regardless of what type of wine they started out drinking, all four groups indicated that the top 3 types of wine they are drinking now are dry red wines (.96); dry white wines (.90); and champagne (.80). Furthermore, there is very little differentiation in their response patterns.

One reason for these strong similarities in wine preference could be the fact that all respondents in this sample are classified as core drinkers, meaning they drink wine frequently – usually at least once a week; sometimes daily. Therefore, since they are quite knowledgeable about wine and these 3 types of wine go quite well with food, they may have all evolved to these preference patterns. Another reason is because popular sentiment in the U.S. suggests that sweeter wines and rose wines, such as white zinfandel, are considered to be less sophisticated than their drier counterparts.

One interesting aberration is a strong preference for Millennials now drinking sweet white wines (Table 3), such as Rieslings and gewürztraminers. What is fascinating about this is the fact that they started with dry red and whites, and now are moving to sweeter wines. This is an opposite trend in comparison with the other cohort groups, as illustrated in Figure 2. This may suggest a larger market, in the future, for sweet white wines, since the Millennials are already sophisticated wine drinkers with entry-experience in dry reds and whites, and are a very large market size at 76 million consumers.

**Figure 2. Cohort Preference for Drinking Sweet White Wines Now**

Preferred Varietals Currently Drinking

The fourth research question regarding the types of varietals the respondents are currently drinking supports the findings of the previous question on type of wine. Since dry reds are the most popular, it is no surprise that cabernet sauvignon came in first and merlot as second. Likewise, since dry white wines were the second most popular type of wine respondents currently drink, the fact that chardonnay was the third most popular varietal is to be expected. There is a strong similarity in response pattern to all cohort groups on these items. The only minor difference is noted in the sweet white wines, such as riesling, pinot gris, and gewürztraminer. In each of these categories, the Millennials scored highest, mirroring the results in the previous question regarding their additional preference for sweet whites in addition to dry reds, whites, and champagne.

Types of Situations in Which Wine is Consumed

The fifth research question regarding the types of situations in which wine is consumed, illustrates similarities and difference between cohorts. All groups agreed that the most popular situation to consume wine is with meals, either at home or in restaurants. There were, however, interesting differences of opinions regarding 4 other situations illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Types of Situations to Consume Wine**
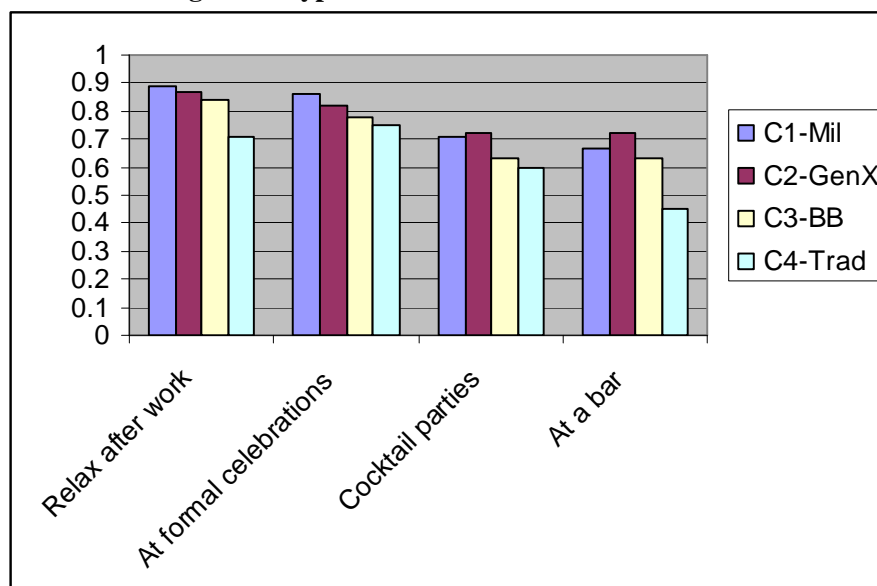
All four groups agreed that using wine to relax was third highest, but the Millennials and Gen Xers especially agreed with this statement, scoring it much higher than the two older cohorts. These two younger groups also viewed wine as a beverage to consume at formal celebrations and at cocktail parties, whereas the two older groups did not agree as strongly. This shows a marked difference in the way wine is perceived by the different generations. Probably the most telling result is the fact that the Traditionalist do not see wine as a beverage to drink at a bar, whereas the other groups agree more strongly with this. The rationale may lie in the background of the Traditionalists as being a generation that was known for the cocktail hour and drinking martinis. It is probable that they see wine as going with food, but not as a bar drink. Instead they may be more conditioned to order a cocktail.

Image of Wine

The final research question regarding the image of wine elicits some strong differences between the four cohort groups, suggesting that their reasons for drinking wine are different as

well (Figure 4). For example, the highest scoring "image" of wine was that it was used for relaxation, but the Millennials agreed most strongly with this at .83 and the Traditionalists scored the lowest of the four groups at .75. This suggests that Millennials see wine as a beverage to help them relax, verses a beverage to party with; whereas the other cohorts don't see wine as strongly in this context.

Figure 4: Differences in Image of Wine Between Cohort Groups
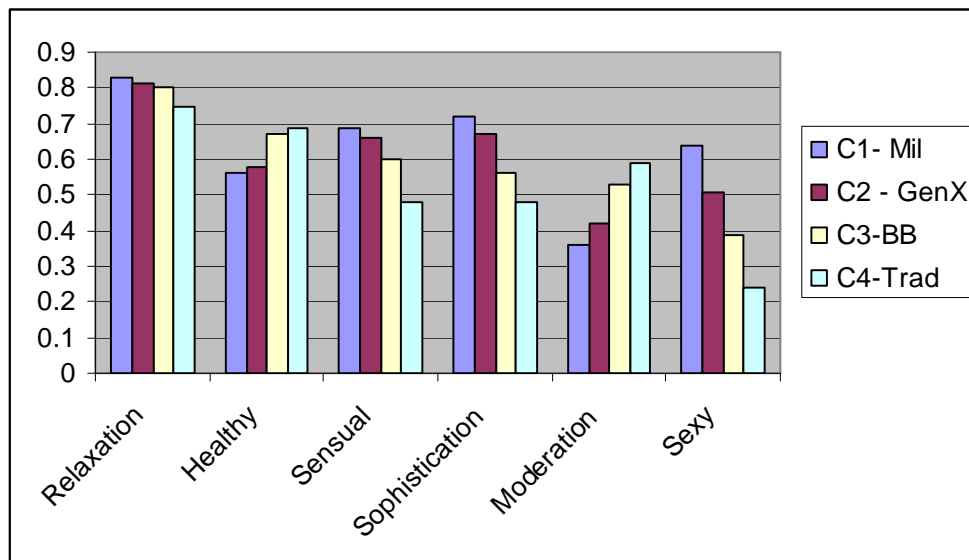
On the other hand, there is a reversed trend between the groups regarding the image of wine as healthy. Traditionalists scored this most highly, with Millennials identifying this image as less important. This suggests that one of the major reasons older consumers drink wine is for perceived health benefits. This supports findings in other studies (Wine Market Council, 2000). Figure 4 also shows an opposite trend between the four groups regarding the image of wine as sensual and sophisticated. The younger drinkers, both Gen Xers and Millennials, were more apt to agree with the statement that they perceived the image of wine as a sensual and sophisticated drink, whereas the older cohorts did not agree as strongly with this statement. This suggests again, a difference in motivations, and therefore, a needed difference in marketing and advertising to tap into the stimuli of these different cohort groups.

Finally, two other interesting differences between cohorts had to do with wine's image as a drink of moderation and as sexy. Again, according to Figure 4, Traditionalists agreed most strongly that wine is a drink of moderation, and this could be because this was a generation that was more apt to drink spirits and strong cocktails, such as martinis. Therefore wine would be perceived as a moderate drink. The reason as to why the other groups feel differently is up to debate. The image of wine as sexy, appears to have a strong correlation with the age of the respondent group. According to this study, as a cohort group ages, they are less likely to perceive wine as sexy. This suggests that promoting the image of wine as "sexy" in advertising would be less effective with older consumers.

Implications to Marketers

There are several important implications in this study for wine marketers. The primary and most obvious implication is that marketers must take generational differences into consideration when developing wine marketing and advertising campaigns. This is because each

of the different age cohorts appears to be drinking wine for different reasons. Therefore, wine marketers must understand the motivations of these different generations and modify this advertising to match the desired needs.

The good news is that there are a few concepts that appear to be universal regarding wine and why people start drinking wine. The main one is the food and wine connection. There is strong agreement across all four age cohorts that wine and food go together and enhance one another. Therefore, a further emphasis on this connection in advertising campaigns would probably be beneficial. Furthermore, it appears that people begin to drink wine because they are introduced by family, friends and co-worker and they enjoy the taste. Advertising that depicts the characteristics of the various cohort groups could be appealing, especially to the Millennials which showed the strongest indication that they adopted wine because they were influenced by friends and family. More research on differences in taste profiles, explaining why certain individuals prefer fruity and sweet verses tannic and dry, would also be useful.

Another interesting implication of this study, is that regardless of the type of wine that people start drinking, they all eventually migrate to the same place as they become core drinkers. For this study, all four groups indicated they are now primarily drinking dry red and white wines, as well as champagne. All three of these types of wines also go well with food. The only exception is the Millennials' additional preference for sweet white wines, such as reislings and gewürztraminer. This suggests that there may be a growing market in this area, and that grape growers and winemakers may want to consider this in their future forecasting for type of grape varietal to plant and make. It is also possible that this trend towards drinking sweeter white wines after starting with dry red wines as an entry-point suggests a shift in wine preference tastes. According to Phillips (2000), throughout the centuries of wine history, there have been continuing patterns of shifts within wine drinking cultures of people preferring dry wines and then shifting to sweet, and then back again. There is a possibility that this could be just be beginning with the millennial generation.

A final implication for wine marketers has to do with the strong connection of wine to relaxation. This concept is currently not being promoted very well in the U.S. Instead wine marketers seem to be focused on the food/wine connection, as well as promoting wine as a drink of romance and sophistication. Though these also came up as motivations to drink wine, relaxation was a strong motivation for all four groups. This suggests that wine marketers may want to tap into the various settings and ways in which consumers use wine to relax and portray this in their advertising.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The fact that this study is based on the wine consumption behaviors and attitudes of only core drinkers in the U.S. makes the generalizability of this study to marginal wine consumers and other countries tenuous. Therefore, the authors recommend that this study be duplicated in other countries and with the marginal wine drinking segment in the U.S. Another limitation of this study is the fact that it is based on an internet survey, thus making the sample nonrandom. Only individuals who knew how to access the Wine Vision web site responded to this survey. This sample may be more "involved" with wine than the typical wine consumer. These respondents also would have needed to be comfortable with using the internet. Therefore, this sample may not be representative of all core drinkers in the U.S. and most probably missed many of the new wine drinkers in the U.S.

Another limitation had to do with the fact that the survey was designed to capture data from respondents at one point in time only. Ideally, a cohort analysis would compare behaviors of the respondents in the same age bracket at different points in time. The data doesn't currently allow for this approach because it was a voluntary Internet survey and it would not be possible to guarantee that the same group of random respondents would complete the survey a second time. Related to this limitation is a question of life cycle effect, which has been shown to impact consumer decisions around wine consumption in that there are certain times in a person's life when they may begin consuming more wine for health or other reasons (Thach & Olsen, 2004). This study does not examine the difference between cohort and life cycle effect. A final limitation to the study was the fact that respondents were asked to rely on memory regarding the types of wine they drank in the beginning. In some cases, their memory may not have been completely accurate.

In terms of future research, the questionnaire could now be expanded to include more specific questions relating to the wine drinkers' first introductions to wine as well as life cycle effects. If, as the findings suggest, that friends, family, and/or coworkers drank wine and that is how the respondent was introduced to wine, then how did this introduction take place? In what setting and for what occasion? More in depth questions on reference group influence would help marketers understand the importance of specific reference groups under different types of settings (e.g. barbeques, weddings, business dinners). Future research could develop more in depth questions relating to the occasion, budget of the consumer, the importance of the reference group to the consumer, and the wine expertise of peers as influencers of new wine consumers. If co/workers are indeed large influencers on new wine drinkers, then perhaps wine tastings at professional conferences may be an effective venue for the introduction of wine. Formal research hypotheses based on these additional concepts could be tested to provide additional support for the theory of consumer socialization.

Another area of future research could be into the concept of drinking for relaxation. Eighty percent of the respondents associated wine with relaxation. What are the implications for marketers? A more thorough examination of what relaxation means to wine consumers may help in the development of future advertising campaigns and also in selecting sponsorship opportunities for the arts, fundraisers, sporting, and social events. Finally, it may be useful to adapt the survey to a qualitative format of cohort consumer panels which could be reconvened and tracked over time in order to compare potential changes in behavior regarding wine consumption.

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