

## **Exploring Attributes of Variety Seeking Wine Consumers in the US**

**Dr. Janeen Olsen**

SSU Wine Business Institute, Sonoma State University, USA  
[janeenolsen@gmail.com](mailto:janeenolsen@gmail.com)

**Dr. Tom Atkin**

SSU Wine Business Institute, Sonoma State University, USA  
[Tom.Atkin@sonoma.edu](mailto:Tom.Atkin@sonoma.edu)

**Dr. Liz Thach, MW**

SSU Wine Business Institute, Sonoma State University, USA  
[Liz@lizthach.com](mailto:Liz@lizthach.com)

**Dr. Steve Cuellar**

SSU Wine Business Institute, Sonoma State University, USA  
[cuellar@sonoma.edu](mailto:cuellar@sonoma.edu)

**Respectfully Submitted April 8th**

to

***AWBR 8<sup>th</sup> International Conference  
Geisenheim, Germany***

# Exploring Attributes of Variety Seeking Wine Consumers in the US

## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** To investigate the various levels of variety seeking behavior amongst US wine consumers, in order to determine if there are differences in characteristics, values, and their relationship with wine

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative research study using an online survey of 401 US wine consumers. The Swartz Value Inventory and VARSEEK scale were used as part of the measurement instruments. SPSS software was used to analyze data, including descriptive statistics, ANOVAs and discriminate analysis.

**Findings:** Results illustrate strong differences between High Variety Seeking Consumers compared to Moderate Variety Seeking and Variety Avoiders, in that High Variety Seekers were younger, held different values, paid more for wine, purchased wine in more locations, preferred more varietals, and considered themselves to have more wine knowledge and involvement than the other two segments.

**Practical implications:** The results suggest several implication for wine marketers targeting High Variety Seeking Consumers including wine brands that offer a wider array of varietals, wines from different countries, various price tiers, and include creative packaging and sustainable messages.

**KEY WORDS:** Wine, consumer behavior, variety-seeking, consumer segmentation

---

The concept of variety seeking behavior has been developed in several areas since the 1950's. Exploratory behavior has been a major topic of research in the psychology literature as Berlyne (1960) suggested that "novelty", "unexpectedness", "change", and "complexity" are pursued because they are inherently satisfying. The concept quickly made its way into the marketing research literature, and is of special interest to product categories in which there are a large number of choices for consumers, such as music labels, perfume and wine.

With estimates of more than 10,000 wine brands available in US retail establishments (Mondavi, 2008), wine is often referred to as a very confusing product that creates a segment of consumers that are "overwhelmed" by the amount of choices (Constellation, 2008). At the same time, there are a group of wine consumers that appear to relish the wide variety of styles, varietals, and national origins of wine. These consumers are often referred to as "variety seeking."

Though some research has occurred in different countries on the construct of variety seeking consumers (Goldsmith, d'Hauteville and Flynn, 1998; Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991; Orth & Bourrain, 2005), only a few studies have examined the US wine consumer (Dodd et al.,1996). Therefore the purpose of this paper is to investigate the various levels of variety seeking behavior amongst US wine consumers, in order to determine if there are differences in characteristics, values, and their relationship with wine. This resulting information will be useful

in assisting wine marketers in developing more focused promotions, as well as to provide direction for future wine business research.

## **1. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

### **1.1 Definitions and Measures of Variety Seeking Behavior**

Defining and measuring variety-seeking behavior amongst consumers has resulted in several definitions and useful scales to address the issue. One of the most comprehensive definitions of variety seeking behavior was described by Hirschman (1980) as an internal drive or motivating force that motivates the individual to seek out novel information. However, individuals often vary their choices among known stimuli. For example, they may vary their purchases of previously sampled brands. She referred to this phenomenon as “variety seeking” since the stimuli are not completely new and new information is not acquired.

Zuckerman developed several instruments for measuring the personality trait of sensation seeking (Zuckerman et. al., 1978; Zuckerman, 1994). It consisted of four subscales that measured thrill and adventure seeking, disinhibition, boredom acceptability, and experience seeking, which represents the seeking of experience through the mind and sense as well as travel (Ferrando and Chico, 2001). In addition, other researchers have used different methods of measurement. For example a higher degree of novelty was shown to increase the GSR (Galvanic Skin Response) of subjects (Berlyne et al, 1963).

Howard and Sheth (1969) and Venkatesan (1973) have asserted that there is an optimal level of stimulation that consumers strive to maintain. A departure from that optimality can lead the consumer to behave in such a way as to reestablish the stimulus level to an intermediate range (Berlyne, 1960). One method to measure this Optimal Stimulation Level (OSL) was Zuckerman’s (1964) Sensation Seeking Scale.

Another instrument used to measure OSL is the Change Seeker Index (CSI), which gauged the need for variation in an individual’s stimulus input (Garlington and Shimota, 1964). At 95 items, it has been observed that that it is too long for practical use so Steenkamp and Baumgartner (1995) reduced it to a 7-item scale without losing any nomological validity.

### **1.2 Characteristics of High Variety Seeking Consumers**

Consumers with high levels of variety seeking behavior have a tendency to exhibit certain characteristics. Kish and Donnenworth (1972) characterized a high sensation seeker (HSS) who possesses a stronger than average need to seek out activities which are novel, complex, or more intense. Mittelstaedt et. al. (1972) found that high sensation seekers tend to push through the evaluation phase and move right in to the actual trial of a new product. HSS individuals also have a shorter decision time than those with a low OSL.

In the consumer behavior area, the literature suggests that individuals with high OSL will be more likely to explore new stimuli due to the higher need for environmental stimulation (Raju, 1980). This would include stimulus characteristics such as novelty and complexity as well as information search behavior (Raju and Venkatesan, 1980). On the other hand, those with a low

OSL will feel more comfortable with familiar stimulation. Raju (1980) also found that consumers with high OSLs are less rigid in their response patterns and more likely to seek change or variety. It was also found that high OSL people tend to be younger, better educated and employed. These linkages of OSL to demographic variables can help to identify target markets. Those with high OSL are more prone to brand switching while lower OSLs tend toward repetitive behavior.

In addition to focusing on variety seeking as an individual characteristic, Van Trijp et. al. (1996) investigated the impact of product category, where consumers may seek variety in one product category but not in another. They found that the product category-level variables such as purchase frequency and purchase history make a greater contribution than the need for variety in determining variety-seeking intensity. This leads to the conclusion that variety-seeking behavior is not expressed to the same extent for all products.

Concerning purchase behavior, Kahn (1995) defined variety seeking to be the tendency of an individual to seek diversity in their choices of services or goods. That individual may seek diversity due to their desire for change or because of satiation with product attributes (McAlister and Pessemier, 1982). Once a consumer has attained an optimal level of an attribute, he is satiated and may choose to consume a different attribute on the next occasion. They also posited that risk takers are more likely to act upon their intrinsic desire to explore unusual and unfamiliar products. Another motivation, put forward by Kahn (1995), is that consumers seek the variety of a portfolio of options as a hedge against future preference uncertainties.

Ratner and Kahn (2002) focused upon hedonic products where the benefits provided are a matter of taste (as opposed to utilitarian products). They found that consumers expect others to evaluate their purchase decision more favorably if they choose variety. Thus, consumers will incorporate more variety if they expect their decision to be subject to public scrutiny than if it was a private decision. Earlier research by Ariely and Levav (2000) demonstrated that the desire to make a positive impression on others led consumers to incorporate variety in situations where decisions could be observed by others.

The extent to which perceived social pressure can lead to consumer's choosing variety can vary across product attributes (Inman, 2001). Inman found that consumers are more likely to seek variety on sensory attributes, such as flavor, than on non-sensory characteristics, such as brand. Using A.C. Nielsen wand panel data, purchases from 1,900 households were tracked over a three year period. It was found that consumers switch more intensely between flavors than between brands. This was true for both cake mix and tortilla chips.

### **1.3 Variety Seeking in the Wine Domain**

Variety-seeking has been a topic of interest in the wine area for the last two decades. Researchers compared enthusiasts who switch the region of their wine purchases frequently to those with lower levels of variety-seeking behavior (Dodd et. al. 1996). According to Bloch (1986), product enthusiasts are consumers that possess an enduring involvement with certain products. The willingness of consumers to drink wine from a variety of regions has been used previously as a measure of variety-seeking in the wine domain (McAlister and Pessemier, 1982).

Dodd et. al. (1996) found that variety-seekers consult more information sources than lower variety seekers. Variety avoiders spent less money on wine annually and consumed wine less frequently than variety neutral or variety seeking consumers. No significant associations were found between the amount of variety sought and age, income, or education.

Goldsmith, d'Hauteville and Flynn (1998) studied innovative consumer behavior because they felt it important to know who the potential earliest adopters of a new product are so special marketing efforts can be directed toward their trial and eventual adoption. Innovators act as gatekeepers for new products and can also provide early feedback to marketers. The domain specific innovativeness scale (Goldsmith and Hofacker, 1991) measures the innovativeness or tendency of wine consumers to be among the first to try new wine products. An international sample of respondents from England, Germany, and France showed that wine innovators in all three countries tended to be heavy users of wine. In addition, they were more involved and more knowledgeable about wine than later adopters.

Another factor to consider is risk. Campbell and Goodstein (2001) found that when the goals of a purchase are high risk, people become more risk averse and have a greater preference for familiar options. "For example, the goal of choosing a good wine for a socially risky occasion is likely to lead to a preference for a product that matches expectations rather than for a novel product (p. 441).

Wine has long been observed to be a complex product. Rasmussen (2001) found that in many situations, wine consumers simply purchase a familiar brand as a way to avoid processing the complex information.

Orth and Bourrain (2005) integrated consumer behavior, psychology and marketing in order to investigate the role of retail atmospherics in stimulating variety-seeking behavior in wine purchases. Wine marketers have found that buyers are often hesitant to try new brands and varieties because such choices are perceived to be risky. The research found that the pleasantness of a scent moderated the effects of optimum and actual stimulation on variety seeking and risk taking.

Knox (1998) asserts that most customers buy on a portfolio basis and brand loyalty is relative. He points out that 99% of British gasoline consumers buy more than one brand and 85% of customers shop at more than one grocery retailer. Some customers are "switchers" who change brands opportunistically for discounts and lower prices while others are variety seekers who will purchase different products on different occasions. Research conducted at upmarket wine stores in the London, England area found that variety-seekers would buy their preferred wine only one time out of fifteen. He cautioned that variety seekers are expensive customers because they need the stimulation of a large variety of wine from which to choose and are prone to sales promotions.

In addition to brand, consumers often buy wine at a variety of price points (Hussain et. al, 2007). They found that consumers at all levels of knowledge were variety seeking as far as the price paid per bottle of wine. They also point out that shoppers often appear confused during the wine

selection process and consumers have trouble remembering which wines they have previously bought and liked.

## **2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Based on the review of the literature several research questions were developed with a focus on US wine consumers

- 1) What are the different levels of variety seeking behavior amongst wine consumers?
- 2) Are there differences in consumer characteristics based on their variety seeking level?
- 3) Are there differences in values of consumers based on their variety seeking level?
- 4) What type of relationship do different levels of variety seeking consumers exhibit towards wine, in terms of: a) consumption frequency, b) average price paid c) purchase location, d) wine knowledge, e) wine involvement, and f) preferred varieties?

From a marketing segmentation perspective, it is important to understand how consumers approach wine from a variety seeking perspective. The results can assist wine marketers in developing more focused promotions, as well as to provide directions for future wine business research.

## **3. METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Creation of market segments based on variety seeking behavior.**

An online survey was developed to measure variety seeking behavior, as well as to gather data on consumer characteristics, values, and their relationship with wine in terms of consumption frequency, preferred varieties, self-assessed wine knowledge and involvement, as well as purchasing behavior. A total of 84 questions were included in the survey, utilizing standard 5-point Likert type scales, or simple rating questions.

Membership in discrete market segments based on variety seeking tendencies are the criterion variable for this study. In order to measure variety seeking behavior among wine consumers, the VARSEEK scale, first developed to measure variety seeking tendencies with respect to food, was adapted to wine (Van Trijp and Steenkamp, 1992). All items were measured on a 5-point Likert type scale where 1 equaled strongly disagree and 5 equaled strongly agree.

In order measure individual values, the Schwartz Value Inventory (SRI) was used as the framework (Schwartz, 1994). For the remainder of the questions, standard scales to measure wine knowledge and wine involvement were used, as well as the Wine Market Council's measurement of consumption frequency. For wine varieties, information was sourced from Nielson scan data to identify the top 12 most popular varieties consumer in the US.

The resulting survey questions were beta-tested, and minor revisions were made. The survey was launched on March 12, 2012 using Survey Monkey and the services of Survey Sampling International. The target sample was wine consumers from the southern part of the US. This demographic was selected because the southern states of Florida, Georgia, Texas, and others are growing quickly in terms of wine consumption. The survey was ended on March 19 2012, and resulted in a total of 401 usable responses for the analysis.

## 4. RESULTS

### 4.1 Variety Seeking Behavior in Wine

The results of the measures from the VARSEEK scale are listed in Table 1, along with the means and standard deviations. The Chronbach's Alpha for the scale was .864 providing evidence of internal reliability among the eight items.

**Table 1. Measures of Variety Seeking Behavior in Wine**

| Measures for Variety Seeking Behavior   | Mean | Standard Deviation |
|---|------|--------------------|
| 1. I like to try the most unusual wines, even if I am not sure I would like them. | 3.27 | 1.09               |
| 2. I think it is fun to try out the wines I am not familiar with.                 | 3.82 | .89                |
| 3. I like to drink exotic wines.  | 3.36 | 1.06               |
| 4. At dinner parties, I enjoy trying new wines.                                   | 3.78 | .89                |
| 5. I like to try wines from different countries.                                  | 3.76 | .94                |
| 6. I am constantly sampling new and different wines.                              | 3.26 | 1.06               |
| 7. I prefer to drink only the wines I am used to. (Reverse scored)                | 2.34 | .89                |
| 8. I am afraid to try wines I have never had before. (Reverse scored)             | 3.04 | 1.08               |

Chronbach's Alpha, .864, N = 387

### 4.2 Cluster Analysis into 3 Market Segments

Next, cluster analysis was used to identify distinct market segments based on their wine variety seeking behavior. Using this approach simplifies data structures and facilitates discussion of marketing activities directed at discreet target market segments. A solution with 3 market segments was selected for interpretation in this study. A 3 segment solution allows researchers to adopt the polar extreme approach of comparing the two extreme groups, those whose members exhibit low and high variety seeking behaviors (Hair et al., 2006, pg. 288). The 3 segments were labeled high variety seekers (n = 159), moderate variety seekers (n = 178), and a smaller group labeled variety avoiders (n = 64).

ANOVA and discriminant analysis were used to profile the 3 market segments (Hair et al., 2006, pg. 626). Given a single categorical criterion variable and multiple continuous predictor variables, univariate ANOVA was first used to profile group members. Discriminant analysis is the appropriate statistical technique for testing whether group means, in this case for variety seeking segments, are equal. Its use is appropriate when a large number of interrelated predictor variables are involved as is the case in this study. Loadings can be used to determine which variables contribute the most to discriminating between group membership.

Table 2 presents findings of the analyses used to identify the nature of the 3 groups. As the same measures used to first create the groups with cluster analysis were then used in the discriminate analysis and ANOVA to describe their members, the finding have no inferential purposes.

**Table 2. ANOVA and Discriminant Analysis for Variety Seeking Measures for Variety Seeking Segments**

| Variety Seeking Measures  | High Variety Seekers Mean, N = 159 | Moderate Variety Seekers Mean, N = 178 | Variety Avoiders Mean, N = 64 | F-Ratio | Sig. | Loading |
|---|------------------------------------|--|-------------------------------|---------|------|---------|
| 1. I like to try the most unusual wines, even if I am not sure I would like them. | 4.12                               | 3.01                                   | 1.71                          | 251.3   | .000 | .570    |
| 2. I think it is fun to try out the wines I am not familiar with.                 | 4.40                               | 3.72                                   | 2.54                          | 211.9   | .000 | .519    |
| 3. I like to drink exotic wines.  | 4.18                               | 3.13                                   | 1.84                          | 239.2   | .000 | .556    |
| 4. At dinner parties, I enjoy trying new wines.                                   | 4.38                               | 3.59                                   | 2.71                          | 132.7   | .000 | .414    |
| 5. I like to try wines from different countries.                                  | 4.39                               | 3.59                                   | 2.52                          | 155.6   | .000 | .448    |
| 6. I am constantly sampling new and different wines.                              | 4.11                               | 2.97                                   | 1.86                          | 225.8   | .000 | .539    |
| 7. I prefer to drink only the wines I am used to.<br>(Reverse scored)             | 2.62                               | 2.30                                   | 1.75                          | 22.4    | .000 | .169    |
| 8. I am afraid to try wines I have never had before.<br>(Reverse scored)          | 3.54                               | 3.59                                   | 2.52                          | 55.5    | .000 | .267    |

First discriminant function significant at  $p = .000$ . Centroids are High Variety Seekers, 2.07, Moderate Variety Seekers, -.60, and Variety Avoiders, -3.83.

## 4.2 Describing the 3 Variety Seeking Market Segments

### 4.2.1. Consumer Characteristics

The remaining analyses seek to further describe the 3 market segments in terms of their consumer characteristics, values, and relationship with wine. The first set of analyses focused on common demographic attributes used in market segmentation strategies. Age was measured using 4 categories matching generational groups. The first category was age 21-33, known as the Millennials, the second category was age 34-45, Generation X, the third category was age 46-63, the Baby Boomers, and the final category, older than 63 were the Seniors. Gender, educational attainment and income were also measured using standard formats. The results of the ANOVA showed that age is the only consumer characteristic on which the variety seeking segments differed, with high variety seekers being the youngest, moderate variety seekers are in the middle and the variety avoider the oldest in terms of their mean age. Duncan's Post Hoc test revealed that the 3 segments are significantly different from each other in terms of age. The



results of the ANOVA revealed there are no significant differences among the 3 market segments in terms of their gender, educational attainment and income levels.

**Table 3. ANOVA for Consumer Characteristics and Variety Seeking Segments**

| <b>Consumer Characteristic Measures</b>   | <b>High Variety Seekers Mean N = 159</b> | <b>Moderate Variety Seekers Mean, N = 178</b> | <b>Variety Avoiders Mean, N = 64</b> | <b>F-Ratio</b> | <b>Sig.</b> |
|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|
| Age (4 categories, 1 = 21-33, 2 = 34 – 45, 3 = 46-63, and 4 = greater than 63)  | 2.10                                     | 2.60  | 3.02                                 | 20.59          | .000*       |
| Gender (1= male, 2 = female)  | 1.53                                     | 1.59  | 1.55                                 | .750           | .473        |
| Education (1 = some high school or less, 2 = high school graduate, 3 = some college, 4 = college graduate, 5 = some graduate school, 6 = completed graduate school)                                 | 3.53                                     | 3.63  | 3.61                                 | .285           | .752        |
| Income (1 = less than \$20,000, 2 = \$20,000-\$29,999, 3 = \$30,000-\$39,999, 4 = \$40,000-\$49,999, 5 = \$50,000-\$69,999, 6 = \$70,000-\$99,999, 7 = \$100,000-\$149,999, 8 = \$150.000 and over) | 4.27                                     | 4.13  | 4.14                                 | .180           | .835        |

\*Duncan Post Hoc Test, each subset differs from others.

#### **4.2.2 Consumer Values**

The research investigated whether the 3 market segments differed in terms of the values held by its members. To measure individual values, the Schwartz Value Inventory (SRI) was used as the framework (Schwartz, 1994). This approach has been used in wine marketing research to better understand wine market segments (Mueller, Remaud and Chabin, 2011). The specific scale items used to measure values were developed by Held, et al. (2009) and are presented in Table 4.

The results of the ANOVA and discriminant analysis show that members of the 3 market segments were different in terms of many of the core values they held. A lower mean score indicates greater agreement that the value is seen as important. High variety seekers are most likely to hold values that creativity is important, whereas the variety avoiders place less value on creativity. The high variety seekers value fun and enjoyment of life and they are more likely to value an exciting life and risk taking more than variety avoiders. High variety seekers are also more likely to value money and expensive things than variety avoiders and they also value

success and having others recognize their achievements. High variety seekers are also more likely to express values to help others and care for their well being, and care for nature and the environment. On each of the above measures, the moderate segment lies in the middle. The three groups did not differ in terms of valuing a safe and secure surroundings, to behave properly and meet the expectations of others, and to value the traditions and customs derived from religion and family.

**Table 4. ANOVA and Discriminant Analysis for Consumer Values and Variety Seeking Segments**

| <b>Measure of Values (6 point scale where 1= higher agreement and 6 = less agreement</b> | <b>High Variety Seekers Mean, N = 159</b> | <b>Moderate Variety Seekers Mean, N = 178</b> | <b>Variety Avoiders Mean, N = 64</b> | <b>F-Ratio</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>Loading</b> |
|--|---|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| It is very important to think up new ideas and to be very creative                       | 2.25                                      | 3.05  | 3.30                                 | 21.36          | .000        | .585           |
| It is very important to have a lot of fun, a good time and enjoy life                    | 1.94                                      | 2.26  | 2.46                                 | 5.86           | .003        | .314           |
| It is important to have an exciting life and take risks                                  | 2.41                                      | 3.32  | 4.16                                 | 47.83          | .000        | .897           |
| It is very important to have a lot of money and expensive things                         | 3.81                                      | 4.19  | 4.68                                 | 9.45           | .000        | .394           |
| It is very important to be successful in life and to have others recognize achievements. | 2.83                                      | 3.33  | 3.62                                 | 9.15           | .000        | .392           |

|   |      |      |      |       |      |       |
|---|------|------|------|-------|------|-------|
| It is very important to live in safe, secure surroundings   | 2.69 | 2.71 | 2.49 | .69   | .501 | -.070 |
| It is very important to help people and care for the well-being of others                         | 1.88 | 2.19 | 2.13 | 3.32  | .037 | .197  |
| It is important to look after the environment and care for nature                                 | 2.31 | 2.95 | 2.86 | 11.05 | .000 | .371  |
| It is important to behave properly and avoid doing things most people think are wrong             | 2.77 | 2.83 | 2.43 | 1.97  | .141 | -.102 |
| Traditions are important and one should follow the customs handed down through religion or family | 2.54 | 2.77 | 2.51 | 1.43  | .240 | .043  |

First discriminant function significant at  $p = .000$ . Centroids are High Variety Seekers, -.625, Moderate Variety Seekers, .227, and Variety Avoiders, .893.

### ***4.2.3 Wine Related Behaviors and Preferences***

From a marketing segmentation perspective, it is important to understand how the 3 groups of high and moderate variety seekers and variety avoiders differ with respect to their behavior and attitudes toward wine. For this paper, the a) frequency of consumption, b) the average price paid for a bottle of wine to be consumed at home, c) the place of purchase, d) a person's subjective wine knowledge, e) his or her level of wine involvement, and f) the number of varieties the person considers a favorite were investigated. Frequency of wine consumption was measured following the Wine Market Council (2012) practice of asking how often wine is consumed on a 6 point scale ranging from daily to a few times a year or less. The price a respondent usually pays for wine at the grocery store was measured using categories consistent with those used in the

trade in the US (Wagner, Thach and Olsen, 2010). The place of purchase was measured by asking participants to respond to how often they purchased wine at grocery stores, wine shops or winery tasting rooms on 5 point Likert type scales with the end points ranging from never to almost always. Subjective wine knowledge was measured using a four point scale asking the respondents how they viewed themselves, as a novice, intermediate, advanced or connoisseur concerning wine, and wine involvement was measured using the wine involvement scale first developed by Brown, Havitz and Getz (2006) and later refined by Pratt (2010). The number of favorite varietals was determined by asking respondents to check all of their favorite varieties from a list of 18 wines and totaling the number checked. ANOVA was used to test for differences between the groups, and Duncan's ranges were used as the post hoc test to identify where the differences occurred. The results of the analyses are presented in Table 5.

The findings of the ANOVA show that the 3 variety seeking segments differ on many of the wine related aspects measured in this study. The high variety seekers drank wine the most often, followed by the moderate variety seekers and lastly, the variety avoiders. In terms of the average price paid for a bottle of wine, the high variety seekers paid significantly more than the other two groups. When looking at the place where wine was purchased, the three groups did not differ in their purchases of wine made in grocery stores, and this location was the most popular for all three groups. However, the high variety seekers shopped more often than the other two groups at specialized wine stores. They also shopped most often at winery tasting rooms, followed by the moderate variety seekers, who were more likely to shop at winery tasting rooms than variety avoiders. The three groups also differed from each other in terms of their self-reported wine knowledge with high variety seekers considering themselves most knowledgeable, followed by moderate variety seekers and then variety avoiders.

Similar results were found for wine involvement where the high variety seekers, followed by the moderate variety seekers, and then the variety avoiders reported decreasing levels of involvement with wine. High variety seekers also reported having more favorite varietals than moderate variety seekers, who in turn had more than variety avoiders. Further analysis using chi-square revealed that for all varietals except white zinfandel, high variety seekers were most likely to list the named varietal as a favorite, followed by moderate variety seekers, and then variety avoiders. White zinfandel differed from other varietals in that it was most likely to be listed as a favorite by variety avoiders, with high and moderate variety seekers less likely to list it as a favorite. Overall, for all groups, chardonnay and merlot were listed most often as one of their favorite varietals.

**Table 5. ANOVA and Wine Related Behaviors and Variety Seeking Segments**

| <b>Measures of Wine Related Behaviors</b>   | <b>High Variety Seekers Mean, N = 159</b> | <b>Moderate Variety Seekers Mean, N = 178</b> | <b>Variety Avoiders Mean, N = 64</b> | <b>F-Ratio</b> | <b>Sig.</b> | <b>Duncan's Post Hoc Test</b> |
|---|---|---|--------------------------------------|----------------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| Frequency of consumption (1 = daily, 2 = several times per week, 3 = once a week, 4 = several times per month, 5 = once a month, 6 = a few times a year or less                                       | 2.57                                      | 3.33  | 3.94                                 | 20.19          | .000        | Group 1 from 2 from 3.        |
| When buying wine for home, average price paid. 1 = \$2-\$3 per standard bottle or equivalent, 2 = \$3-\$5, 3 = \$5-\$8, 4 = \$8-\$10, 5 = \$10-\$15, 6 = \$15-\$20, 7 = \$20-\$25, and 8 = over \$25. | 4.84                                      | 4.11  | 3.84                                 | 16.03          | .000        | Group 1 from 2 and 3.         |
| Place of purchase- Grocery Store  | 3.39                                      | 3.37  | 3.32                                 | .077           | .926        |                               |
| Place of Purchase- a wine store   | 3.86                                      | 3.24  | 3.15                                 | 19.06          | .000        | Group 1 from 2 and 3.         |
| Place of purchase- a winery tasting room  | 2.44                                      | 1.87  | 1.40                                 | 20.18          | .000        | Group 1 from 2 from 3.        |
| Subjective Wine Knowledge   | 2.13                                      | 1.74  | 1.50                                 | 26.05          | .000        | Group 1 from 2 from 3.        |
| Wine Involvement  | 4.15                                      | 3.50  | 2.74                                 | 100.59         | .000        | Group 1 from 2 from 3.        |
| Number of Favorite Varietals  | 5.42                                      | 3.81  | 2.48                                 | 36.52          | .000        | Group 1 from 2 from 3.        |

## **4. DISCUSSION**

### ***4.1 Support of Previous Research Studies***

The results of this survey are consistent with several of the previous studies on variety seeking consumers. In this study, high variety seekers admitted to trying unusual wines, even if they were not sure they would like them. They also enjoy drinking exotic wines and wines from different countries. This is consistent with Kish and Donnenworth's (1972) findings show that high sensation seekers possess a stronger than average need to seek out activities which are novel, complex, or more intense. It also supports other studies illustrating that high variety seekers are more likely to explore new stimuli (Raju, 1980; Raju and Venkatesan, 1980), such as new wine varieties in this study. Furthermore, the willingness of consumers to drink wine from a variety of regions has been used previously as a measure of variety-seeking in the wine domain (McAlister and Pessemier, 1982), and was supported by this study.

This study also confirms most of the results of Dodd et al. (1996) in that it illustrated that high variety seekers spend more money on wine and consume more wine than moderate or variety avoiders. The findings were also consistent with Dodd et al. (1996) regarding no significant associations found between the amount of variety sought and income or education. However, this study did highlight a difference in the age variable with high variety seekers being the youngest of the sample. It is not clear why there was a difference in this study compared to Dodd et al (2006), but the results do support values of the younger Millennial generation in the US regarding strong preferences for unique types of wine from different countries (Gillespie, 2013).

### ***4.2 Implications for Wine Marketers and Researchers***

This study does provide several implications for wine marketers and researchers. In terms of consumer characteristics, the fact that high variety seeking consumers are younger, consume the most wine and are willing to pay significantly more for wine, indicates that wine marketers should pay more attention to this lucrative group of consumers. Though they may not be very brand loyal due to the fact that they like to try new types of wine, they do consider themselves knowledgeable and are the most wine involved consumers in the study. Therefore, if a brand manager can emphasize creativity in its range of offerings, perhaps by brand extension with new varieties and/or different countries, this may prove quite attractive to this segment of consumers. The fact that they also prefer many more varieties, with the exception of white zinfandel, than moderate or variety avoiders, also indicates this strategy could be successful, just as long as the brand includes chardonnay and merlot, which were identified as quite popular by this segment.

The fact that high variety seekers value money and expensive things as well as success and recognition, suggests these consumers may be interested in wine brands that have offerings at different price tiers and have received rewards or high ratings. Therefore, the use of reserve wines and special vintage or library selections, accompanied by information on awards/ratings, could be appealing to them. Likewise, their strong value of helping others, nature, and the environment indicates an opportunity to emphasize sustainable winegrowing practices, and/or charitable contributions the wine brand makes.

In terms of wine purchase location this study shows that it is important for wine brands to be located in US grocery stores, as all three consumers segments researched in this study identified this location as their preferred place to buy wine. However, high variety seekers and moderate variety seekers will also go to tasting rooms to purchase wine, therefore savvy wine brands need to be located in both locations – with perhaps more exotic varietals or library selection provided in the tasting room for high variety seekers. In addition, specialized wine shops are another preferred shopping location for high variety seekers indicating that in order to reach this group, a wine brand should be represented in all three channels.

Sadly, this study highlighted the fact that consumers who prefer white zinfandel have a tendency to be variety avoiders, who are older, consume and pay less for wine, and identify themselves as low on wine knowledge and involvement. This suggests that wineries that produce large quantities of white zinfandel keep their prices low, sell only in grocery stores, and don't employ overly sophisticated labels or displays that may appear risky or too creative.

## **5. LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH**

There are several limitations to this study. The first involves the sample of those selected (i.e., sample selection bias) or invited to complete the survey. In a non-random, convenience sample one must be cognizant of the fact that those who were invited to complete the survey may not be representative of the general wine consuming population. A second limitation is the self-selection bias of those who chose to complete the survey. Specifically, among those who were invited to complete the survey, are those who chose to complete the survey representative of general wine consuming population. Both sample selection bias and self-selection bias can limit the generalizability or external validity of our results to the overall wine consuming public.

To mitigate the effects of sample-selection and self-selection bias associated with survey based results, future researchers may want to examine actual purchasing behavior using household panel data such as those provided by Nielsen and Symphony IRI. Household panel data follows household purchases over time, so unlike scanner data, whose smallest unit of observation is at the store level, household panel data contains demographic characteristics of the households being followed. Household panel data thus allows researchers to examine differences in purchasing behavior, such as variety seeking, across household demographic characteristics. This study could also be duplicated in other countries in order to determine if variety-seeking behavior differs by culture.

## REFERENCES

- Ariely, D. and Levav, J. (2000), "Sequential choice in group settings: Taking the road less traveled and less enjoyed", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 27 (December), pp. 279-290.
- Berlyne, D. E., Craw, M. A., Salapatek, P. H. and Lewis, J. L. (1963), "Novelty, complexity, incongruity, extrinsic motivation, and the GSR", *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, Vol. 66 No. 6, pp. 560-567.
- Berlyne, D. E. (1960) *Conflict, Arousal and Curiosity*, McGraw-Hill, New York, NY. Bloch, P.H. (1986), "The product enthusiast: Implications for marketing strategy", *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 51-61.
- Brown, G. P., Havitz, M.E. and Getz, D. (2006), "Relationship between wine involvement and wine related travel", *Journal of Travel and Tourism Marketing*, Vol. 21, pp. 31-46.
- Campbell, M.C. and Goodstein, R.C, (2001), "The moderating effect of perceived risk on consumers' evaluations of product incongruity: Preference for the norm", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 28, pp. 439-449.
- Constellation Wines U.S. (2008). Project Genome Home & Habits Study on 10,000 US Wine Consumers. Research presentation accessed on Dec. 27, 2013 at: <http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/constellation-wines-us-releases-results-of-landmark-consumer-study-55558297.html>
- Dodd, T.H., Pinkleton, B.E. and Gustafson, A.W. (1996), "External information sources of product enthusiasts: Differences between variety seekers, variety neutrals, and variety avoiders". *Psychology and Marketing*, Vol. 13 No. 3, pp. 391-304.
- Ferrando, P.J. and Chico, E. (2001), "The construct of sensation seeking as measured by Zuckerman's SSS-V and Arnett's AISS: a structural equation model", *Personality and Individual Differences*, Vol. 31, pp. 1121-1133.
- Garlington, W.K. and Shimota, H.E. (1964), "The change seeker index: A measure of the need for variable stimulus input", *Psychological Inputs*, Vol. 14, pp. 919-924.
- Gillespie, J. (2013). Presentation of Wine Market Council Research – Annual Meeting & Report. Santa Rosa, CA, January 2013.
- Goldsmith, R.E. and Hofacker, C.H. (1991), "Measuring consumer innovativeness", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 19 No.3, pp. 209-221.
- Goldsmith, R.E., d'Hauteville, F. and Flynn, L.R. (1998), "Theory and measurement of consumer innovativeness: A transnational evaluation", *European Journal of Marketing*, Vol. 32 No. 3/4, pp. 340-353.



- Hair, J.F., Black, W.C., Babin, B.J., Anderson, R.E., Tatham, R.L. (2006), *Multivariate Data Analysis*. Prentice Hall, Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.
- Held, M., Muller, F. Deutsch, F. Grzechnik, E. and Welzel, C. (2009), “Value Structure and Dimensions, Empirical Evidence for the German World Values Survey”, *World Values Research*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 55-76.
- Hirschman, E.C. (1980), “Innovativeness, novelty-seeking, and consumer creativity”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 7 No. 3, pp. 283-295.
- Howard, J. A. and Sheth, J. N. (1969), *The Theory of Buyer Behavior*. John Wiley and Sons, New York, NY, pp. 164-165.
- Hussain, M., Cholette, S. and Castaldi, R. (2007), “Determinants of wine consumption of U.S. consumers: An economic analysis”, *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, Vol. 19 No.1, pp. 49-62.
- Inman, J.J. (2001), “The role of sensory-specific satiety in attribute-level variety seeking”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 28 No. 1, pp. 105-120.
- Kahn, B.E. (1995), “Consumer variety-seeking among goods and services”, *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 139-148.
- Kish, G.B. and Donnenwerth, G.V. (1969), “Interests and stimulus-seeking”, *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, Vol. 16, pp. 551-556.
- Knox, S. (1998), “Loyalty-based segmentation and the customer development process”, *European Management Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 16, pp. 729-737.
- McAlister, L. and Pessemier, E.A. (1982), “Variety-seeking behavior: an interdisciplinary review”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 9 December, pp. 311-322.
- Mittelstaedt, R.A., Grossbart, S.L., Curtis, W. W. and Devere, S.P. (1976), “Optimal stimulation level and the adoption decision process”, *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 3, pp. 84-93.
- Mondavi, R. (2008). “Forward”, in Wagner, P., Olsen, J. & Thach, L. (Ed), *Wine Marketing & Sales*. The Wine Appreciation Guild, San Francisco, CA
- Mueller, S. Remaud, H. and Chabin, Y. (2011), “How strong and generalizable in the Generation Y effect? A cross-cultural study for wine”, *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 23, No. 2, 125-144.
- Orth, U.R. and Bourrain, A. (2005), “Ambient scent and consumer exploratory behavior: A causal analysis”, *Journal of Wine Research*, Vol. 16 No. 2 pp. 137-150.

- Pratt, M. (2010), "Moderating effects of wine involvement in wine tourism", 5th International Academy of Wine Business Research Conference, Feb. 8-10, Auckland, New Zealand.
- Raju, P. S. (1980), "Optimum stimulation level: its relationship to personality, demographics, and exploratory behavior", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 7, December, pp. 272-282.
- Raju, P. S. and Venkatesan, M. (1980), "Exploratory behavior in the consumer context: A state of the art review", *Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 7, ed. Olson, J., Association for Consumer Research, Ann Arbor, MI, pp. 258-263.
- Rasmussen, M.K. (2001), "The effect of region of origin on consumer choice behavior", Unpublished masters thesis, University of South Australia.
- Ratner, R.K. and Kahn, B.E. (2002), "The impact of private versus public consumption on variety-seeking behavior", *Journal of Consumer Research*, Vol. 29 (September), pp. 246-257.
- Schwartz, S.H. (1994), "Are there universals in the content and structure of values?" *Social Issues*, Vol. 50, pp. 19-45.
- Steenkamp, J-B E.M. and Baumgartner, H. (1995), "Developing a cross-cultural validation of a short form of CSI as a measure of optimum stimulation level", *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Vol. 12, pp. 97-104.
- Van Trijp, H. and J.B. Steenkamp (1992), "Consumers' variety seeking tendency with respect to foods: Measurement and managerial implications", *European Review of Agricultural Economics* Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 181-195.
- Van Trijp, H.C.M., Hoyer, W.D. and Inman, J. (1996), "Why switch? Product category-level explanations for true variety-seeking behavior", *Journal of Marketing Research*, Vol. 33, August, pp. 281-292.
- Venkatesan, M. (1973), "Cognitive consistency and novelty seeking", in Scott Ward and Thomas S. Robinson, eds. *Consumer Behavior: Theoretical Sources*, Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, pp. 353-384.
- Wagner, P., Olsen, J.E. and Thach, L. (2010), *Wine Marketing and Sales*, Wine Appreciation Guild, San Francisco, California.
- Zuckerman, M. (1964), "Development of a sensation-seeking scale", *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, Vol. 28, pp. 477-482.
- Zuckerman, M. (1994), *Behavioral Expressions and Biosocial Bases of Sensation Seeking*. New York: Cambridge University Press

Zuckerman, M., Eysenck, S.B.G., and Eysenck, H. J. (1978), "Sensation seeking in England and America: Cross-cultural, age and sex comparisons", *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, Vol. 46, pp. 139-149.