Application of the Duplication of Purchase Law on Wine Attributes in the French Retail Wine Market

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This research explores buying patterns in the French retail wine market, a complex and potentially highly fragmented product category. There is much wine marketing research focused on buyer behaviour emanating from ‘new world’ wine countries, specifically Australia. There are a host of methods that have been validated for application on wine attributes through the analysis of panel data. ‘New world’ wine markets are navigated by consumers using those attributes, making these studies attractive. In France, the ‘old world’ terroir-based system is primarily used to reach the consumer. There is a gap in the understanding of how French consumers behave over a period of time across multiple purchase occasions. The duplication of purchase law was utilised to describe how consumers share their purchases across the levels of each principal attribute. The process of extrinsic attribute exploration applied by Cohen (2010) using panel data in the Australian retail wine market was applied for the duplication of purchase method. The method of retrospective recall was applied based on the research of Romanik and Dawes (2005) and Murphy (2006). A price-based survey designed by Murphy (2006) was adapted into French and modified to encompass all key wine attributes in the French wine market as well as investigating consumer’s perceptions of terroir. Due to the inability of French consumers to clearly define the concept of terroir as demonstrated by Wilson and Jourjon (2010) and confirmed by this study, a decision was made to test whether French wine consumers were aware of the attributes, variety and region of origin, that were generally encompassed in each specific terroir name. In addition, the structure of the wine market based upon price and as well as the role brand plays in buyer behaviour were of interest.

A call centre of a University marketing research institute contacted a representative sample of 300 wine buyers. The data was not usable for brand buying behaviour. This was due to inability of respondents to effectively recall brand. This is an interesting finding in itself. The sample size ranged between 240-260 respondents for each attribute after the data had been appropriately handled and cleaned.

This research focused on three issues for the French wine market: establishing if retrospective recall is an appropriate data collection technique, verifying if the duplication of purchase law holds and demonstrating the potential value of taking attribute-based approach to understanding market structure. Whilst is clear that there are limitations of retrospective recall and prior research in Australia has suggested the superiority of panel data, the value of using this data collection method as a prospecting technique is clear. The duplication of purchase law does hold for variety, region of origin and price. The duplication of purchase law does not hold for brand. The sharing of purchases among variety and region of origin provide valuable marketing insights. There are partitions in both of these attributes that appear to indicate the effect of terroir in purchase behaviour and taste preferences.

This study proves that there is value in extending this stream of research in France. Application of additional methods of deciphering buyer behaviour on the current data set is planned. Obtaining panel data in order to work with a more significant sample size and mitigate some of the limitations that exist from the currently applied data collection methods is advised.