Analysis of the Importance of Several Aspects before the Purchase of a Wine Bottle for Comunidad Valenciana (Spain) Consumers.

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This paper analyses the importance of several aspects that consumers in the Comunidad Valenciana (Spain) take into account when getting a wine bottle from a shelf. These aspects are:
- The designation of origin,
- The price,
- Design and information on the label
- Design and information on the back label
- The point of sale,
- The seller advice,
- Friends and family recommendations.

The information has been obtained through survey with 400 interviews throughout Comunidad Valenciana (Spain). These interviews were based on asking to answer a questionnaire with closed questions.

It has been seen how the most valued aspect is the Designation of Origin. The second aspect in the rank is Friends and family recommendations. Price is the third most valued aspect. The less valued aspects are the seller advice and the point of sale. The design and information of the label is more valued than the design and information of the back label.

Results seem to show how consumers want to reduce risk before buying a wine bottle looking for aspect they can rely on. They give more importance to family and friends recommendations than to the seller advice.

1. Introduction.

Jennings and Wood (1994) mentioned Kotler (1984) to say that any product can be distinguished at three levels: the core product, the tangible product, and the augmented product. In the case of wine the following tangible features can be identified:
- The wine itself, determined by grape variety, region, vintage and blending style
- The bottle and bottle dress to identify the type and style of wine and indicate quality through traditional shapes and colours
- Labelling information to confirm the taste and flavour of the wine, provide evidence of quality and supporting advice on its consumption and enjoyment

The augmented product introduces additional intangible features that can help to differentiate a wine from the competition. Features such as the image associated with a winery, awards given by wine magazines and newspapers, the atmosphere created by the wine outlet as well as the knowledge and education provided by the wine seller can reinforce and enhance the wine buyers' perception of the product on offer.
Effective marketing of wine requires the producer to make a complex set of decisions in the selection and balancing of both tangible and intangible features which will enhance the product in the eyes of the consumer.

Jennings and Wood (1994) apply Roy et al. (1987) theory to show that different design factors are relevant to competitiveness at the various stages of the purchasing decision. This has significance for winemaking given that the real nature of the final product remains hidden until it is actually consumed. It is important that design factors influencing the 'before purchase' as well as the 'actual purchase' decision create a clear and consistent impression of the quality being offered by the wine. Poor packaging design or company image could create discord in buyer perceptions to the disadvantage of the product in the marketplace. After consumption it is important to maintain and reinforce the perceptions gained while drinking the wine.

In this paper, we concentrate on the factors that are relevant before purchase. This is to say, the factors that direct a consumer to consider buying a wine bottle. This includes concepts as designation of origin, price, design and information on the label, design and information on the back label, point of sale, seller and friends and family.

Dimara and Skuras (2005) say that information on search attributes is relatively plentiful and easily attained, always depending on the consumer's ability to perceive and process information. Since consumers cannot judge experience attributes of food quality until after they buy and use the product, they always run a risk of purchasing a product that will not satisfy them or that will not increase their utility, negatively affecting them financially or even in terms of their health. In order to reduce this risk, consumers try to learn about the product's attributes in various ways. One way is to acquire information from either more informed consumers (personal communication) or from appropriate news media and specialized columns in newspapers, magazines, etc.

Labels and back labels provide the key recognition factor through their shape, colour and position as well as the information offered. Label information is governed partly by regulations which vary according to country as well as EC requirements. Before purchase, they deliver the key message to consumers as to the benefits on offer encouraging wine consumers to experiment.

Bagwell and Riordan (1986) examine the case where consumers enter the market sequentially and how the knowledge of informed consumers can be used by previously uninformed consumers. Another strategy that reduces consumer risk is the gradual and repeated purchase of food products where reputation is important and consumers have some degree of loyalty to higher quality producing firms (Allen, 1984; Shapiro, 1982, 1983). Finally, consumers may learn about food attributes through quality signalling in the form of informational labelling, certifiers or branding, warranties and advertisement.

Models developed by Akerlof (1970) and Grossman (1981) explore the conditions under which information on product quality could be effectively supplied to consumers. Akerlof's famous "market for lemons" model concludes that the quality product market may disappear completely and only the lowest quality products may be sold if sellers cannot signal quality. In contrast, Grossman's signalling model concludes that markets for varying levels of quality will exist and operate smoothly if totally effective, truthful and costless quality signalling and verification of claims are assumed.
Thomas and Pickering (2003) state that the purchase of a bottle of wine is often a challenging event. A wine’s packaging, consisting of a several inter-related factors (e.g., bottle shape, colour and labels), interacts with a consumer’s varying experience and knowledge of wines, and the situation and occasion faced. These forces combine to form decisions.

However, not all consumers are alike. Some know what they want and select a wine based on their experience, or the wine’s variety/style, region, producer or maker. Others, however, do not know and scour a bottle’s labels to satisfy their information requirements. Combris, et al (1997) indicates "consumers may decide to make their wine choice primarily on the basis of the objective characteristics (appearing on the label of the wine bottle)".

Alternatively, Kidd (1993) notes the impact that shape and colour can have on choice, and that front labels, "should be reserved for making a positioning statement." Information on wine labels presents itself openly to consumers for processing and acts as an aid to decisions. Wine label information is regarded as ‘clues’ and includes information such as grape variety, region, manufacturer and style. Cowley (1992) refers to these as 'designators', or widely recognised elements for positioning and differentiating wine products in consumers’ eyes.

Arguably, the array of information on wine labels identifies the special qualities of a bottle’s contents. Also, the information presented conveys a wine’s character and helps make a statement to potential buyers. Label information, the consumer’s evaluative criteria and their state of knowing, contributes to assessing and deciding upon competing alternatives.

Knowledge of the importance given to wine label information would offer wine makers a value-added impression of specific information elements and its value to wine consumers.

Purchase behaviour can be influenced by the manner in which information is presented and by the way it is perceived or processed. It is also guided by the extent to which various information elements are available and used.

Wine consumers are exposed to a variety of information sources and these are recognised as important to marketers and consumers alike (Chaney, 2000; Dodd et al, 1996). For consumers, information is used to reduce risk or minimise uncertainty. Information assists charting the unfamiliar (Dodd, et al, 1996) and guides choice amongst alternatives (Chaney, 2000). Mitchell and Greatorex (1989) established that consumers experience different forms of risk in buying wine. These risks pertain to functional (taste), social (family and friends), financial (price) and physical (hangover) conditions. To cope with risk, consumers seek information, become brand loyal, trust others (e.g., a retail sales person) or a well-known brand, use price as an indicator and use free tastings.

Chaney (2000) attests to the strong influence of friends and family. Ultimately, this source is a credible and trustworthy influence. Chaney (2000) found comments from friends was ranked third out of 16 information sources. This was preceded by point-of-sale and label information. However, comments from friends was viewed as slightly more important than information derived from tastings.

In wine marketing, packaging plays an integral part in delivering information and a manufacturer’s promise. Thomas (2000) notes that packaging embodies aesthetics and
emotions, yet presents itself as communication and influence mechanisms to purchasers. Here, the wine’s label plays a large role.

Several authors (Shaw, et al, 1999; Jennings and Wood, 1994; Kidd, 1993; Lochshin and Rhodus, 1993; Cawley, 1992) have commented on the importance of labels and the role they play. Charters et al, (2000) examined wine course students' attitudes to wine bottle back labels. They found that back labels were seen as interesting, provided useful information and received variable use in purchase decisions. Back label information as a source was favoured slightly more than that contained on front labels.

Understanding the factors that determine which options wine consumers choose and whether they choose to buy the product or defer the purchase decision is critical to the development of marketing strategies. A major contribution of behavioural decision research has been to establish the notion of uncertain preferences, the idea that consumer preferences are not well defined but rather constructed during the process of making a selection. This constructive viewpoint suggests that different tasks and contexts highlight different aspects of the purchase options, focusing consumers on different considerations that lead to seemingly inconsistent decisions (Bettman et al., 1998).

Research has focused on the effect of this decision conflict and preference fluency on consumer choice by manipulating the content of the choice or by manipulating which content is the focus of attention.

Information and other product attributes can influence consumers' purchasing behavior by the manner in which it is presented and by the way it is perceived or processed by the consumer. For consumers, information is used to increase knowledge and reduce risk or minimize uncertainty. This buying decision is guided by the extent to which various information elements are available and used by the consumer (Thomas and Pickering, 2003).

Previous experience with a product creates the foundation that aids in the development of the consumers' knowledge, and thereby their self-confidence.

Relying on sources of information such as their own values and preferences, friends and family, journalists and wine writers, as well as descriptions from labels aids in the purchase decision (Dodd et al., 2005; Hall and Lockshin, 2000; Unwin, 1999).

2. Material and methods.

400 surveys were made throughout Comunidad Valenciana, with a maximum error of 5% and a level of confidence of 95%, through a conglomerates sampling with ramdom subsampling, looking for usual market basket buyers of the usual food basket in entrance access to facilities (supermarkets, hypermarkets, central markets, street markets, etc.). The questionnaire included several questions about wine label bottle information.

3. Results.

a) Socio – demographic profile of respondents.
Figure 1 shows the age of the respondents. The major part of them was included in 31 - 35 (20% of respondents), 36 - 40 (15%) 41 - 45 (15%) and 26 - 30 (14%) years old. 55% of respondents were men.

Figure 1. Age of respondents.

![Age of respondents](image1)

Figure 2 shows the level of studies of respondents. The majority of respondents declare to have College studies (30%) and Degree studies (29%).

Figure 2. Level of studies of respondents.

![Level of studies](image2)

64% of respondents declared to be employees. This can be seen in Figure 3 where occupation of respondents is shown.

Respondents' family level of incomes per month can be seen at Figure 4. 20% of them said the monthly incomes were 2001 - 2500 Euros. 19% said it was more than 3000 Euros per month.

Finally, Figure 5 shows the town size where respondents live. The majority (30%) of respondents live in a town with that has 10.001 - 50.000 inhabitants and 100.001 - 500.000 inhabitants (25%).

Figure 3 Occupation of respondents.

![Occupation of respondents](image3)
b) Wine consumption patterns.

Respondents were asked to declare their consumption of wine per week. This can be seen at Figure 6. 48% of respondents declare to consume less than 1 bottle of wine per week. Less than two bottles was declared by 36% of respondents.

The questionnaire also asked where this consumption of wine was mainly done. 31% of respondents declared that they mainly consumed wine at home. 30% of them declared to mainly do it at restaurants. Finally, 39% of respondents declared to consume wine both at home and at restaurants.
c) Analysis of the importance of several aspects before the purchase of a wine bottle.

Respondents were asked to rank from 1 (non important) to 7 (very important) several aspects that they could take into account when getting a bottle form the shelf before buying it. These aspects were: the designation of origin, the price, design and information on the label, design and information on the back label, the point of sale, the seller advice and friends and family recommendations.

Table 1 shows the average, minimum, maximum and mode of the scores. The most valuated aspect by respondent was Designation of Origin getting an average score of 5.50. The second aspect in the rank is Friends and family recommendations (5.15 in average). The less valuated aspects are the seller advice (3.94) and the point of sale (4.11). The design and information of the label is more valuated (4.89) than the design and information of the back label (4.70)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Designation of Origin</th>
<th>Price</th>
<th>Design and Information of the label</th>
<th>Design &amp; Information of the back label</th>
<th>Point of Sale</th>
<th>Seller Advice</th>
<th>Friends &amp; Family Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Average</td>
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<td>Maximum</td>
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Importance given to the Designation of Origin by respondents can be seen in Figure 7. 31% declared that is very important when getting a wine bottle from the shelf before buying it. 25% said it was significatively important. Quite important was chosen by 22% of respondents.

Figure 7. Importance given to Designation of Origin.

Figure 8 shows the percentages of answers for the importance of the price. Price was very important for 21% of respondents. 30% of them said it was significately important.

Figure 8. Importance given to price.
The degree of importance that respondents give to design and information on the label can be seen in Figure 9. 27% of them said it was quite important. 21% declared it was significatively important.

Figure 10 shows the same considerations for the design and information on the back label. 26% of respondents said it was significatively important. 21% chose it as quite important.

The point of sale is valuated according to Figure 11. 23% of respondents said the point of sale was important. 21% consider it as relatively important.

Figure 9. Importance given to design and information on the label

Figure 10. Importance given to design and information on the back label

Figure 11. Importance given to the point of sale.
The importance given to the seller advice by respondents can be seen in Figure 12. 24% of respondent consider it as important. 18% declared it was of little importance.

**Figure 12. Importance given to the seller advice**

Finally, Figure 13 shows the importance that respondents declare to give to friends and family recommendations. 31% of respondents declared it was significatively important. 20% of them consider it quite important.

**Figure 13. Importance given to friends and family recommendations.**

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5. List of references.