Consumer Perceptions and Acceptance of Innovation in Wine Packaging: an International Approach

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Despite numerous innovations in the global wine industry in recent years, many marketers around the world have underscored limited acceptance of change by consumers. Previous research has even suggested that wine drinkers give more importance to tradition than to innovation when selecting a bottle of wine.

Many of the innovations launched in the past decade have concerned packaging (bottle shape and size, labels, closures, formats). Given harsh competition and overwhelmingly numerous options facing consumers during the decision-making process, wine marketers attempt to make their products noticeable and attractive to both novice and experienced wine drinkers. New packaging has thus appeared in many international wine markets.

The purpose of this paper is to examine how consumers perceive and perhaps accept this innovation in wine packaging by studying the case of the wine-in-tube (WIT). This innovative packaging, originally created to simplify the shipment of samples and to respond to growing demands of sustainable development, has recently appeared in various consumer markets. Many questions arise concerning this type of innovation: How are wines packaged in this tube perceived by consumers? Does this packaging influence perceived product quality? What is the impact on both cognitive and affective involvement in the wine purchase? Is acceptance of innovation greater in some consumption contexts that in others? How does the country-of-origin of the wine influence perceptions and acceptance of wine bottled in a tube?

The goal of this research is to explore these different questions by conducting an on-line experiment on groups of young wine consumers. The respondents are first faced with a visual document allowing them to discover the innovative product. Country-of-origin is tested as some consumers are exposed to a French wine while others are exposed to an identical Australian wine. Consumers are then asked to evaluate the product and to share their perceptions and initial reactions in regards to this innovation. Involvement, consumption context and intent are investigated in the research protocol. Data obtained is analyzed from both cultural and marketing perspectives and suggests limited initial acceptance of innovation in wine packaging. However, some variations appear in terms of the country-of-origin of the wine. Insight from this research can lead marketers to a better understanding of perceptions and acceptance of innovation by young wine consumers and guide them in the way they communicate with this important segment of consumers.