

Do wine judges give higher score to wines made with less known grape varieties?

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Abstract

- *Purpose: In this study, we investigate the extent wine judges do give higher scores to specific wines, based on various attributes, including: region of origin, color, still vs. sparkling, grape variety, etc. Having a greater understanding about the chances to get awarded is critical for wine producers submitting wines to any competition: should they showcase a typical Cabernet? And compete within a well-known Cabernet characteristics universe or submit a bottle of Treixadura, for which wine judges may have a greater willingness to showcase the original characteristics of the product...*
- *Design/methodology/approach: 27,470 wines submitted to the International Wine and Spirit Competition from 2013 to 2016 have been analysed. The IWSC database offer a wide range of different wines, from mainstream wines to more original or indigenous wines. The ranking of grapes is provided by Adelaide University in the 2010 Database of Regional, National and Global Winegrape Bearing Areas by Variety. Not all the wines were awarded by IWSC, but all have been given a score over a 100 points scale, resulting from the average of the grades given by a pool of wine experts (judges). The analyses are based on the OLS estimation of grade equations.*
- *Findings: Econometric results indicate that the Top10 varietals variables are associated with a negative estimated coefficient, meaning that on average, wines made from these grapes are graded lower than wines made from other, less frequent, grapes. Attributes impacting positively the score given to wines submitted to IWSC include: wines of the new world, wines produced under a certification of origin rule.*
- *Practical implications: Our findings suggest that consciously or not, wine judges tend to give an incentive to wine amateurs and buyers to discover less 'mainstream' wines. Our results also encourage organizers of wine competitions to select some more homogenous samples of wines.*

Key words: Judge, Score, IWSC, Grape varieties