

Padua 2017 Abstract Submission

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

terroir

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authenticity

Research Question

What is the comparative appeal of terroir for consumers of different cultural backgrounds across a range of foodstuffs (cheese, charcuterie, wine)?

Methods

The use of Discrete Choice Methods, combining product attributes and levels into hypothetical choice situations to analyse respondents' stated preferences using 1200 respondents from three countries.

Results

This is currently a work in progress and the preliminary results will be given at the conference.

Abstract

Tell me a story about terroir. Analysing the appeal of different terroir stimuli for consumers

A terroir product is a product with a story to tell. Terroir is often seen as a kind of philosophical concept, bearing mystical, environmental and marketing meanings (Charters, 2010). Products associated with terroir are often considered a kind of 'refuge' product, able to represent values, commitment and ethics, as well as to provide consumers with a guarantee of quality and authenticity (Guy, 2011, Batat, 2013).

Scholars use to interpret the concept of 'terroir product' through different dimensions. Aurier et al. (2005) identified three intrinsic dimensions. The first one has to do with the 'trade-skill' aspect, embodying know-how and tradition. A second dimension is connected to the origin, including territory, region and land and a third dimension, the most important from the consumer viewpoint, is linked to the concepts of time and culture and therefore the history and the ritual linked to the product. Spielmann and Charters (2013) identified three dimensions as well, related to the concept of authenticity and linked to product, internalised and institutional authenticity.

The word terroir has regularly been associated with wine by scholar and marketers. Terroir is able to raise the scores and price of a wine when included in the note of a wine magazine (Spielmann et al., 2014). It is differently perceived by different stakeholders, depending on their level of involvement with the product (Spielmann and Gélinas-Chebat, 2012), and it is transmitted to consumers through different cues in a wine label (Capitello et al., 2016).

The literature analysis highlights that studies focusing on terroir products other than wine and from a consumer perspective are relatively rare, as well as the study of terroir products coming from outside Europe (Batat, 2013; Charters, 2010; Moulard et al., 2015).

This study aims to analyse the appeal of different terroir stimuli for the consumer, without just focusing on wine and the Old World. In particular, it will highlight: i) how consumer perceptions toward terroir changes from product to product; ii) the cultural differences in the perception of terroir; iii) different perception of terroir linked to

different country of origin; iv) consumer preferences for the different label attesting the legal recognition of terroir (PDO, PGI and AVA).

The research objective will be pursued applying Discrete Choice Methods, combining product attributes and levels into hypothetical choice situations to analyse respondents' stated preferences (Louviere et al. 2000). The surveyed terroir products will be wines, cheeses and charcuterie, each of them becoming the main actor of a discrete choice experiment. The surveyed population will be composed of 1,200 consumers coming from France (the 'homeland' of the term terroir), Italy (one of the most important producers of terroir products in the world) and UK - a European country less involved in the production of terroir products than the previous two. Each consumer will be asked to imagine inviting an American friend for dinner and to offer him/her a domestic cheese labelled PDO, a European cold cooked meat labelled PGI and a Californian wine labelled AVA. Each experimental design will be made up of four attributes, assuming different levels: I) the origin (expressed at a national, regional or local level); II) the theme of the story about terroir (concerning the history of the family of producers, the production territory, the production process and the climat); III) the private label (present or not); IV) the collective label (present or not), and; V) the price. Attributes and levels are allocated to choice tasks by using a Bayesian efficient experimental design, which minimises the Db-error (Ferrini & Scarpa, 2007; Sándor & Wedel, 2001; Scarpa, Campbell, & Hutchinson, 2007) starting from some parameter values drawn from a pilot study. Data will be collected online by a panel provider society, ensuring the same quota in terms of age and gender of the surveyed populations. Data will be analysed through Random Utility Models, highlighting consumers' utility and Willingness to Pay (WTP) for different terroir stimuli in the different foods and the wine. Random Utility Models apply the Lancaster theory (Lancaster, 1966), according to which the utility of a good is not given by the good itself, but by the different attributes composing the good, and the random utility maximization theory developed by Thurstone (1927). This theory postulates that the utility of an individual n , who assesses for t times j alternatives and chooses alternative i (Unit) is a stochastic function, composed by a deterministic part (V_{nit}), function of the attributes of the good, and a stochastic part, or error term (ϵ_{nit}), that includes the heterogeneity of consumer preferences and cannot be observed by the researcher. In this study, different models will be drawn from different specifications of the density function of the stochastic part of the utility.

Results will give deep insights into the terroir world, providing producers from the New and the Old world with suggestions about how to communicate their terroir to their different target markets.