Is There a Target Consumer for Fair Trade Wine in the United States?

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to empirically identify the consumers that are attracted to fair trade wines. There are growers of wine grapes in Argentina, Chile and South Africa that benefit from Fair Trade Certification. (Fair Trade USA. 2015). Survey research was used to examine wine consumers’ familiarity with fair trade wine. A survey instrument was administered through personal interviews during October of 2013 to 411 consumers. The surveys were conducted among a random sample of wine consumers using the personal interview method and a convenience sample in San Luis Obispo County, California. San Luis Obispo County was designated the best test market in the United States by Demographics Daily (Jackoway, 2001). San Luis Obispo was found to be the best of 3,141 counties to represent a microcosm of the United States based on 33 statistical indicators.

There is low awareness and understanding of fair trade products among wine consumers. Only ten percent of wine consumers indicate that they are very familiar with fair trade products. A half of those very familiar indicate that fair trade is an extremely or very desirable feature of wine when they purchase wine. This research examines the wine consumer that is very familiar with fair trade to identify a target for fair trade wine products. These fair trade target consumers are able to correctly identify the attributes of a fair trade product, such as, producers pay workers a fair wage and produces pay growers a fair price.

The fair trade target consumers are more likely to be females with a postgraduate education. Most of the fair trade target consumers agree that they consider themselves to be foodies and wine enthusiasts. The fair trade target is more likely to learn about a new wine from a sommelier, a magazine, television, a wine app and Pandora.

The fair trade consumer is more likely to belong to a wine club. They are similar to the average consumer in number of bottles purchased and dollars spent per month on wine. The fair trade target are more likely to have purchased wine from Chile, 33%, and South Africa, 13%. The fair trade consumers target also rate the quality of wine from Chile and South Africa higher than the non-target. The fair trade target is more likely to have purchased merlot, pinot noir, pinotage, and white rhone varietals. They are less likely to purchase chardonnay than the non-target consumer. The target also indicates a higher level of familiarity with Rhone varietals.

To develop a positioning that is attractive to the fair trade target, positioning research was conducted. The research reveals that the fair trade wine consumer finds the following
attributes more desirable to them when they make a wine purchase decision: varietal I like, premium quality product, has a creative label, organically grown, is a fair trade product and is imported from a new world wine region.

The results of this research indicate a need from consumer education about the benefits of fair trade and will provide information for a lively discussion at the AAWE meeting in Argentina, one of the countries that produce fair trade wine.

References
