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Keywords

wine knowledge, wine communication, US consumer wine preferences, segmentation NPC test, CBBE model

Research Question

The purpose of this paper is to evaluate factors affecting the knowledge of Italian wines in US consumers, i.e., to what extent wine promotion actions can improve the consumer's awareness.

Methods

A sample survey collects preferences of US professionals and consumers through questionnaires. Data have been analyzed through a non-parametric model to investigate the customers perception and the wine knowledge.

Results

Results may be helpful in designing effective communication strategies in US which should be focused on consumer's appreciation of Italian wines as a brand instead of targeting specific wines.

Abstract

The US market is increasingly oriented to Premium Italian wines. However, there is a lack about the knowledge of Italian wines in US because of wide and rich wine variety mostly known as geographical indications (GI) accounting more than 500 PDOs and PGIs. More generally, the knowledge of Italian wines changes dramatically not only from wine to wine but also from consumer to consumer.

To spread the knowledge of these wines, the Italian Association of GI wines has started a communication activity on export markets which is aimed to evaluate knowledge and to promote Premium Italian wines among intermediaries (eg. importers, retailers, restaurants, etc.) as well as standard consumers. These communication activities are now well-established; they are done annually and they have involved several countries around the world. A first survey, carried out between 2009 and 2011 in both European and not European countries, collected 3,579 interviews classified into four promotion actions: press conference, wine tasting, tasting course, knowledge of Italian wines. Barisan et al. (2015), have analyzed these data to evaluate differences between and within country groups and to assess the consumer perception about Italian wines through the Keller's model.

The wine communication plays a key role in enforcing competitiveness on international markets by improving the consumer perception as well as by building up the consumer loyalty (Campell and Guibert, 2006; Bernetti et al., 2006). On export markets, wine communication campaigns should be designed according to both target country features (Rod and Beal, 2012; Corsi et al., 2010) and competitive aspects such as price (Parcerro and Villanueva, 2011).

Studies on food promotion on international markets may be useful in designing wine promotion campaigns at the international level: for instance, some authors have shown that local country's features affect the consumer

perception about products having strong regional features (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Romeo and Roth, 1992; Maheswaran, 1994); others argue that when regional communication is managed at the country level (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Gilmore, 2000; Endzina and Luneva, 2004; Olins, 2002) positive effects may be extended to the development of domestic products, the growth of tourism, the attraction of foreign investments or to establish good international relations (Paoli, 1999; Van Ham, 2000; Latusi, 2002). Accordingly, the wine promotion may be more efficient when it is focused on regional origin (Schamel, 2009) and it is managed at regional/country level .

This paper evaluates factors affecting the knowledge of Italian wines in US consumers, i.e., to what extent wine promotion actions can improve the consumer's awareness or the reputation of Italian wines. As a consequence, these activities may increase the wine consumption as well as wine exports to US. The survey was done during exhibitions or events in large cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, covering main US areas.

Communication activities have been prepared to achieve a large number of targets as well. Two main activities have been done: tasting seminars and consumer actions. Two less international known Italian wines such as Frascati and Castel di Monte, were also presented in the survey as case studies.

Wine tasting courses are seminars where information about Italian wines is given. Seminars are followed by guided tasting sessions where chemical and sensory features of Italian wines are presented. These activities were supported by a multimedia presentation.

The tasting seminars target special customers such as importers, food and beverage managers, buyers working for supermarket chains or for HoReCa channels as well as influencers such as journalists, sommeliers, wine educators, etc.. These events are focused on communicating the identity of some GI Italian wines in order to reinforce their image in the mind of US customers and influencers.

The consumer action are aimed to final consumers. These activities are done in social occasions such as cocktails, in which the participants were invited to follow a guided tasting while receiving an information booklets on tasted Italian wines. Thereby, consumers could receive information about the sensory profile, food pairings, terroir together with more technical information when required (eg. quality and control systems).

Indeed, a further survey was carried out during the exhibitions. Specifically, a questionnaire was fill out by people who were met there. The questionnaire was previously formulated according to the respondent: intermediaries or professionals and final consumers.

Questionnaire's questions are dichotomous or multiple responses ones while opinions are expressed in a Likert scale. The survey accounted for 296 questionnaires: tasting seminars (82 questionnaires), consumer action (107), participation in fairs (107). According to respondents, 40% of questionnaires were fill out by professionals and 60% by final consumers.

A descriptive analysis shows a variability and representativeness in the data survey about professionals while sample data about final consumers are affected by some bias.

Data are then analyzed through a nonparametric technique known as nonparametric combination (NPC) which allows to manage databases where a large amount of variables are often associated with few records. Actually, the response rate differs among questionnaires and respondents. Consequently, a large amount of variables with different records make parametric methods difficult to apply. The NPC can overcome these difficulties by handling multivariate testing procedures which are useful in looking for significant differences among variables.

The NPC test is further used to build the Customer Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model (Keller, 2003) on two actions (tasting course and consumers actions). The CBBE model, originally though as a tool to measure brand equity, is useful in suggesting information about the customer's perception about Italian wines. The idea, underlying this analysis, is to represent a country as a brand by evaluating the consumer-based equity of the country of origin.

First results seem to show a strong change of respondent's opinions, especially for final consumers, because of different user profile (e.g. gender, age, work area); most likely, these results are driven by a different wine tasting experience of respondents which has a strong impact in appreciating the wines.

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The communication of Italian wines in United States

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The US market is increasingly oriented to Premium Italian wines. However, there is a lack about the knowledge of Italian wines in US because of wide and rich wine variety mostly known as geographical indications (GI) accounting more than 500 PDOs and PGIs. More generally, the knowledge of Italian wines changes dramatically not only from wine to wine but also from consumer to consumer.

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The wine communication plays a key role in enforcing competitiveness on international markets by improving the consumer perception as well as by building up the consumer loyalty (Campbell and Guibert, 2006; Bernetti et al., 2006). On export markets, wine communication campaigns should be designed according to both target country features (Rod and Beal, 2012; Corsi et al., 2010) and competitive aspects such as price (Parcero and Villanueva, 2011).

Studies on food promotion on international markets may be useful in designing wine promotion campaigns at the international level: for instance, some authors have shown that local country's features affect the consumer perception about products having strong regional features (Bilkey and Nes, 1982; Romeo and Roth, 1992; Maheswaran, 1994); others argue that when regional communication is managed at the country level (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2000; Gilmore, 2000; Endzina and Luneva, 2004; Olins, 2002) positive effects may be extended to the development of domestic products, the growth of tourism, the attraction of foreign investments or to establish good international relations (Paoli, 1999; Van Ham, 2000; Latusi, 2002). Accordingly, the wine promotion may be more efficient when it is focused on regional origin (Schamel, 2009) and it is managed at regional/country level .

This paper evaluates factors affecting the knowledge of Italian wines in US consumers, i.e., to what extent wine promotion actions can improve the consumer's awareness or the reputation of Italian wines. As a consequence, these activities may increase the wine consumption as well as wine exports to US. The survey was done during exhibitions or events in large cities such as Chicago, San Francisco, Miami, covering main US areas. Communication activities have been prepared to achieve a large number of targets as well. Two main activities have been done: tasting seminars and consumer actions. Two less international known Italian wines such as Frascati and Castel di Monte, were also presented in the survey as case studies.

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