Applying the Mental Availability Framework to Country of Origin in the China Wine Market

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1. BACKGROUND

China and its wine market are of keen interest to both academics and practitioners. Due to the infancy of the China wine market, the limited marketing budgets of small and medium wine brands and the responsibility for building awareness and perceptions left in the hands of government and wine industry bodies, country of origin (COO) has become a pivotal component of wine communication strategy in China. The findings reported here are building

on Stage 1 of an ongoing research agenda in China that generated a list of potential category entry points (CEPs), the occasions, reasons and drivers a Chinese person enters the wine category. This initial research was presented at AWBR in Stellenbosch by Cohen et al. (2019a) and further detailed by Cohen et al. (2019b). Stage 2, reported here, addresses a gap in the literature and increases knowledge of the China wine market by quantitatively measuring mental availability of countries of origin, which is a measure of how easy the brand is to think about when purchasing from the wine category (Romaniuk and Sharp, 2016).

2. METHODOLOGY

Mental availability measurement is a two-staged process that is based on the elicitation of category entry points based on Romaniuk and Sharp (2016) and the guidelines documented by Hogan et al. (2016). The second stage is the quantitative measurement of the category entry points against a competitive set using the pick-any approach. Romaniuk (2013) outlines the 3 metrics: 1) mental market share 2) mental penetration and 3) average network size. Table 1 below defines the three metrics. More analysis will be presented at the conference.

Table 1: 3 metrics of mental availability

Mental availability metrics	Definition
Mental market share (%)	Share of associations, as a % of all associations between brands and attributes in the set
Mental penetration (%)	% people linking brand to at least one attribute
Average network size	Average number of attributes linked to brand, for those with at least one brand association

In March/April 2019 a sample of 1296 alcohol buyers were recruited via an international online panel provider across twelve cities in China. The sampling was based on the findings of Cohen et al. (2018) and the guidelines for reaching light buyers suggested by Cohen and Lockshin (2017). The cities selected were driven by their managerial relevance to Wine Australia who generously supported this research. The mental availability measurement was conducted on the 22 CEPs generated for wine buying from Stage 1 of this research.

3. RESULTS

Table 1 below reports the Mental Market Share (%) for country of origin in China.

Table 1: Mental Market Share (%) for COO for wine in China

Country	Mental Market Share (%)
France	17%
China	16%
Italy	10%
Australia	9%
USA	8%

Portugal	8%
New Zealand	7%
Spain	7%
Chile	7%
Argentina	6%
South Africa	5%

This measure is useful for understanding the total share of mind that COOs for wine have among alcohol category buyers in China. This is important because the only other real statistics available on COO for wine in China are based on Chinese customs import data. Currently this is used as a proxy for success in the marketplace, but at best is only a measure of inventory and not sales. France and China are both the dominant players in the minds of Chinese.

Table 2 below reports the Mental penetration (%) and Average Network Size for country of origin for wine in China.

Table 2: Mental penetration (%) and Average Network Size for COO in China

Country	Mental Penetration (%)	Average Network Size
France	92%	8.3
China	92%	8.1
Italy	78%	5.6
Australia	77%	5.3
USA	73%	4.9
Portugal	75%	4.8
New Zealand	73%	4.7
Spain	73%	4.5
Chile	69%	4.7
Argentina	62%	4.1
South Africa	59%	4

(COOs ordered by Mental Market Share % reported in Table 1)

Presenting these two metrics together is useful for showing a clear pattern in data. The COOs with higher mental penetration also have larger network sizes. This suggests that the pathway for a COO to grow in China is to build associations with more relevant CEPs.

4. CONCLUSION

Measuring mental availability is a superior way to investigate the brand health of COOs amongst a competitive set. It is a viable alternative to traditional brand health/equity research streams that typically try and understand how consumers associate descriptors and adjectives that are typically generated by research agencies and not 'real people' in the market place. These approaches are typically concerned more about identifying brands so called 'personalities'. On the other hand, mental availability measures the strength and breadth of the connections to the actual occasions in which a buyer would enter the category of wine. An additional improvement

is that these CEPs are generated from a standardised approach. The outcome of this two-stage process can be used to design strategies for growth and defence against the competition.

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