# Abstract Submission

**Title**
Wine gender: Femininity lies in the eye of the critics ... and in the wallets of the customers

**I want to submit an abstract for:**
Conference Presentation

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**Keywords**
wine gender; femininity; rating; ageing potential; price

**Research Question**
We address three research questions: (1) wine gender and its evolution over time; (2) relation between wine gender and ratings and ageing potential; (3) relation between wine gender and prices

**Methods**
Data: tasting notes, scores and ageing potential (data collected on The Wine Advocate's website). Methods: machine learning (to extract information from tasting notes) and regression analyses.

**Results**
Feminine wines (according to their tasting notes) have become more numerous over time, the degree of femininity relates positively to the ratings and negatively to the ageing potential.

**Abstract**
Gender has long remained a non-issue, in the sense that a specific role was assigned to women and men in society. This role was certainly implicitly defined but little or not discussed. Things began to change with the economic and political events of the first half of the 20th century. In the middle of the century, the first "feminist thinkers" (e.g., Simone de Beauvoir in France or Betty Friedan in the U.S.) challenged this sclerotic view of women's role in society.
Later, feminist scholars such as Judith Butler, Anne Fausto-Sterling and Eve Sedgwick further explored the issue of gender and its construction. Gender theory argues that gender is not a biological characteristic, but results from a social construction based on cultural norms (see, e.g., Butler (1990) and Lorber (1994)). Today, gender and its implications are a subject of study addressed in many disciplines from diverse but complementary perspectives. Research in social sciences and economics provides the foundation for understanding how gender affects attitudes and behaviors (Zayer & Pounders, 2022). These analyses serve as a starting point for studies on more specific topics. For example, many studies in marketing have looked at the impact of gender in product presentation and description (e.g., using gender-based adjectives) on consumer perception and choices (Pogacar, Angle, Lowrey, Shrum & Kardes, 2021).

In this paper, we focus on wine. It is common to associate this good with a particular gender depending on the style and aromatic profile of the wine. Certain grape varieties and winemaking styles result in particularly fine, delicate and elegant wines that are frequently described as feminine. Conversely, adjectives such as powerful, tannic, bold, strong are associated with masculinity. Emile Peynaud, the "father of modern enology" (see, e.g., Mitchell and Mitchell (2009)), proposes a model of wine evaluation based on three axes, one of which is called "masculine/feminine" (Peynaud, 1980). Wine is thus distinguished from traditional goods that are usually considered gender-neutral. Of course, it is common to distinguish clothes, certain luxury products such as watches or jewelry, or even certain everyday hygiene products, according to the gender of their targeted customers. But it is a generally binary distinction (masculine or feminine, without any nuance between the two) and often constructed through marketing and advertising (Fugate & Phillips, 2010). Today these associations are increasingly questioned, which shows that the perception of gender can evolve over time according to attitudes and social norms (Cooke, Russell-Bennett, Wang & Whyte, 2022).

Unsurprisingly, the reason marketing uses adjectives associated with one gender rather than the other to talk about a product is because of the impact it can have on consumers. For instance, gender cues related to different products (i.e., specific colors) activate stereotypical expectations that can influence the perception of these products. Therefore, depending on the product’s reputation, masculine or feminine gender cues may increase purchase intentions. More specifically, for reputable brands, feminine gender cues increase purchase intentions, whereas for non-reputable brands, masculine gender cues are more effective (Hess & Melnyk, 2016).

More generally, elements considered masculine are traditionally associated with competence, while elements considered feminine are typically associated with warmth (Pogacar et al., 2021). The expectations and gender stereotypes associated with masculine and feminine are therefore reflected in the evaluation of gendered products. Thus, in the context of hedonic consumption, products considered feminine are generally preferred to those considered masculine. On the contrary, in the case of utilitarian consumption, the opposite effect is observed (Schnurr, 2018).

In the context of wine, Livat and Jaffré (2022) identify two main areas of research related to gender. First, the question of gender and its impact on wine choices, consumption, purchases and appreciation – in short, the impact of gender on the demand-side – is an area of research that has developed significantly in recent years (see, e.g., Thach (2012)). The other area focuses on women and their role and influence within the wine industry (supply-side). As the renowned English critic and author Jancis Robinson (2014) explains, women have become more important. However, this line of research remains rather scarce. In this article, we investigate a third area which is the gender of wine as such. It should be noted that the gender of wine is the result of cultural stereotypes. Marketing has no (or very little) influence. Although there are attempts to position certain wines more for women (because they form a group of consumers that is increasing in size) through the packaging or the name of the wine. Here we are interested in the way wine is perceived from a gender perspective, and the implications in terms of perceived quality and pricing.

We address three research questions. The first is the gender profile of wines and whether feminine wines have become more numerous over time. Women are becoming increasingly important on both the demand and supply sides. If the associations between the aromatic profile of certain wines and their gender have any validity, it is legitimate to expect that wines are becoming more feminine. Moreover, given the generally positive perception associated with feminine terms in hedonic consumption, we can expect this to be reflected in the ratings. In other words, more feminine wines should get better scores. This is the second research question we test. Finally, our third question analyzes whether the degree of femininity of a wine has an effect on its pricing. This relationship is not a priori clear. On the one hand, given the expected effect on consumer perceptions and ratings, it is likely that more feminine wines are more expensive. But, on the other hand, masculinity is frequently associated with a more serious character, which can also contribute to making a wine more expensive due to a perceived greater potential...
for aging and development.
To run our inferences, we use a large database that contains Robert Parker Jr.’s tasting notes and ratings on vintages from 1995 to 2014. This corresponds to a total of 1404 observations. In order to make the analyses perfectly comparable, we use data from Bordeaux and take into account only the “en primeur” scores and prices. Focusing on a single expert and a single wine region may seem restrictive, but it should be noted that (i) Robert Parker Jr. is the best known and most influential taster in the world (Masset et al. (2015)), and (ii) Bordeaux wines represent more than 50% of the global fine wine market (see Liv-ex.com for more detailed statistics).
The scope of our research extends beyond wine, as other products have relatively similar gender specificities. For example, it is relatively common for journalists and critics to use gendered terms to describe the consumption and appreciation of certain cultural goods, culinary experiences, and works of art. This is because of the nature of these goods, including their cultural embeddedness, and the subjectivity that surrounds their evaluation.

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