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Title

CONSUMER MOTIVATIONS TO DRINK WINE IN KENYA: THE SEARCH FOR IMAGE

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

Wine perception, consumer behaviour, African consumers, Kenya, market segmentation, African consumerism, Africa social change

Research Question

The study investigates why Kenyan consumers drink wine, specifically what wine signifies for consumers, how wine's image differs from other alcoholic beverages, and why consumers choose wine.

Methods

Mixed Methods Research (MMR) with an initial qualitative phase informing a subsequent quantitative phase (survey). Qualitative data transformation uses constructivist grounded theory.

Results

Uninformed Kenyan consumers use wine to send messages. Male consumers that they are a 'modern' man. Female consumers that they are independent and confident. Wine quality is unimportant.

Abstract

Introduction:

Wine consumption in sub-Saharan Africa is growing rapidly (Euromonitor, 2016; Foxcroft, 2009). However, there is little research into the motivations of consumers to purchase and consume wine in the region. This work-in-progress study investigates the motivations of consumers in Kenya.

Literature review:

Significant research exists regarding European (Brunner & Siegrist, 2011), American (Kelley, Hyde, & Bruwer, 2015) and Australasian wine consumers (Bruwer & Li, 2017). There are also studies into emerging markets such as China (Camillo, 2012). However, academic research into consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, outside South Africa (Foxcroft, 2009) is scarce. Media reports and wine industry studies, however, attribute wine consumption to a growing middle class with greater disposable income and a desire to secure social status through association with wine (Abadie, 2015; Douglas, 2012; Mwiti, 2015).

Consequently, there is a significant gap in academic research aimed at understanding the motivations of SSA wine consumers in their specific context.

Research focus:

Wine is not an alcoholic beverage traditionally consumed in sub-Saharan Africa (Ndanga, Louw, van Rooyen, & Chikazunga, 2008). In Kenya, men generally consume whisky, beer and traditional spirits, while women generally either abstain from alcohol consumption or consume spirits such as gin and vodka in the company of female friends.

This study investigates why consumers in Kenya choose to drink wine instead of more 'traditional' alternatives, such as beer and spirits. It focuses on understanding what wine signifies for consumers, how the image of wine differs from other alcoholic beverages, when and why consumers choose wine instead of alternatives, and the needs that wine consumption satisfies.

Research methodology:

Given the lack of prior research into wine consumers in sub-Saharan Africa, the research focus requires an interpretive understanding of the social realities of individual consumers. The study therefore uses a Mixed Methods Research (MMR) approach (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2006), in which an initial qualitative study informs a subsequent quantitative phase. Significant weight is given to the qualitative phase. Once analysis of the qualitative studies is complete, the findings will be tested for soundness and generalisability through a survey.

The qualitative phase (currently underway) comprises semi-structured interviews with wine consumers with different socio-demographic characteristics. The study uses constructivist grounded theory for data transformation (Charmaz, 2014). Prior literature on consumers in markets outside sub-Saharan Africa is used for sensitising purposes (Lempert, 2007), thereby allowing the researcher to approach the study without the influence of a priori ideas and concepts.

Preliminary findings:

The study identifies two segments of Kenyan wine consumers, informed wine consumers and uninformed wine consumers.

Informed wine consumers include consumers of both genders who consider themselves to be knowledgeable about wine and seek a consumption experience through drinking good quality wine. This consumer segment has lived and travelled overseas and learnt about wine while outside Kenya. The study suggests that such consumers seek a consumption experience (Bruwer & Buller, 2013; Mora & Moscarola, 2010; Orth, 2005) and select wine based on its attributes (Lockshin & Hall, 2003). They are therefore similar to consumers in more mature markets.

The second consumer segment consists of uninformed wine consumers, and represents the majority of Kenyan wine consumers. This segment is poorly informed about wine but shows little interest in increasing their knowledge. Such consumers do not seek quality in wine and acknowledge that they do not consume good quality wine. This segment displays strong brand loyalty, and shows little interest in experimenting or seeking new experiences.

For this segment, wine is a social drink, to be consumed with friends and family: it is rare for wine to be consumed alone. Consequently, for uninformed wine consumers, wine serves a specific purpose within the social context in which it is consumed rather than for its qualities as wine per se. Within the social setting of wine consumption, the

study identified significant differences in the consumption motivations of men and women.

Men do not see wine as 'manly' and still generally consume beer and spirits in male company: men rarely consume wine with male friends for fear of ridicule. However, male consumers in Kenya do consume wine in mixed company for two purposes:

- First, to disassociate themselves from the 'hard drinking' tradition of beer or whisky consumption by Kenyan men, with the aim of projecting a softer image that is more acceptable in mixed society. However, such consumers are generally not committed to, or interested in, wine;
- Second, wine is used in mixed company to make a conscious and purposeful statement that the consumer is a 'modern man'. This motivation is noticeable in young men under 30 who wish to create a good impression which they hope will appeal to women;

A third aspect of wine consumption noticeable in male consumers in Kenya is a concern for health. Such male consumers are generally over 40 and drink wine in both male and female company because they think it is good for their health, avoiding the health risks (primarily weight gain) associated with beer, and bad hangovers associated with whisky drinking. Such a health motivation is confirmed to male Kenyan wine consumers.

In terms of female Kenyan wine consumers, the study identified three motivations for wine consumption:

- Female consumers use wine to make a statement that they are independent, modern and will do as they wish. This group includes women of all ages, but is strongest amongst women under 30. Younger female Kenyans acknowledge the influence of external social media and films in which wine is seen as a 'power play'. Wine consumption is associated with successful women, whom they see as their role models. Such female consumers see wine as more important than clothes or other 'status' apparel when sending a message about themselves. They note that the quality of the wine being consumed is not important, as it is the fact that wine is being drunk which is more important than the quality or type of wine and, indeed, they note that most onlookers will not have sufficient knowledge to be able to judge the quality of the wine in any case;
- women of all ages who see wine as a socially acceptable option to other alcoholic beverages, thereby enabling them to drink alcohol in public, even on more conservative social occasions. Wine also allows younger Kenyan women to consume alcohol for longer without feeling the effects and 'staying on control'. Wine therefore represents a 'middle way' between soft drinks and spirits. In this sense, wine adds to the options for consumption of alcoholic beverages in social company and even enables women to consume alcohol within the constraints of a strongly religious society.
- Unlike Kenyan male uninformed wine consumers, Kenya women acknowledge that they like wine, and will generally choose wine over alternative alcoholic beverages in mixed company. Older Kenyan women note that they have experienced alcohol in the form of gin and vodka in their youth but have developed a preference wine as a more sedate and socially acceptable alcoholic beverage.

Conclusions and Discussion:

Contrary to prior studies into wine consumption in sub-Saharan Africa, Kenyan consumers do not use wine to secure social prestige. Informed wine consumers drink wine for the consumption experience, as in more mature markets. However, uninformed wine consumers in Kenya consume wine not for a consumption experience but for social reasons. Wine provides an alternative to other alcoholic beverages, and consumers of both genders use wine to make specific statements about themselves, essentially linked to being 'modern'. This reflects changes in Kenyan society, particularly the empowerment of women and a rejection by men of the macho image associated with 'hard alcoholic beverages' and a move towards more socially-responsible alcohol consumption.

Wine also allows both male and female consumers to drink alcohol without the negative connotations associated with other alcoholic beverages such as beer and spirits. Consuming wine in public therefore has greater social acceptance.

Interviews have been conducted in Kenya. The study will now proceed to test the findings for robustness and generalisability through a survey.

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