Probably Not the Best Beer in the World.
A Beer Tasting Experiment on the Role of Product Information
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We investigate the role and impact of exposure to brands in consumers’ evaluations and purchasing decisions of beers, and explore its relation with exposure to price and intrinsic information. The first objective is to study the ability of consumers to identify their preferred beer. The second is to explore the effect of exposure of consumers to brands. The third question concerns the exact role played by brands, under three distinct perspectives: i) whether the effect of exposure to brands is either generalized or specific to preferred beers; ii) the interaction between intrinsic and extrinsic information; iii) the ability of brands to induce perception of sensory characteristics. Finally, the interaction with exposure to prices, and with the conveyed signals about expensiveness and quality. We propose an experimental design combining analytical methods from experimental economics and sensorial analysis. We collect information from a questionnaire and a multi-stage beer tasting experiment. The experiment is designed to exploit information both on within-subject differences across different stages, and between-subjects differences across treatments. Subjects go through a sequence of four stages, in which they provide evaluations and WTP about three beers under different conditions concerning the product information they were exposed to. The main results of our experimental analysis are the following. Consumers seem to be unable to significantly distinguish between beers in blind taste. Brands affect consumers evaluations: after the brand information is revealed, average evaluations change. These brand effects are stronger on most preferred brands, although they are quite generalized. Moreover, extrinsic information on brands also affect the description of sensorial perceptions of intrinsic characteristics of beers. Finally, no significant price effects emerge.