Lausanne 2024 Abstract Submission

Title
Regional differences in the wine-drinking behavior of Swiss consumers

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Conference Poster Session

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Keywords
wine, consumer behavior, Switzerland, regional differences

Research Question
Are there differences among the three major language regions in Switzerland in regard of consumers' wine involvement, buying behavior and motives to drink wine?

Methods
Flyers inviting for an online survey were send out to 67 randomly selected zip code areas comprising a representative mix of urban, semi-urban, and rural areas across Switzerland.

Results
Twelve out of 17 wine-related factors showed differences among the three language regions. The findings allow producers, retailers, and restaurateurs to adopt a region-specific marketing strategy.

Abstract
Switzerland is an interesting wine market. Around one third of the wine consumed in Switzerland is produced in Switzerland, two thirds are imported from all around the world. Per capita consumption lies in the upper top ten and a Swiss person’s wine budget is one of the highest in the world. However, Switzerland is also an interesting market since it covers three language regions in a confined space that differ in cultural heritage.

In the present study, we investigated the three major language regions in Switzerland and compared wine consumers in regard of wine involvement, buying behavior and motives to drink wine. French-speaking Switzerland is the largest wine-growing region in the country and depends on sales in the rest of Switzerland. The same holds true for the Italian-speaking part. However, producers and marketers alike rarely take into account the drinking habits of the consumers from the other regions which of course diminishes the success for selling the wines there. The findings of this study will allow to produce and market wine successfully to the regional demands.
Flyers inviting for an online survey were send out to 67 randomly selected zip code areas comprising a representative mix of urban, semi-urban, and rural areas across Switzerland resulting in a final sample size of 563 Swiss wine consumers. Data was collected between December 2021 and January 2022. A person over 16 years old and enjoying a glass of wine at least occasionally was asked to fill in the questionnaire. Besides more general questions about wine consumption and socio-demographic variables, 34 variables taken from the literature comprising seventeen relevant factors about wine involvement, buying behavior and motives to drink wine were analyzed. Twelve of them showed statistically significant differences between the three language regions: French- and Italian-speaking Swiss visit more often wineries and take part more often in wine tastings than German-speaking Swiss. However, regarding knowledge about wine no differences were found. Intrinsic characteristics like provenance, grape variety and cultivation are more important for French-speaking consumers than for the other two language regions whereas the German- and Italian-speaking consumers attach more importance to bargains and special offers. French-speaking Swiss drink wine more for pleasure and because they love the taste than Italian-speaking Swiss but German- and Italian-speaking Swiss drink it more for having fun and feeling good than the French-speaking. The pairing of wine with food and the healthy aspect of wine drinking are more important for German-speaking than for French-speaking consumers whereas the motives of tradition and cultural background are more crucial for the French- than for the German-speaking wine drinkers. For German-speaking consumers wine drinking also has a social aspect since it helps socializing and is regard as something esthetic and stylish more so than for French- and Italian-speaking wine consumers.

Patronage of consumers is the key to economic success of wine producers. The findings of this study allow producers, retailers, and restaurateurs to understand the consumers of the three major language regions of Switzerland and to adopt a region-specific marketing strategy for selling their wines. The present results clearly demonstrate the variety of motives and the resulting consumption patterns that need to be considered for successful wine production and marketing.

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