

Ithaca 2018 Abstract Submission

Title

Consumer preferences and perceptions of rosé wine in out-of-home consumption situations in Italy

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Conference Presentation

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Keywords

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Research Question

The aim of the study is to explore the factors which may influence Italian consumers' preferences for rosé wine and to identify Italian rosé wine consumers profile.

Methods

Data have been collected through an online survey on 287 wine consumers in Italy. A choice experiment was assigned to the rosé drinkers to elicit their preferences for rosé.

Results

A latent class approach allowed us to define different rosé consumer profiles in relation to the consumption situation. Three classes have been identified: wine bar visitors; the unenthusiastic; restaurant visitors.

Abstract

Introduction

In the last decade, rosé wine has gained a growing interest both among wine producers and consumers.

Rosé wine production assembles between 8 and 10% of wine production around the world and has reached 23 million hectoliters in 2015 (OIV, 2015; FranceAgriMer, 2017).

Due to the increasing demand for this product, rosé wine production has had a positive trend since 2002 with a growth rate of the 18% worldwide. The largest rosé wine producing countries are France, the leading producer, Spain, USA and Italy, which represent the three-quarters of the worldwide production (FranceAgriMer, 2017).

On the other hand, in the case of the Italian market, rosé production has had a recent decrease in volume. As

such, in order to overcome the price competition of other producing countries, such as Spain and South Africa, Italian rosé producers are focusing on the production of higher quality products and the improvement of their market positioning (FranceAgriMer, 2017). Accordingly, some Italian wine growing areas, for example in Apulia, Veneto, Abruzzo and Lombardy regions, have gained increasing popularity in the rosé wine production (Civiltà del Bere, 2017).

Indeed, despite the decrease in rosé wine production, Italian wine producers and winemakers have been increasingly paying attention to production techniques and sensory characteristics of rosé wine and wineries have started to increase their supply of rosé as a product differentiation strategy. Wine magazines and critics have, as well, acquired a growing interest in rosé wine (Civiltà del Bere, 2017). According to Wine Monitor Nomisma (2017), Italian consumers have started consuming rosé in different occasions and rosé has become particularly popular among young people, who tend to consume it as aperitif, out of home, at wine-bars for example. However, despite the growing interest of consumers in this product, restaurants and wineshops are still reluctant in introducing new varieties of rosé in their wine list and inventory respectively (Civiltà del Bere, 2017). Therefore, Italian consumers generally have a limited range of rosé wines in terms of quality, brand and price.

In addition, while the rosé wine market has acquired attention by the commercial point of view worldwide, Velikova, Charters, Bouzdine-Chameeva, Fountain, Ritchie and Dodd (2015) observed that a few research studies have investigated factors which can influence consumers' choice behavior for rosé wine. Indeed, to our knowledge, only three studies have explored this issue: Fitzmaurice (2017), Velikova et al. (2015) and Corsinovi, Gaeta and Corsi (2013). Velikova et al. (2015) explored consumers' preferences and perceptions towards rosé wine in four countries: the USA, New Zealand, France and the UK, observing that rosé image varied in different markets, shaped by different cultural and image management issues. Fitzmaurice (2017) investigated the rosé wine market by a sociological perspective, highlighting how the perception and classification of the product by the elite wine critics has changed in the USA. He showed how US critics worked to codify and disseminate a new, high-status, category identity for rosé. Finally, Corsinovi et al. (2013) have explored the Italian market showing that Italian consumers tend to choose rosé at restaurants when they want to try something new and when it matches with food, while they are mainly interested in the origin of the product in a retailing setting (Corsinovi et al., 2013).

Research questions

According to Centre du Rosé (2017), the increasing demand for rosé can also be explained by the fact that rosé matches with the new food consumption trends, such as informal and deconstructed meals and the seeking of uncommon and new foods.

As such, due to the growing differentiation of wine consumer profiles and of wine consumption contexts, a challenge for Italian rosé wine producers is the identification of the characteristics of the product which may strengthen the position of the rosé wines in the market. Thus, the aim of the present research is to explore the factors which may influence Italian consumers' preferences for rosé wine and to identify Italian rosé wine consumers profile. Findings from this study will be of insight to marketing practitioners in the identification of market opportunities and consumption contexts for rosé wines.

Methods

Data from this study have been collected through an online survey on 287 wine consumers in Italy between July and September of 2017. Precisely, only 179 out of the 287 respondents were rosé wine consumers.

The questionnaire was structured in four sections:

- 1) general wine consumption habits: Likert and semantic scales have been implemented;
- 2) rosé wine consumption habits and perceptions: Likert and semantic scales have been implemented. In the case of rosé wine non-consumers motivations for non-consuming rosé wine were investigated;
- 3) elicitation of consumers' preferences for characteristics of the rosé wine: a Choice Experiment (CE) approach has been implemented. Specifically, in the CE, consumers were presented with different hypothetical purchasing scenarios consisting of two product alternatives, i.e. a glass of rosé wine (100 ml), and an opt-out alternative. The product alternatives were described by four attributes including consumption context (restaurant or wine bar), type of rosé (still or sparkling), origin (from the region of residence of the respondent; from Italy, but not from the region of residence of the respondent; from France; from the USA), and price (3.5, 5.0, 6.5 o 8.0 euros/100 ml). Attributes and attribute levels were allocated across 12 choice tasks using a fractional orthogonal experimental design.
- 4) Socio-demographic characteristics.

The CE (third section of the survey) was assigned only to the rosé wine drinkers.

Results

In regard to the main motivations of rosé non-drinkers (38% of the sample), respondents have indicated, with highest frequency, the dislike of the product and its unsuitability in their consumption habits. This suggests that rosé winemakers and marketers should focus on the improvement of quality and sensory characteristics of the product, and the identification of appropriate consumption contexts.

On the other hand, in regard to the motivations of rosé wine drinkers, respondents' perceptions towards rosé wine have been analyzed using a principal component analysis. Results show that Italian wine consumers of rosé associate three different images to rosé wine: 1) 'distrust', the choice of a rosé is perceived as a difficult task in terms of value for money evaluation and consumption occasions; 2) 'hedonism', rosé is able to offer pleasant sensations and situations to the consumer; 3) 'versatility', rosé is perceived as an easy to drink wine, suitable for any occasion and season.

Consumers' responses to the choice experiment have been analyzed using discrete choice models. Specifically, a latent class approach has been implemented. This allowed us to define different rosé wine consumer profiles.

On the basis of model fit statistics, three classes have been identified:

- 1) Wine bar visitors: This kind of consumers (58% of the sample) prefers consuming rosé at the wine bar rather than at the restaurant, if it is sparkling, from their region of residence, from Italy in general and from France rather than from the USA. They have a strong preference for consuming the rosé instead of non consuming it, while the price of the product does not have a significant impact on their choices.
- 2) The unenthusiastic: this type of consumers (12% of the sample) does not have an interest in consuming the rosé (we did not observe any significance on the "opt out" option). This group prefers still rosé to sparkling and prefers the product from the region and from Italy rather than from the USA. They do not have any significant preference for the French rosé.
- 3) Restaurant visitors: This group of respondents (30% of the sample) tends to prefer the restaurant context rather than the wine bar context. They tend to prefer to purchase the rosé rather than non purchasing it, but the probability of choosing the product decreases if price increases. They do not have significant preference whether the wine is still or sparkling, but they have a strong preference for the Italian origin over France and USA.

Conclusion

Research findings suggest that the market penetration of rosé wine among rosé non-drinkers, as well as in the unenthusiastic segment, could be encouraged through marketing strategies aimed at improving the product quality and communicating appropriate associations of rosé wines with contexts and consumption situations. The study confirms that the Italian consumers have a strong preference for the Italian origin of rosé wines. It has identified two market segments of particular interest for producers and managers of restaurants and wine bars. These findings suggest that rosé wine producers should pay increased attention to the product design in relation to the consumption situations (e.g. wine bar visitors and restaurant visitors have different preferences about the type of rosé). Findings also suggest to restaurant and winebar managers that the careful selection of rosé products in their wine list and of price ranges may enhance wine consumer's demand for rosé.