

Tbilisi 2022 Abstract Submission

Title

Consumer wine preferences: The case of Muscadine wines

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

Muscadine, Vitis Rotundifolia, perceived wine quality, wine purchase intentions

Research Question

The primary objective of this research is to determine the perceived quality and purchase intentions for Muscadine wines.

Methods

Study 1: A live blind wine tasting experiment collected data from 157 participants. Study 2: An online scenario-based experiment is currently being conducted to collect data from US wine consumers.

Results

Study 1: No significant difference in perceived quality or purchase intentions between Muscadine and a Vitis Vinifera wine. Study 2 Muscadine perceived as lower quality with lower purchase intentions.

Abstract

Background

Most research about consumer tastes and preferences for wine concerns wines produced from grape varieties of the *Vitis Vinifera* species, being the principal species from which most of the world's wines have been made for more than 8,000 years (McGovern et al., 2017). Wines produced from other species, such as *Vitis Rotundifolia* (also known as "Muscadine"), native to the southeastern United States, have received scant attention in the consumer behavior literature, with a few studies relating to marketing (Alonso, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2014; Taplin 2012) and a robust scientific literature relating to health properties (e.g., Kim et al., 2009; Mertens-Talcott et al., 2008). Health properties of Muscadine grape seed oils have been shown to contain particularly large amounts of phenolic compounds and strong antioxidant properties, demonstrating great nutritional potential (Zhao et al., 2017). The dearth of academic research relating to Muscadine wines may, in part, be due to these wines being perceived as being inferior to their *Vitis Vinifera* counterparts and to consumer snobbery (Alonso, 2011b), despite their health properties.

In Florida, a primary Muscadine-growing state, the Florida Wine and Grape Growers Association lists 19 winery members and 14 vineyards on their website (Florida Wine and Grape Growers Association, n.d.) and the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services lists 32 wineries on their website (Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, 2020). In fact, Florida was said to rank seventh among U.S. wine producing states in terms of volume of wine production in 2018 (Wine-searcher, 2018). Yet, Florida wines remain relatively unknown, even among Floridians, and do not feature in Florida's tourism product marketing. As interest in wine tourism (e.g., Back et al., 2019), local cuisine (Levitt, et al., 2019), and the health and wellness food market (Statista, 2020) continues to increase, and with approximately 3,200 acres of Muscadine planted (mainly in Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, and the Carolinas) (Wine Folly, 2020) and an increasing demand for Muscadine products (Hoffmann et al., 2020), this study sets out to investigate consumer responses to Muscadine wines.

Methodology

Two studies are being conducted to test consumer preferences for Muscadine wines. Study 1 is a live blind tasting experiment with two conditions - a white Muscadine wine from Florida and a *Vitis Vinifera* wine with a similar alcohol level, residual sugar, and price point (a Moscato from California). Study 2 replicates Study 1 through an online experiment, with the labels, tasting notes, and technical wine information presented to the consumer. The dependent variables for both studies are perceived quality and purchase intentions.

Results

Preliminary results reveal that online participants perceive the quality of the Moscato to be significantly higher than that of the Muscadine, with significantly higher purchase intentions. Participants who tasted the wines, however, perceived both wines to be of a similar quality and showed similar purchase intentions for both. Full results and implications will be presented at the conference.

Practical Implications

Results of this study will inform the wine industry in Muscadine-producing states, as well as DMOs in these states, about consumer sentiments to be used for strategic wine marketing. The study findings will help the industry to boost Muscadine wine branding, thereby strengthening the consumer based brand equity of Muscadine wines.

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