

**WINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR: AN IRISH WINE MARKET ANALYSIS.
A LITERATURE REVIEW.**

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ABSTRACT

The Irish wine market, worth €1.65 billion in 2009 (DIGI, 2010), has experienced unprecedented growth in the last fifteen years, growing from an 8% share of the overall alcoholic beverage market in Ireland in 1994 (WDB, 2007) to 22% in 2007 (DIGI, 2009). Relative to the long history of wine making and wine drinking, the marketing of wine is in its infancy (Thomas and Pickering, 2003). With approximately 1,451,000 wine drinkers (WDB, 2004) Ireland is an attractive and profitable target market for international wine brands.

This research aims to analyse the consumer behaviour of Irish wine drinkers, to provide marketers with an insight into the purchase choices of consumers. A profile of consumption patterns will provide marketers with valuable pointers on the type of wine preferred and the wine attributes that appeal to Irish wine drinkers. These pointers can inform brand positioning strategies, in particular labelling, advertising and point of sale decisions.

This paper is a literature review of wine consumer behaviour theory as applied to the Irish market. Assael's 2004 model of consumer behaviour is adapted to a wine consumption context and three areas of influences on behaviour are reviewed; individual influences, decision making process influences and environmental influences. The review identifies patterns in Irish wine consumer behaviour, such as preference among wine consumers for wine from Australia and Chile. Irish consumers have a preference for red wine, particularly shiraz/syrah and Irish wine consumers identify price, style and region of origin as the most important product attributes when choosing wine. While the literature provides valuable insights into Irish consumer behaviour and preferences, there is little understanding of how the wine consumer behaviour environment in Ireland (e.g. culture, reference sources) influences preferences and choice of wine. The next stage of this research is to undertake primary research, using semi-structured interviews to analyse environmental influences on Irish wine consumption behaviour.

INTRODUCTION

“Why do consumers buy the wines they do? It’s a big question, and predictably there isn’t a simple answer – at least not one that applies to all 26.4 million of the UK’s regular wine drinkers (Wine Intelligence, 2008, p. 1).” With approximately 1,451,000 wine drinkers in Ireland (WDB, 2004), the Irish wine market is considerably smaller than the UK market, yet it was worth €1.65 billion to the Irish economy in 2009 (DIGI, 2010). Marketers of wine targeting Irish wine drinkers face the same question; why do Irish consumers buy the wines they do?

Wine Intelligence (2008, p. 1) answer the question above by stating that by investigating wine consumers and their relationship to wine, patterns emerge in consumer behaviour, and these insights “can help the wine industry not only understand the way people act, but also begin to influence it.” This current research paper aims to analyse consumer behaviour of Irish wine drinkers, to provide marketers with an insight into the purchase choices of Irish wine drinkers. A profile of consumption patterns will provide marketers with valuable pointers on the type of wine preferred by and wine attributes that appeal to Irish wine market. These pointers will inform brand positioning strategies, in particular labelling communication and point of sale decisions.

The paper is a literature review of the history of wine marketing and the role on consumer behaviour in effective wine brand positioning. A model of consumer behaviour by Assael (2004) is adapted to the wine consumption environment, and introduces three areas of influences on wine consumer behaviour; individual consumer influences, decision making process influences and environmental influences. The three types of influences are discussed in the Irish wine market setting with emphasis on how the information gleaned can assist wine marketers in effectively positioning wine brands in Ireland. This paper also outlines the direction of future research to address the shortcomings of research to date and to provide marketers of wine with more rounded and meaningful insights into the wine consumption behaviour in Ireland.

BACKGROUND TO THE IRISH WINE MARKET

The Irish wine market has experienced tremendous growth over the past 15 to 20 years, with an almost five fold increase in the consumption of wine from 1.7 million cases in 1990 to 8.2 million cases in 2007 (WDB, 2008). DIGI (2010) reported a 6.9% decline in wine consumption (by volume in 2009), however this decline took place in a year when the overall alcohol market contracted by about 10% due to “poor national economic performance” (DIGI, 2010, p. 6). Despite the recent drop in consumption over the past year, the 450% growth in the Irish wine market since 1990, and the shifts in demand and preference result in the Irish wine market becoming an important target market for wine brands.

Preferences of Irish wine consumers have changed with a notable shift towards ‘New World’ wines, from a 6% market share in 1990 to a 68% share in 2007 (WDB, 2008). Previously, wine was a highly inaccessible product in the market, with high prices, limited selections, and complex labelling (Farren, 2003). In more recent years, wine has become widely available and increasingly affordable and accessible. Quinton and Harridge-March (2003) describe how wine was once perceived as a luxury good, but is now an everyday consumer good, bought by a wider socio-economic range of consumers. Overall, the dynamics of the Irish wine market have changed dramatically, and require further investigation and research, to ensure the needs of the customers in the new wine market are being met, and that brands are being optimally positioned to them. According to Thomas and Pickering (2003) further research into wine consumer choice and preference is essential for competitive effectiveness in the industry.

MARKETING OF WINE

The production of wine is a specialised area, and the wine industry has traditionally adopted a production focused mindset with the complexities of viticulture (growing of grapes) and vinification (the production of wine from grapes) having occupied the attention of specialists in the area (Thomas and Pickering, 2003). Bruwer, Li, and Reid (2002) note the agricultural basis of the wine value chain. The industry is often criticised for employing mass marketing campaigns (Gluckman, 1990; Spawton, 1991a; Hall and Winchester, 1999; Bruwer, Li, and Reid, 2002) and according to Thomas and Pickering (2003), the marketing of wine is in its infancy, relative to the long history of wine making and wine drinking. In the early 1990s an interest in branding emerged in the industry as a method of coping with changes in distribution and the growth of wine retailing; “there is a realisation in the industry that its future is geared to meeting the expectations of the wine consumer. That has contributed to the growing importance of wine marketing within the industry” (Spawton, 1991, p. 6).

Following the introduction of marketing to the mainstream wine industry in the early 1990s, the branding of wine became a key focus of wine makers where brand became ‘king’, a position that was previously enjoyed by the vineyard or wine maker. The 1990s saw a number of legal proceedings which reinforced for winemakers the power which existed in region of origin name, and thus began an aggressive undertaking of wine branding. Gluckman (1990) in a much cited article presents a number of challenges facing the wine marketer in branding wines. Most notably, a move towards own brand labelling by retailers reinforces the necessity for strong wine brands. In particular, Reid (2002, p. 50) illustrates the difficulty in communicating value and improving brand performance in an “explosion in brand competition.” Building strong brands is hindered by a limited understanding of wine consumption behaviour, the complexity of choice and wide ranging wine attributes, and by the challenge of consistent communication to influence behaviour (Gluckman, 1990). Successful brands are those that are targeted at sizeable and profitable markets or segments, with relevant and meaningful positioning strategies based on consumer behaviour insights. The Irish wine market’s growth over the last 20 years means it is a sizeable and profitable market for wine brands; however, further understanding of consumer behaviour is required for improved brand positioning.

WINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

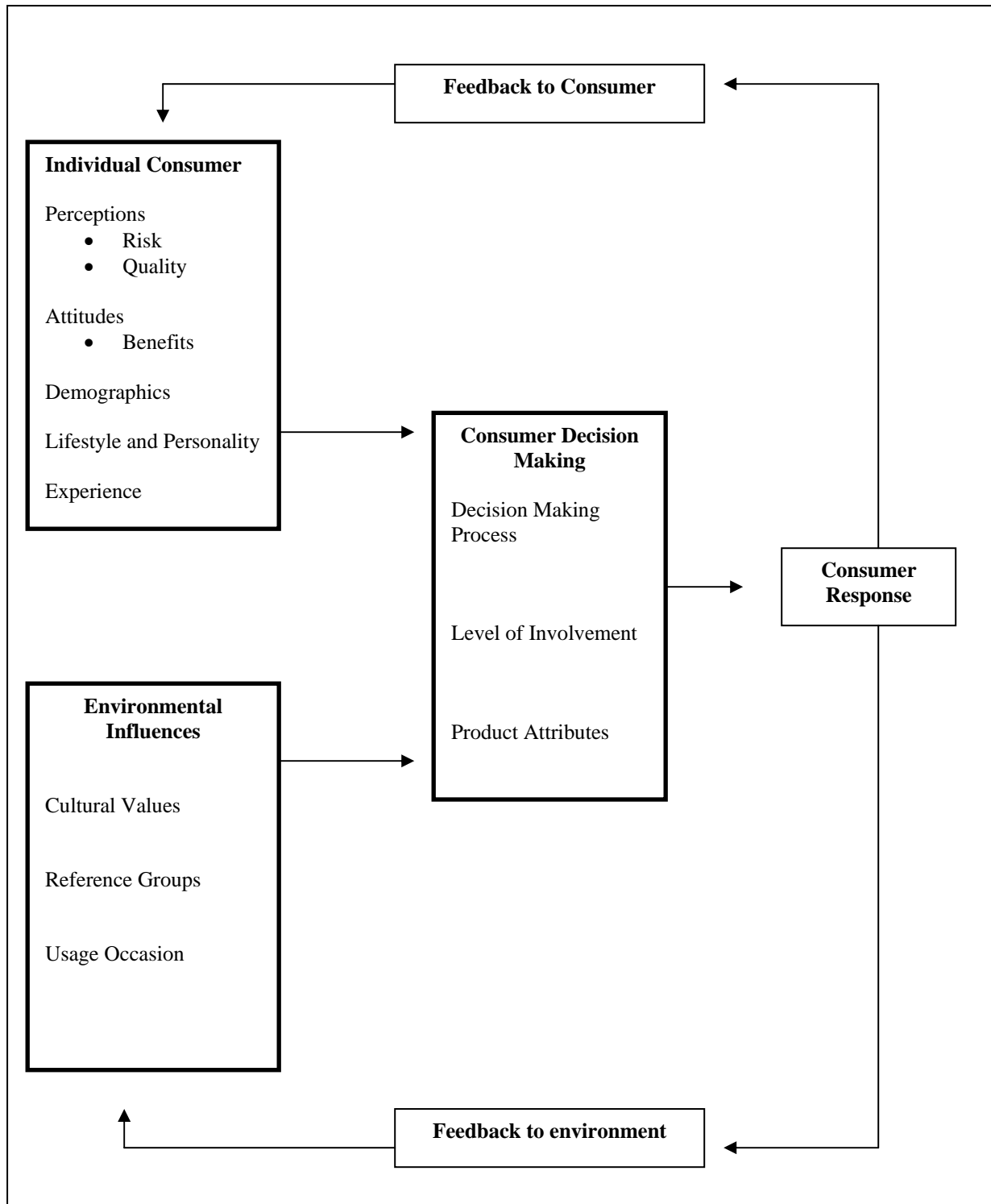
“... consumer preferences can serve as markers in developing and targeting persuasive messages to attract specific consumer groups. This will help marketers to develop strategies to increase sales (Atkin et al., 2007, p.327).”

Kotler (1997) and Jobber and Fahy (2003) discuss two important aspects of consumer behaviour in order to understand how outside stimuli influence the consumers consciousness in decision making: factors influencing consumer behaviour, and understanding the consumer decision making process. Figure 1 maps Assael’s (2004) model of consumer behaviour, as applied to wine drinkers. The model is centred on consumer decision making, which is affected and controlled by both the consumer’s individual influence and environmental influences. As a result of the decision making, the consumer responds with either action (purchase) or non action. Their response not only influences their future decision making, but also the greater environment, often through word of mouth communication (Assael, 2004). To gain a greater understanding of choice and preference in wine purchasing decisions, the three elements of the model; consumer decision making, individual influences and environmental influences are explored in Irish wine market context. By examining these factors in the Irish wine market setting, marketers can better understand how stimuli, such as brand positioning strategies, influence wine choice among Irish wine consumers. Four sources of Irish wine market behaviour information are referred to in exploring the three elements of the model;

- Wine Development Board of Ireland Statistics (WDB, 2004 & 2007)
- The Drinks Industry Group of Ireland: The Drinks Market Performance (DIGI, 2009)
- Euromonitor International: Country Sector Briefing (Euromonitor, 2008)
- The Irish Wine Market: A Market Segmentation Study (Geraghty and Torres, 2009)

Figure 1: Model of Wine Consumer Behaviour

Adapted from: Assael, H. (2004) *Consumer Behaviour. A Strategic Approach*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Company, p. 22.



Individual Consumer Influences

Assael's (2004) model of consumer behaviour identifies the many aspects of the individual consumer which influence their ultimate choice in the decision making process. Consumers are

influenced in decision making by their perceptions, attitudes, characteristics, lifestyle, and personality (Assael, 2004). Some authors identify perceived risk as the most influential factor in determining choice in wine purchasing decisions (Hall, Binney, and O'Mahony, 2004; Mitchell and Greatorex, 1989; Hall, Lockshin, and O'Mahony, 2001). Wine consumers infer quality about wine in different ways depending on their level of knowledge and degree on experience in purchasing wine (Mitchell and Greatorex, 1989). While insights into some advanced aspects of the Irish wine consumer, such as perceived risk, are not explored in reports or research, there are basic aspects of the Irish wine consumer that are well explored, such as demographics and consumption levels.

Demographics

The two age groups which together account for 55% of wine drinkers in Ireland are the 25-34 year old age group (23% of wine drinkers) and the 35-44 year old age group (22%) (WDB, 2004). Over 75% of wine drinkers are employed or self employed, 10% are students and the remaining 10% of drinkers is composed of housewives, unemployed people and retired people (Geraghty and Torres, 2009). Over 70% of wine drinkers are educated to third level; undergraduate or postgraduate level (Geraghty and Torres, 2009).

There are more female than male wine consumers in Ireland, with 57% of wine purchases being made by women (WDB, 2007). Positioning wine brands to target the female wine consumer should take into account that perceptions of product attributes are different between for males and females. Explicit communication, such as labels and shelf tags, of wine attributes are important for female buyers, as are tangible cues of quality, such as medals and awards (Atkin et al., 2007).

Consumption Levels

The number of bottles purchased per month by Irish wine consumers ranges from 1 to 30, averaging at over 7 bottles (Geraghty and Torres, 2009). Annual wine consumption in Ireland, at 15.3 litres per capita per annum, is less than 30% of wine consumption in other European countries such as France (48.5 litres per capita) and Italy (47.5 litres per capita) (WDB, 2007). Marketers of wine should take into account the relatively short history of wine consumption in

Ireland and the likely hood that the level of consumption of wine in Ireland is unlikely to reach the same level as Ireland’s European counterparts.

Consumer Decision Making Influences

Sanchez and Gil (1998) describe the decision making process of wine consumers as having four stages; needs recognition, search for information, evaluation of alternatives, and final choice. Figure 2 illustrates a wine consumer decision making process, which highlights key areas of consideration for understanding preference and choice. The three stages of the wine consumer decision making process which are complex for the consumer, and hence, are of concern to wine marketers are, the search for alternatives and the evaluation of alternatives, and to a lesser extent, need recognition. Understanding the dynamics of these stages of the process in particular is critical in the formulation wine brand positioning strategies and marketing strategies; “a better understanding of how consumers choose products will lead to a better framework on which to base decisions on pricing, packaging, and distribution” (Atkin et al., 2007).

Figure 2:	Wine Consumer Decision Making Process
Adapted from:	Sanchez, M. and Gil, J. M. (1998) Consumer preferences for wine attributes in different retail stores: a conjoint approach, <i>International Journal of Wine Marketing</i> , 10(1), p. 26.

Stage 1 :	Need Recognition Thirst, Occasion
Stage 2:	Search for Information Involvement Intrinsic and Extrinsic Cues
Stage 3:	Evaluation of Alternatives Preference Wine Attributes
Stage 4:	Choice Purchase

Stage 1. Need Recognition

Need recognition refers to two needs to satisfy; thirst and occasion of intended wine consumption. Thirst is a need easily satisfied, however occasion of intended wine consumption

can have a high influence on the decision making process of wine consumers. Hall, Lockshin and O'Mahony (2001) examine dining occasions and the link between these occasions and wine choice. The occasion based study highlights the role of values in influencing wine choice in different dining situations, by illustrating how wine choice can be based on the consequences desired from wine consumption. Such consequences include, complementing food, impressing others, value for money, mood enhancement, as a treat, and avoiding negative emotions. Different consequences are considered desirable in different circumstances, for example, in a 'dinner with family' occasion, a 'taste good' consequence is the most important consideration. While in a 'business related' occasion, an 'impress others' consequence is desirable (Hall, Lockshin, and O'Mahoney, 2001).

Similarly, Quester and Smart (1998) examine product attribute preference of both highly involved and lesser involved consumers, in three different anticipated consumption situations. The three situations are, for the purpose of drinking at home, with friends, and to give as a gift. The findings of the Quester and Smart (1998) demonstrate that how consumers regard wine attributes and wine choice is influenced by the anticipated person-specific consumption occasion.

Geraghty and Torres (2009) identify that 50% of Irish wine consumers buy wine mostly for home consumption in a dining situation. A further 20% purchase wine mostly when dining out, while 10% purchase wine for drinking at home, and the remaining 20% of consumers buy wine for a social occasion, for a special occasion or when drinking out. According to Quester and Smart (2001), collecting information from wine buyers can reasonably be assumed to correlate with wine consumers' behaviours and attitudes, as more often than not, the two are one and the same, with the exception of buying wine for gift purposes. The study by Geraghty and Torres (2009) does not identify the percentage of wine consumers who buy wine as a gift. Further investigation to the belief systems and values of Irish wine consumers would provide marketers with valuable information on the motivations of wine consumers when choosing wine for different usage occasions, particularly in the occasion of buying wine as a gift.

Stage 2: Search for Information

Consumers put various amounts of cognitive and behavioural effort into each stage of the process (Peter and Olson, 1996). Assael (2004) identifies the three levels of decision making as complex,

habitual, and low involvement. The nature of effort put into the process is dependent on the level of decision making. In order to determine the level of decision making, and thereby the amount of cognitive and behavioural effort endured by wine consumers, it is necessary to examine the level of involvement of wine consumers with the product itself and their preferences for wine attributes. Research by Geraghty and Torres (2009) examines the involvement level of Irish wine consumers in the purchase decision making process by adapting the product involvement measurement instrument developed by Lockshin et al. (2001) and identifies 48% of the Irish market as having medium involvement, 38% as having high involvement and 14% as having low involvement in the wine decision making process.

The involvement level of consumers is regarded as important in understanding how to position brands. Lockshin et al. (2001) identify an involvement base as the most suitable basis for segmenting the Australian wine market. The wine decision making process is considered complex due to the large number of wine attributes for the consumer to potentially evaluate. Wine attributes include brand name, producer, grape variety, blend of grape varieties, vintage, region of origin, price, label, bottle type, cork type, bottle size, colour of wine, style of wine, and level of alcohol. Wine marketers may wish to target consumers with a particular level of involvement. For example, a wine brand whose selling points are spread over a large number of wine attributes may seek to target high involvement wine buyer who have the interest, motivation and knowledge of wine needed to recognise the wine attributes of a particular brand. On the other hand, a wine brand which relies on one or two wine attributes, such as grape and country of origin (for example, a sauvignon blanc from New Zealand) to appeal to wine buyers, may target low involvement consumers who do not invest a lot of time in the evaluation of alternatives in the wine buying process.

Stage 3: Evaluation of Alternatives

The 'evaluation of alternatives' stage of the wine decision making process relates primarily to consumer preferences and the evaluation of wine attributes. Substantial data exists on the wine preferences of Irish consumers. Red wine is the most popular wine in Ireland (51% of volume), followed by white wine (44%), while rose wine accounts for just 5% of volume (WDB, 2008). For marketers of wine, understanding consumer preferences for different grape varieties is

important to ensure they are positioning the right wine to a particular market. In terms of red wine, the most popular grape is Shiraz/Syrah (33% of volume), while Chardonnay continues to be the preferred white wine grape, with 36% share of volume (Euromonitor, 2008).

In terms of country of origin preferences, the Irish wine market has changed substantially over the last 20 years. In 2007, 68% of wine consumed in Ireland was from 'New World' wine countries (WDB, 2008). 'New World' countries refer to wine producing countries outside of Europe, such as Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the US, Chile and Argentina (Fielden, 1996). This preference for 'New World' wine has gained momentum since 1990, when these wines accounted for only 6% and wines from 'Old World' countries (for example, France, Spain, Italy and Germany) accounted for 94% of wine consumption (WDB, 2004). Almost 47% of wine consumed in Ireland in 2007 came from Australia and Chile (WDB, 2008). The shift in the country of origin preference represents an important shift in preference for style, taste, brand, price, and other wine variables. According to Moran (2002), the new wine drinking culture in Ireland is a result of wine becoming more accessible, affordable, and better branded, particularly the wine from New World countries. Marketers of wine should ensure their labels, packaging and display appeal to the Irish wine consumers' preferences for accessible wines.

While the above information on wine preferences is important, to fully understand the consumer decision making process, wine marketers require an understanding of how consumers rate wine attributes and how these ratings impact their wine preferences. Sanchez and Gill (1998) illustrate how consumers have preferences according to the bundle of benefits they are seeking. Due to the large number of wine attributes, wine consumers have a wider range of considerations in making purchasing decisions. Johnson, Ringham and Jurd (1991) suggest a hierarchical structure exists in the consumer choice process, with wine colour and style as the most important product attribute. Orth, McGarry-Wolf and Dodd (2005) outline how origin of wine is one of the most highly regarded intrinsic cue for consumers to evaluate the quality of wine, and shapes their attitude towards other aspects of the product, especially price. Not only is the wine region of origin attribute important as a cue for economic value, it can also represent emotional and social value for consumers. McCutcheon et al. (2009) find region of origin is more important in the

decision making process for particular consumer groups; high involvement consumers, red wine consumers and female consumers.

Geraghty and Torres (2009) examine the importance to Irish wine consumers of 14 wine attributes using a likert scale. The attributes with the highest importance rating are price, style (e.g. dry or fruity) and region (e.g. Australia). The least important wine attributes are bottle shape, label design and type of cork (e.g. cork or screwcap) (Geraghty and Torres, 2009). The perceived importance of wine attributes can vary substantially in different markets. Goodman (2009) identifies the influences of wine choice across 12 countries and finds consumers base their wine choice on having tasted the wine previously or the recommendations of others. In some markets, particular wine attributes are the influencers of wine choice. For example, in Brazil and China, brand name is the most important influence (Goodman, 2009) while brand name is only the fifth most important wine attribute for Irish wine consumers (Geraghty and Torres, 2009). In Austria, grape variety is the top influencer (Goodman, 2009), but for Irish consumers, grape variety is the fourth most important attribute in buying wine. The variations between markets are an important consideration for international wine marketers, as brands may need to rely on different selling points in different countries.

Perceptions on the importance of product attributes provide marketers with an indication of what buyers identify as cues of quality. By emphasising these cues, brand communication efforts are more likely to be successful. As identified, the importance of product attributes can vary in different countries. An analysis of Irish wine consumer behaviour should explore the cultures which could provide an insight into why some attributes are more important in some cultures than in others. Johnson (2003), in a lifestyle segmentation study of the Australian wine market, suggests beliefs, values and other factors are more embedded in consumption behaviour than lifestyle perceptions and attitudes to wine. An examination of wine consumption in the context of Irish culture, particularly in terms of beliefs and values, would provide marketers with an insight into more embedded influences of behaviour, and may help to develop more meaningful relationships with the target consumer. Culture is one of the three potential environmental influences on wine consumer behaviour discussed below.

Stage four of the decision making process is choice (i.e. purchase). At this stage, the evaluation of alternatives determines the final choice, and a marketer's influence can be minimal. Insight into consumer behaviour in the previous three stages of the process; needs recognition, search for information and evaluation of alternatives; are more salient for wine marketers.

Environmental Influences

Beyond the consumer's individual influences on purchasing decisions and the four stages of the actual decision making process, environmental factors also influence choice. Assael (2004) considers environmental influences as macro influences, which are derived from cultural and social norms. The holistic influences take into account the overall consumption experience, and not just the purchasing process. Sanchez and Gill (1998) illustrate the cultural attachment of Spanish wine consumers to wine produced in the region in which they live, and the conditioning of consumers to evaluate wine quality against the wine produced in the region in which they live. An important consideration in an Irish consumer behaviour analysis is the minimal level of wine production in Ireland (Fielden, 1996). Irish wine consumers do not have reference points such as local wines to act as benchmarks in determining brand quality, and therefore must use other cues in evaluating quality and value. Three environmental influences are reference sources, cultural and usage occasion influences.

Reference Sources

According to a briefing on UK wine consumer behaviour by Wine Intelligence (2008), a UK based research company, reference sources play a central role in influencing the actions of wine consumers. The research based on the consumer behaviour of 1,512 regular wine drinkers in the UK reveals that 29% of wine drinkers state they are influenced by wine critics, such as Oz Clarke and Olly Smith (popular UK wine critics). The research also indicates that regular wine consumers in the UK are not only influenced by wine critics and personalities through newspaper articles and reviews, but through an increasingly varied source of reference; books, television, email, magazines and the internet (Wine Intelligence, 2008).

The Wine Intelligence (2008) report also identifies the importance of recommendations from friends and family in a regular wine drinker in the UK; 60% of whom would rate such recommendations as valuable in choosing wine. This statistic is twice as high as the number of regular wine drinkers who rate shop signage, advice from shop workers, or the opinion of wine critics as influential factors. An analysis of the Irish wine market consumer would require investigation into the role of reference sources, especially wine critics, and friends and family in influencing the decision making process.

Usage Occasion

A further environmental factor influencing the purchase decision process is the usage occasion Assael (2004). In China, another market with a relatively short wine consumption history (Balistini and Gamble, 2006) usage occasion has high influence on the evaluation of alternatives in the decision making process. Research by Yu et al. (2009) demonstrates large discrepancies in wine spends dependent on the intended usage; €3 to €8 for daily consumption wine, compared with €30 for wine intended as a gift.

Cultural Values

Usage settings and cultural values in the consumer behaviour environment are closely linked. The tendencies of Chinese consumers to pay four times as much for wine intended as gift (Yu et al., 2009) may be related to the high value placed on the gift giving tradition in Chinese culture. In the evaluation of alternatives, cultural values can influence the preference of wine types. Jenster and Cheng (2008, p. 248) account for the high popularity of red wine in China with the symbolic associations of the colour red with “happiness and celebration in Chinese society.” Liu and Murphy (2007) also comment on the associations between the colour white and death which may account for the lack of popularity of white wine in Chinese culture. A consumer analysis of the Irish wine market requires greater understanding of cultural values in Ireland and how they influence the evaluation of alternative types of wine in the decision making process.

In cultures with a deep rooted tradition of wine drinking, the buying behaviour is markedly different from ‘new’ wine consumption countries such as Ireland and China. In Italy, wine was traditionally consumed at home everyday, during both principal meals of the day (Seghieri et al.,

2007). Seghieri et al. (2007) suggest lifestyle and a number of cultural factors have evolved and changed greatly over the last number of years, resulting in different types of demand for wine and emerging tastes and trends. A cultural analysis of the Irish wine market would need to take account of the changing nature of culture, and how this influences wine purchases.

THE FUTURE OF THIS RESEARCH

There is a substantial knowledge base in the literature and in the industry on wine consumer behaviour, particularly surrounding the individual factors influencing behaviour (demographics and consumption levels) and the decision making process (preferences and importance of wine attributes). However, little is understood about how Ireland's culture, belief systems and the overall environment influence wine consumer behaviour.

The next stage of this research is the completion of primary research. The primary research will involve collective qualitative data through semi-structured interviews with regular wine consumers to gain an insight into how environmental factors influence wine choice. The purpose of this is to identify commonly held views on the influence of environmental factors, including reference sources, usage occasion and other aspects of Irish culture and belief systems. The author intends to conduct the primary research with a sample of 'medium level involvement' regular wine drinkers in the Republic of Ireland. The first stage of the primary research to be completed is to seek access to the market through the cooperation of retailers.

The primary research is intended to provide a greater understanding of the motivating factors behind preferences which would provide marketers with an opportunity to target their brands to the beliefs, values and culture of Irish wine consumers, and not just appeal to their preferences.

CONCLUSION

The Irish wine market, with 1,451,000 wine drinkers and worth €1.65 billion a year, is a potentially attractive market for international wine brands. The Irish wine drinking culture is relatively new and the aim of this paper was to analyse the consumer behaviour of Irish wine drinkers, to provide marketers with an insight into the purchase choices of Irish wine drinkers. A profile of consumption patterns would provide marketers with valuable pointers on the type of wine preferred by and wine attributes that appeal to Irish wine market. These pointers will inform brand positioning strategies, in particular labelling communication and point of sale decisions.

An adaptation of Assael's (2004) model for consumer behaviour identifies three categories of influences on wine behaviour; individual influences, the decision making process influences and environmental influences. The literature and industry reports reveal much about individual influences and the decision making process influences on Irish wine consumer behaviour. The Irish wine consumer is more likely to be female, buying on average eight bottles of wine a month for consumption at home with food. Positioning wine brands to target the female wine consumer should take into account that perceptions of product attributes are different for males and females. The Irish wine consumer is likely to have medium involvement in the decision making process, meaning they will invest some time and energy in evaluating alternatives. Marketers should tailor brand communication keeping in mind this level of involvement for 48% of the market. Marketers of complex wine brands should consider that there is a second substantial segment (38%) who can be considered highly involved consumers and are likely to invest their effort to evaluate complex brands.

Based on the preferences of Irish wine consumers for 'New World' wine, particularly shiraz and chardonnay, marketers of wines brands with similar regions of origin and grape varieties should consider Ireland as a potential market. Wine attributes of price, style and region of origin are considered strong influences on choice, and therefore should be emphasised in the brand communication in Ireland. Attribute influences are different in other markets, and marketers may need to adjust the emphasis on different attributes accordingly. The difference between markets has been highlighted by the variation between countries on the most important wine attribute in the consumer decision making process. Further research into the environmental influences on Irish wine consumer behaviour would provide marketers with a greater understanding of the

beliefs, values and cultural factors that influence preference and could assist marketers to develop more meaningful relationships with target wine consumers in Ireland.

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