



Review

Consumer behaviour for wine 2.0: A review since 2003 and future directions

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Abstract

This paper summarises the main findings concerning consumer behaviour for wine published in academic journals in the last ten years and provides some suggestions about strategic research directions to take in the next few years. One major finding was that few new or novel findings are occurring in some areas: the role of price, brand, region, grape variety, awards; comparisons of Old and New World; segmentation of wine consumers; the value of sustainable or 'green' wine practices to consumers. Another finding was the predominance of one-off convenience sample studies that are difficult to interpret for generalisable results. Some areas with greatest research needs are: retail marketing and consumer response to the variety of techniques retailers use; on-premise consumer behaviour; online and social media influences on consumers; premium and luxury wine behaviour and successful marketing practices; consumer behaviour in emerging markets; the value of wine tourism and marketing for value; the relationship between grape/wine quality and consumer behaviour; consumer response to wine and health issues.

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1. Introduction

In 2003 Larry Lockshin and John Hall wrote an article on the state of knowledge in wine consumer behaviour (Lockshin and Hall, 2003). It provided a literature review and status report about what we knew at the time. This article updates the state of understanding of consumer behaviour for wine and adds some commentary about the way forward and a discussion of the methods of investigation likely to yield the most usable results for the development of marketing in the wine sector globally. The objective of this review is not only to organise and review

the large number of articles in the recent wine consumer behaviour literature, but also to critically examine what we have learned that is of value. This is clearly one way of writing a review article. Not all researchers would agree that the focus should be on the practicality or implications of the published work on wine consumer behaviour. We have chosen this viewpoint, because our personal interest is to help the wine industry grow globally and in doing so better understand and serve its customers.

A search for articles on wine consumer behaviour returned almost 400 entries. These were narrowed by focusing almost entirely on refereed journal articles, which left approximately 100 articles published between 2004 and 2012. This points to the growing popularity of wine as a product category and of growing academic interest in its consumption behaviour. In order to simplify the review, the articles were organised into subject areas. The topics reviewed and a list of references are provided in [Table 1](#). The order of the sections was devised as a logical means to consider wine consumer behaviour. The first section looks at the most common and broadest area of wine consumer

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behaviour-purchasing in retail stores. The next sections look at wine purchasing in different contexts outside the store: online, on-premise and at the winery. The next sections look at grouping consumers by segments, lifestyles, social and personal values, or generational cohorts. The review then moves to more specific influences on purchasing, such as packaging and labelling, region of origin, country and comparisons between countries, sensory factors (wine taste), sustainable or environmental factors, and finally social media influences on consumer behaviour.

Table 1 provides a summary of the topics, the references, and a brief description of the area. All articles are discussed in each section, with similarities and patterns among the most significant ones in each area provided. After the reviews by topic, we discuss the implications of the areas under study for wine industry practice. We then expand our commentary to look into the future, commenting on areas, which should prove fruitful for future research and those that perhaps are no longer useful.

We hope this review and outlook paper will provide some guidelines and direction for future research in wine marketing to be useful in helping the wine sector develop globally.

2. Literature review

2.1. Retail wine purchasing

Studies on how consumers purchase wine in stores and specifically what affects their purchasing are the broadest areas reviewed here. In the earlier (Lockshin and Hall, 2003) there were several studies focusing on the concept of wine involvement and its impact on how consumers purchase wines. Since 2004, only two papers specifically measured and used wine involvement as the key element in their analysis of wine purchasing behaviour (Hollebeek et al., 2007; Lockshin et al., 2006). Another paper (Casini et al., 2009) found differences between high and low involvement consumers, but it was not the main focus of the paper. Hollebeek et al. (2007) used purchase intention as the outcome based on price, price discount and region. Region was more important for high involvement consumers and price more important for low involvement consumers. Lockshin et al. (2006) used simulated choices to measure the importance of price, region, brand, and awards. Low involvement consumers more commonly used price and awards to make their decision compared to high involvement consumers, who used region and also combined attributes in more complex decision-making process. The Casini et al. (2009) paper looked at choice attributes for wine using Best-Worst Scaling in Italy. The most important attributes were previous experience, personal recommendations, and the taste of the wine. The authors also found some differences in respondents' preferences based on age, involvement level, and the geographical part of Italy they were from.

Two other papers used simulated purchasing experiments (discrete choice analysis) to measure the impact of different aspects of wine on purchasing behaviour. Mueller et al. (2010a) combined discrete choice and actual sensory tasting to determine the importance of taste compared to packaging elements in choice. They found that packaging, lower price, and market share, influenced choice, while higher price and sensory characteristics, such as fruity and sweet influenced hedonic liking. Mueller et al. (2010b) looked at the influence of back label statements on choice. Winery history and elaborate taste descriptions were found to be the most positive influences on choice, while ingredient labelling was the only negative influence on choice.

Ritchie et al. (2010) also looked at price as an important element in wine purchasing. They used focus groups to try and understand the ability for wineries to get consumers to trade up in UK supermarkets, where wine is typically sold using price promotions. Their interest is the low involvement, supermarket shopper, typically buying wine like other grocery items. They found that the way supermarkets communicated wine and focused on price discounting caused the focus to be on price and not on other attributes.

Barber (2012) looked at the influence of environmentally safe wines on the attitude towards purchasing. He found there is a small segment of environmentally knowledgeable consumers willing to purchase wines with such a designation, though he points out this is merely an intention to purchase and he did not measure actual purchase behaviour.

Along with price promotions, wines are often offered for tasting, because consumers report they like to know how a wine tastes before buying it. Lockshin and Knott (2009) measured the effect of free wine tastings on sales before, during and after the tasting period. Free tasting improved sales on the day by over 400% compared to before and after the tasting. Only about one third of the consumers surveyed across nine stores in four cities had actually planned to visit the store to taste wines. About 50 consumers were called back one month after the free tasting and most could not remember the wines they had tasted.

One study focused on the difference between in store and online wine purchasing (Quinton and Harridge-March, 2008). This study used a convenience sample of wine buyers to survey the importance of trust between buying wine in store versus online. They found it is important to have an online service mix that instils trust for the first time online buyer.

Finally, Orth and Bourrain (2005) looked at the influence of ambient scent on wine buying behaviour. They found that more pleasant scents increased variety seeking and curiosity-motivated behaviour. This had effects on the importance of the standard elements consumers use in deciding which wine to buy, such as label colour, taste and grape variety.

To sum up, consumers' purchasing behaviour is affected by a range of different factors, which lead to differences in the way consumers approach wines. Socio-demographic differences are not very important, except to distinguish

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