

Rosé Wine Social Representation over three Generations: Provence Rosé Wine as a Case study

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1. INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

Between 2002 and 2018, world consumption of rosé wine increased from 484.1 to 677,2 million gallons (World Rosé Observatory, 2020), an increase of about 40%, France is the world leader in rosé wine; it accounts for nearly 31% of world production and 34% of world consumption. In France, rosé wine has enjoyed considerable success, increasing from a market share volume of 11% in 1992 to 34.3% in 2020 (Nielsen, 2020). A three folds consumption increases means that now one out of three bottles of wine sold in France is rosé. Provence rosé wine, with its pale salmon color, is the leader in terms of turnover in France and internationally. It is also the leader on the AOC/AOP segment, i.e. the most premium segment.

Attempts to explain this fast rise of rosé wine consumption in France are, to our knowledge, few. For Delerins (2016), rosé wine consumption increase is driven by Millennial Generation while Author (2021), suggests that it is due to the emergence of new representations of rosé wine among the Millennials, out of step with the traditional codes of red wine.

To further investigate the possible causes of rosé wine popularity, an in-depth qualitative analyse of the representations of Provence rosé wine was conducted over three generations. Based on the identification of these representations, we highlight the key factors that could provide explanation to the Provence rosé wine success in France.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Social Representation & core nucleus theory

Social representation concept provides an understanding of social transformations taking place in a given social group (Moscovici, 1984, Abric, 1994). This concept has been widely used in the study of the evolution of wine representations in France (Author, 2011, 2015, 2017, 2021), and the dynamics of brand image (Michel & Donthu, 2014). According to (Abric, 1994), the social representation of a given object (e.g. rosé wine from Provence) is organized around a core nucleus and a peripheral system. The central core is composed of stable, long term and consensual associations: it represents the heart of the brand image. The peripheral system is composed of secondary, short term and evolving associations: it allows the brand image to evolve.

2.2. Social representation of rosé wine

In an international study covering four countries (France, USA, UK, and New Zealand), Velikova et al. (2015) showed that rosé wine has three main representations: unsophisticated, seasonal, and feminine. Specifically in France, rosé wine is perceived as convivial and easy drinking, but not profound nor sophisticated. Author (2021) show that the representations of rosé wine for Millennials are based on five dimensions: (1) product quality and refusal of sophistication, (2) color of the rosé wine, (3) freedom, (4) immediate pleasure and sharing with friends, and (5) its feminine personality.

Yet, these studies limited to millennials do not provide information on the evolution of the representations across generations.

2.3. Generations

The present study focuses on specific social group, from the generation as described by American sociologists (Howe & Strauss, 2007; Strauss & Howe, 1991). These authors define the concept of generation through four factors: two are quantitative (i.e., first one: date of birth, second one: four life cycles of 20 years each) and two are qualitative: (1) the historical factor; and (2) the specific identity factor. The three generations of interest were identified: the Z Generation (1996-2010), the Millennial (or Y Generation) (1977-1995) and Baby Boomer (1942-1967).

3. METHODOLOGY

In a qualitative analysis run in November 2021, 36 semi-structured interviews, i.e. 12 interviews for each of the three generations were conducted. Half of these interviews were performed in Paris, and half in Provence in Vidauban and Marseille. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. They lasted on average one hour. A manual thematic content analysis was conducted through the categorization of the speeches from which the merging units of sense were identified (Miles & Huberman, 1994). This study was ethically approved.

4. FINDINGS

We present below only the results for the people interviewed in Provence, i.e. 18 interviews.

Preliminary results show that the representations of Provence rosé wine for these three generations are based on 8 dimensions: (1) Improvements of product quality; (2) Clearly identified organoleptic characteristics: fresh, fruity, light; (3) The pale color is a key criterion of choice ; (4) An accessible price, even if the consumer is aware of a market premiumisation; (5) Conviviality, sharing with friends, and different consumption opportunities; (6) Its original feminine personality, and the prerogative of generation Y; (7) The attitude towards partnerships between brands and stars; (8) The attitude toward organic rose wine.

The similarities (see table 1) between the 3 generations are about quality (1) and the evocation of conviviality, sharing and simplicity (5). The main differences (see table 1) are about organoleptic characteristics (2), occasions of consumption (5), the target of Provence rose wine (women, Y generation) (6), the attitude towards Brands/stars partnerships, social networks & influencers (7), the appreciation about organic rosé wine (8). For both generations, the color is a criterion of choice, but the different criteria taken into account are different (ex: the brand).

5. THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Our main theoretical contribution is firstly to propose a new comprehensive model of social representation of Provence rose wine through the core nucleus theory. Some representations are consensual across the three generations (they therefore belong to the core nucleus), and others are less important, different and evolving (they therefore belong to the peripheral system).

Our main practical implications is the identification of key success factors of Provence rose wine in France: (1) Continuous improvement on quality; (2) Clearly identifiable organoleptic characteristics; (3) A consumer-driven color choice; (4) Price accessibility & premiumisation; (5) A strategy of valorization by the price and the brand Provence.

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Table 1: Comparison of the representations of Provence rosé wine over 3 representations

Topics/Generation Age in 2021	Baby Boom (54-79 y.o)	Y (26-44 y.o)	Z (18-25 y.o)
0/ Global representation, consumption & knowledge	Detailed Representations The historical generation	Detailed Representations The pivotal generation, which has adopted the new codes of Provence rose wine	Simplified representations The new generation Predominance of beers, spirits & cocktails
	Occasional consumption of wine, beers and spirits	Occasional consumption of wine, beers, and spirit-based cocktails	Rite of induction into the world of rosé
	Good knowledge of appellations, denominations, and partially of grape varieties	Knowledge of appellations, but not necessarily of denominations and grape varieties	No knowledge of appellations, denominations, grape varieties
1/ Improvement of the product quality	Past memory of a bad quality : “la piquette”	Quality has improved	Quality is a given. It is affordable
2/ Organoleptic characteristics and pleasure of consumption	Fresh, fruity, light	Fresh, fruity, light	A focus on “softness”, in terms of taste and color
	Pleasure : fresh, sharing, taste	Immediate and direct pleasure	No description of the tasting pleasure
3/ Color & choice criteria	Color, price, terroir	Color, price, local producers	Color, brand, design packaging, price
4/ Price and premiumisation	Affordable price Psychological price of 10 € & 15 €	Affordable price Premium price is due to marketing	Affordable price Future price increase due to global warming
5/ Conviviality, sharing with friends, consumption opportunities	Conviviality, sharing, simplicity	Idem	Idem
	Holidays, relaxation, good mood - No authenticity	Idem	A consumption centered on the aperitif
	Summer consumption	Summer consumption, with Mediterranean cuisine, and even in winter	Idem
	Consumption without ice	Consumption without ice	Consumption with ice: “pool pink”
6/ A feminine personality	A clearly feminine wine	A feminine rose wine that has become universal, multi-generational and consensual The prerogative of generation Y	Rosé wine perceived as being the prerogative of generation Y, for individuals who are more established in life
7/ Brands, partnerships with stars, and social networks	Rejection of Brands/stars partnerships	Low sensitivity to brands and partnership with stars	Strong trust in brands and brand/star partnership
	No presence on social networks, except Facebook	Presence on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter), but no subscription to rosé wines	Presence on social networks (Instagram)
	No sensitivity to wine influencers	Low sensitivity to influencers	Positive sensitivity to influencers
8/ Organic rose wine	A critical view of organic wine	A positive appreciation of organic rose wine with limited willingness to pay	A positive appreciation of organic rose wine, event without having tested it

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