The Moderate Effect of Wine Knowledge and Involvement on Consumer Self-Confidence and Loyalty Intentions: The Case of the Use of a SST in Supermarkets

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More than 70% of the off-trade wine distribution in France is done through supermarkets, where there is a large offer and the service level to help the consumer choose wine is limited. This situation results in the fact that very often the consumer is alone to purchase wine and has difficulty to choose efficiently wine that will respond to his/her needs such as food and wine matching, budget... For many consumers, buying a bottle of wine in a supermarket is a difficult task. Barber, Almanza and Dodd (2008) examine how involvement and consumer self-confidence have an impact on wine purchasing via information cues described on packaging. They found that consumers don't use the same information if they are more or less involved and self-confident. Varietal and vintage are used by involved and self-confident consumers, price and advice by the other. In this paper, we want to study the moderate effect of wine knowledge and involvement on consumer self-confidence and loyalty intentions. Data are collected through a survey addressed to wine consumers purchasing wine in a supermarket in France, where an interactive wine selection Self-Service Technology (SST) has been implemented.

Self-Service Technology (SST) is defined as technological interfaces enabling customers to use a service independent of direct service-employee involvement (Meuter et al., 2000). Service companies have shown an interest in customer participation in self-service activities. This interest is driven by both economic and marketing considerations. Cermak et al. (1994) found that the customer willingness to participate in self-service activities has a positive impact on satisfaction, perceived quality and repurchase intention (Marzocchi and Zammit, 2006). People who have a lifestyle interest in wine, want to learn about wine (Lockshin and Hall, 2003) and enjoys for that. Wine knowledge refers to product knowledge which has 2 dimensions (Brucks, 1985): objective knowledge (products attributes, uses of the products...) and subjective knowledge (consumer’s own assessment of their knowledge). Involvement is defined as an enduring level of personal importance and interest evoked by a product of a product category (Zaichowsky, 1994). Higher involved consumers utilise more information and are interested in learning more, while low involved consumers tend to simplify their choices and use risk reduction strategies (Lockshin, 2003). Low involved consumers rely more on well-known brands and lower prices, while high involved consumers use region and middle range prices to select their wines (Lockshin, 2003). Analyses of consumer behaviour associate Consumer Self-Confidence (CSC) with peoples’ perceptions of their product knowledge (Bearden, Hardesty, and Rose, 2001). The literature is divided on whether CSC, generally defined, encourages or inhibits consumers to acquire information; yet, this act has been hypothesized as a key predictor of high-quality decisions, and, presumably, positive marketplace experiences (Loibl et al., 2009). The growth and profitability of a retailer depend on its capacity to acquire new customers but also to develop loyalty (Reicheld and Schefter, 2000). Customer loyalty is "a deeply held commitment to rebuy or repatronize a preferred product or service consistently in the future, despite situational influences and marketing efforts having the potential to cause switching behaviour" (Oliver, 1997, p. 392). In this article, we focus on customer loyalty intentions, which is defined as "an individual's intention to recommend a retailer, visit that retailer's shop, and purchase from it in the future" (Mathwick, 2002).

In order to test the relationships between the variables presented above, data were collected in a French supermarket who has implemented a self-service technology (called "Max le sommelier"). helping wine consumers purchasing wine. Each consumer enters criteria such as the meal, the price and the type of wine and “Max le sommelier” selects 3 wines with their location in the shelves. 470 respondents filled out our questionnaire (36% were men, 32% were under 40 years old). The questionnaire includes a measure of subjective knowledge based on Bruck (1985), involvement based on the Personal Involvement Inventory (Zaichkowsky, 1994), consumer self-confidence based on Bearden et al. (2001) and a measure of loyalty intentions adapted from Mathwick (2002).
In order to analyze the multivariate effect of subjective knowledge, wine involvement, the SST use (Max User) on consumer self-confidence and loyalty intentions (using MANOVA), we carried out M of Box that verify the homogeneity assumption of covariance matrix of dependant variable (M=111.744; P=0.178). Multivariate tests of significance using Wilks’ lambda are significant at the 0.05 level only for subjective knowledge (Lambda 0.932; F=10.963; P=0.000) and involvement (Lambda 0.937; F=10.090; P=0.000). The Levene’s test of equality of error variance indicates that the homogeneity assumption was met for loyalty (Levene 0.773; P=0.708) and consumer self-confidence (Levene 1.674; P=0.050). The results revealed a main effect of subjective knowledge (F=20.589; P=0.000) on consumer self-confidence. The more the subjective knowledge of the customer is high, the more the customer will be self-confident in his/her choice. Wine involvement has a positive effect on consumer self-confidence (F=10.663; P=0.000) and loyalty intentions (F=16.440; P=0.000). The more the consumer is involved in wine, the more he/she will be self-confident in his/her wine choice and the more his/her loyalty intentions will be high.

Subjective knowledge with SST use (Max user) have an effect on consumer self-confidence (F 4.150; P=0.020). If the subjective knowledge of the consumer is high, he/she will be more self-confident in his/her wine choice if he/she uses the SST. On the other hand, if the consumer subjective knowledge is low, he/she will be less confident in his/her wine choice if he/she uses the SST (figure 1). This result means this SST should not be recommended by wine consumers with low subjective knowledge (novice consumers). Indeed, novice wine consumers who were interviewed mentioned the importance of the reliability of the SST in order to feel confident by using this tool.

In our study, we demonstrate the moderating effect of subjective knowledge and involvement on consumer self-confidence. These results are consistent with Barber, Taylor and Dodd (2009). However, the use of the SST by novice consumers contributes to decrease their self-confidence. Indeed, because of the complexity of the choice for wine, novice consumers may not be ready yet to use such a technology and prefer human contact. However, this research doesn’t evaluate the performance of SST in terms of cognitive effort and resources needed, interactivity, comparative information. Also, this research doesn’t take into account personal’s tendency to adopt new technologies. These are avenues for future research.

Keywords: wine knowledge, wine involvement, consumer self-confidence, loyalty, self-service technologies, retail

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