A pan-European analysis of drinking motives

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Consumers do not spontaneously have a sudden urge to drink water or consume expensive cocktails. Consumers are considered to be driven to act, purchase or behave due to stimulation from internal motivations and external factors.

In this paper, we will draw on data from the Coberen project\textsuperscript{1} to analyse drinking motives in Europe. As part of pan-European online survey data collection, respondents were asked for their favourite alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. For both the favourite alcoholic and the favourite non-alcoholic drinks, they then had to rate agreement with 17 statements that gave possible reasons for consuming this particular drink. The statements were the same for alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks. The statements were developed with inspiration especially from the Schwartz (1992) value domains and the Sproles and Kendall (1986) decision-making styles dimensions. Respondents rated these items on a 4-point scale with labels I totally disagree/I rather disagree/I rather agree/I totally agree. A don’t know option was also provided. Effective sample size was 5258 cases for non-alcoholic drinks, and 4423 cases for alcoholic drinks.

In order to analyze the relationships between drinking motives, countries and beverages, simple correspondence analysis was conducted on the doubled data matrix (Greenacre, 1993, p. 131-140) of the ratings of the drinking motive items. The results for alcoholic beverage consumption led to the decision to retain only one dimension, labelled self-expression. The coordinates of the items on this dimension for the motive items are plotted in figure 1 in decreasing order according to their absolute contributions to the dimension. For each of the 17 motive items, there are two coordinates: one represents the ‘agree pole’ (indicated by a green triangle) and the other represents the ‘disagree pole’ (indicated by a red triangle).

For all the items the ‘agree’ pole is on the positive side of the dimension, while the ‘disagree’ pole is on the negative one, showing that to show that I’m different from other people, because it’s trendy, to feel stronger, to express some personal value, and to do as my friends are the items whose (‘agree’) poles have more extreme coordinates. Moreover, these motives, as well as because it’s exciting, to make me feel at ease with others, because it’s easy to get, and to drink well-known brands, are the ones having higher absolute contributions to the dimension.

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Countries and alcoholic beverages act as supplementary modalities. The most significant categories of the variables *country* and *non-alcoholic beverage* are (in decreasing order):

- **On the positive side (more self-expressive):**
  - *Countries*: Hungary, United Kingdom, Czech Republic, Romania, Germany, Ireland, Poland and Bulgaria.
  - *Beverages*: Beer.

- **On the negative side (less self-expressive):**
  - *Countries*: Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Belgium, Austria, Sweden, the Netherlands, Estonia, Norway and France.
  - *Beverages*: Wine and cider.

The results for non-alcoholic beverage consumption led to the retention of two dimensions. The coordinates of the items on those two dimensions are shown in figure 2.
Figure 2: Coordinates of motive items, countries and beverages on self-expression and functionality dimensions for non-alcoholic beverages

Again, there are two points for each of the 17 motive items, and the ‘agree poles’ (green triangles) are directly opposite to their ‘disagree’ counterparts (red triangles) relative to the origin. Countries and non-alcoholic beverages are supplementary modalities and are represented by blue and purple circles, correspondingly. The first dimension can again be labelled as a self-expression dimension, where the items to show that I’m different from other people, because it’s trendy, to do as my friends, to express some personal value, to make me feel at ease with others, because it’s exciting and to drink well-known brands are those whose (‘agree’) poles have more extreme coordinates. Moreover, these motives, as well as to feel stronger, to put me in a good mood, because it’s good value for money and because it’s a family tradition are the ones having higher absolute contributions to this dimension.

According to their test-values the most significant categories (p<0.05) of the variables country and non-alcoholic beverage on the first axis are (in decreasing order):

- On the positive side (more self-expressive):
  - **Countries**: Romania, United Kingdom, Germany, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Ireland, Hungary and Slovakia.
  - **Beverages**: Tea, tap water and fruit juice.

- On the negative side (less self-expressive):
  - **Countries**: Italy, Austria, Iceland, Spain, Latvia and Belgium.
  - **Beverages**: Soft drinks, coffee and mineral water.
The second is again a dimension capturing the functionality of drinking. To *quench my thirst* and *to be healthy* are the items with more extreme coordinates for their (‘disagree’) poles. Moreover, these motives, as well as because *it’s not risky, to get something good for me* and because *it’s easy to get* are the ones having higher absolute contributions to this dimension.

According to their test-values the most significant categories (p<0.05) of the variables *country* and *non-alcoholic beverage* on the first axis are (in decreasing order):

- **On the positive side (less functional/utilitarian):**
  - Countries: Cyprus, Romania, Ireland, Greece, United Kingdom and Bulgaria.
  - Beverages: Coffee, Soft drinks, tea and energy drinks.
- **On the negative side (more functional/utilitarian):**
  - Countries: Estonia, Italy, Slovakia, Portugal, Iceland, Sweden and the Netherlands.
  - Beverages: Tap water, mineral water and fruit juice.

Means of the scores of the various drinking motive items have been compared according to most preferred alcoholic and non-alcoholic drink by ANOVA. We then profile groups of respondents, defined by their beverage preferences, according to their scores on the consumption motive items.

**Alcoholic drinks**

*Wine Drinker (N = 2113).* Wine is the most preferred alcoholic drink among our respondents. Looking at the mean scores, we can see that *to be healthy* is a major motivation for respondents preferring wine, but also *getting something good for me* and *family tradition*.

*Beer Drinker (N = 1415).* For beer, which is placed as the second most preferred alcoholic beverage, it is evident that it is mostly perceived as refreshing since the strongest motive for drinkers was *quenching my thirst*. Those respondents whose primary preferred drink is beer also score high on the motives *to do as my friends* and *easy to get*, reflecting a need for belongingness and the importance of convenience. Further to that, they consider beer as a not risky option. Finally, it is worth mentioning that beer drinkers score the lowest value on the motive *show that I am different from other people*.

*Cider Drinker (N = 187).* This category of drinkers does not stand out in any particular way. However, it seems that the refreshment motive best describes them.

*Spirits Drinker (N = 346).* Spirit Drinkers appear to have a clear profile, as spirits provide the highest means on most motive items related to self-expression. However, pleasure is the key motive of a spirits drinker. They seem to prioritize excitement and attaining a state of good mood. Moreover, by drinking they seek confidence, as alcohol helps them get at ease with other people and empowers their presence in environments related to alcohol. They are also susceptible to externalizing personal feelings through drinking, i.e., showing that they are different from other people, and expressing personal values. Last but not least, this group of drinkers seems to be eager to drink well known brands of spirits.

*Premix Drinks Drinker (N = 362).* Premix Drinker’s profile is developed around to what is considered trendy. In addition, these drinkers are motivated by a sense of being at ease and connected with one another.
Non-alcoholic drinks

Fruit Juice Drinker \((N = 741)\). Non-alcoholic drinkers that prefer fruit juice base their drinking selection on *getting something good*. Not surprisingly, they also relate drinking to health related criteria.

Soft Drinks Drinker \((N = 417)\). Pleasure is the primary motive for this group of drinkers. In addition, they relate their drinking to functional criteria, i.e. to *quench my thirst*.

Energy Drinks Drinker \((N = 59)\). Primary motives associated with this group of people are *excitement* and differentiation from others. It also seems that drinking helps them socialize (*feel at ease with others and to do as my friends*). They are also committed to what is considered trendy and to recognized brands.

Mineral Water Drinker \((N = 1034)\). Those who prefer to drink mineral water, as expected connect drinking to functional needs (thirst) and they consider this as healthy.

Milk Drinker \((N = 265)\). In analyzing the profile of this group, it is evident that the key motive is associated with the perceived physical strength they gain through drinking milk.

Coffee Drinker \((N = 914)\). Pleasure is the driving motive for coffee drinkers. Closely related is also the good mood feeling they seek. It seems that they consider coffee drinking as a group habit, which also makes them feel at ease with others.

Tea Drinker \((N = 609)\). In the same vein, tea drinking is associated with the state of good mood and family traditions. While it helps drinkers feel comfortable with others, through tea drinking this group also expresses personal values.

Tap Water Drinker \((N = 1219)\). Drinking tap water is perceived as less risky, as acceptable value for money and is associated with the convenience motive. It is also aligned with health criteria and it satisfies functional needs, as thirst.

Our results can be used by the European drink industry for positioning and marketing drinks, taking into account different motivational structures and regional differences.

Since we found that self-expression is the central dimension for consumption motives with regard to alcoholic drinks, any marketing strategy for alcoholic drinks needs to take this dimension into account. In this context, it is interesting to see that while wine is a product that is widely consumed across all of Europe, it scores relatively low on the self-expression dimensions. This may be partly due to the fact that its role in the various food cultures differs. Still, wine, with its high degree of differentiation and considerable quality variation, should be an obvious product for social positioning. Perhaps the wine industry, with its very product-oriented focus, has missed some opportunities for making wine a more self-expressive product. In trying to develop strategies for making wine more self-expressive, one needs to address the different associations of wine to tradition and health that exist across Europe.

Beer as well is consumed all cross Europe, and has a relatively clear profile as something that is consumed with friends and on social occasions. As this is the category positioning, marketing a beer brand needs to find other ways of differentiation, which could be sought in
other self-expressive elements, like being trendy or being traditional. Spirits are also a product that scored higher on the self-expressive dimension.

Consumption of non-alcoholic drinks was linked to both self-expressive and functional motives. The self-expressive motives were most clearly expressed for coffee and tea, which is associated with getting into a good mood and with tradition, whereas energy drinks are regarded as trendy. Water and juice are mostly governed by functional motives. As the analysis done here is on a product category level and not on a brand level, one should be careful and not conclude that there are no brands within, for example, the water category that do not tap the self-expression motives (there are). But any brand positioning has to be done relative to the positioning of the category, and our results indicate that there is still ample room for the positioning of self-expressive brands in the water and juice categories, and perhaps for more trendy brands in the coffee and tea categories.

References