

Vienna 2019 Abstract Submission

Title

WINE INVOLVEMENT AND OPINION LEADERSHIP AMONG DINERS IN SOUTH AFRICAN RESTAURANTS: SOME PERSPECTIVES

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

Wine involvement; Opinion leadership; restaurants; South Africa

Research Question

The business opportunity that wine-by-the-glass offers restaurateurs is underutilized Here we provide a baseline to examine interrelationships between wine product involvement, opinion leadership and consumer behavioral variables.

Methods

An online survey was executed involving wine consumers (18 years and older) who had dined out at least once in the past year., and the results statistically analyzed.

Results

A high Cronbach alpha reliability level was confirmed for both scales. Diner' l wine involvement and opinion leadership show significant differences between dining out frequency, consumption, spend, age cohort and gender.

Abstract

Introduction:

The business opportunity the single-serve wine-by-the-glass (WBG) strategy offers the restaurant industry has to date been largely underutilised (Yoon & Stacy, 2015). From an academic perspective, there is a paucity of research in this specific field, despite attempts to develop a WBG risk perception scale (Bruwer & Cohen, 2018; Bruwer, Palacios-Arias & Cohen, 2017). A need, therefore, exists for a 'baseline' study (Bruwer & McCutcheon, 2017) to examine if and how constructs, specifically wine product involvement, opinion leadership and in-restaurant consumer behavioural variables, are interrelated.

Many consumers experience levels of intimidation when it comes to making wine purchases (Cheong & Bruwer,

2012; Olsen, Thompson & Clarke, 2003; Roe & Bruwer, 2017), particularly so when dining out in a restaurant where the additional social pressure of being part of a multi-person group often also exists (Bruwer, Palacios-Arias & Cohen, 2017). Despite the generally agreed upon importance of involvement and opinion leadership in the marketing and consumer behaviour literature (Chaudhry, 2013; Goldsmith & Clark, 2008), there is a paucity of this research relating to wine, with very few studies having been executed (Chaney, 2001; Goldsmith & d’Hauteville, 1998; Vigar-Ellis, Pitt & Caruana, 2015). Moreover, not a single study has researched these constructs in the context of wine in restaurants.

Literature review:

Given that wine is a ‘complicated’ product when it comes to decision-making (Hirche & Bruwer, 2014), even more so in the restaurant environment, focused research to determine the level of influencing and of seeking advice is long overdue. Measurement of involvement (INV) and opinion leadership (OLS) has been a challenge and hence we used the validated opinion leadership scale of Flynn, Goldsmith and Eastman (1996) and adjusted them to wine as the focus product. We also used the wine involvement scale of Bruwer and Huang (2012) and tested for relationships between the two constructs

Research purpose:

Inter-relationships between wine involvement, opinion leadership and wine consumer behavioural variables of South African restaurant dining patrons, i.e. dining frequency, dining group size, dining group composition and, wine choice factors are examined in this exploratory study. The overall aim is to determine some baseline metrics, whether there are differences between these variables, and how certain socio-demographic variables relate to these.

Research methodology:

An online survey was executed in South Africa by a professional consumer-panel company involving wine consumers (18 years and older) and had dined out at least once in the past month at any of the range of restaurant categories where they consumed wine on that occasion. An online survey eliminated the logistical issues and invasion of diners’ privacy faced when having to collect information in situ in restaurants, and had the added advantage of sampling across South Africa and its different restaurant categories. A total of 537 surveys could be utilised for further analysis.

Preliminary findings:

A high Cronbach alpha reliability level was confirmed for both scales (INV = 0.922 and OLS = 0.829). Preliminary findings indicate that dining patrons’ levels of wine involvement (at 0.01 level) and opinion leadership (at 0.05 level) with wine show significant differences between dining out frequency, quantity consumed, amount spent on wine, gender and age generations. Similar patterns could not be found for the size of the dining group.

Conclusions, implications and recommendations:

Both the wine involvement and opinion leadership scales provide reliable measures of these constructs. These constructs can discriminate between dining patrons on various key wine behavioural variables pertaining to the occasion of dining out at restaurants. A behavioral model predicting these relationships between the constructs and these variables can be postulated and should withstand empirical scrutiny. Future research should examine these further and incorporate them into a theoretically grounded behavioral model.

Knowing the outcomes of this research has practical implications for hospitality management and personal selling strategies by restaurants to encourage wine consumption. Currently, this research illustrates the value of high involvement wine drinkers who are often also high in opinion leadership and its resulting influencing of other (potential) and low involvement wine drinkers.

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