

From non-drinkers to drinkers: The wine adoption journey and the key adoption factors among Chinese consumers

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Abstract

◦*Purpose* – Traditional wine producing countries are confronting greater supply than demand domestically. This encourages penetration into emerging markets where wine is not yet commonly consumed. However, the vast majority of consumer studies focus on those who are already wine drinkers. Our knowledge of converting non-wine drinkers into wine drinkers is still poor. Therefore, this study aims to explore the wine adoption pathway of consumers from the emerging Chinese market and to identify the key factors of wine adoption.

◦*Methodology* - Twenty-six semi-structured in-depth interviews with upper middle class alcohol consumers were conducted. The sample was collected in Guangzhou and Xi'an, which differed in geographic location, age, alcohol and wine consumption frequency. All the interviews were audio recorded and transcribed into Chinese for content analysis.

◦*Findings* – We outlined the four decisive behavioural stages from first wine experience, to increasing exposure, reinforcement, and finally the confirmation of being a regular wine drinker. These four stages are highly associated with the social behaviour and demographic factors of the consumer. Perceived healthiness, product involvement, reference group influence, premium sign value, culture and taste preference are also found to be the key factors of wine adoption in China.

◦*Practical implications* – The results suggest that the wine adoption process starts in a consumer's early 20s and the wine consumption habit may set in around their middle 30s. To grow the customer base for wine, marketing interventions should apply within this period with the consideration of the key factors.

Key words: adoption process, adoption factors, non-adopter, wine, China