Origin of the product and the buying decision

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Abstract. *This article is arguing that Conjoint analysis may offer a solid framework, able to determine the influence of the origin of the product in the consumption decisions. After a research of this framework, an empirical research on wine is conducted. Research is suggesting that there is, for the wine, a certain influence of the origin of the product in the buying decision. Even more, it is not the real origin that counts but the perceived one. The way the consumers perceive a certain region, or country matters and Wine sellers should focus on this influence in their branding strategies.*

Introduction

The global competition generated by the European Union extension and by the permanent trade liberalization has also caused a higher pressure on each separate enterprise in the wine industry (Bröckmeier, 1993, p. 98).

The benefits of this competition are mainly reflected in the high quality, products manufacturing and presentation manner, but also in determining the price that can be obtained by the bidders (Palloks, 1995, pp. 119-121).

Due to the market condition, the enterprises of various fields are attempting to strengthen their market positioning. Furthermore, more and more new and or modified, re-branded products emerge on the market (Palloks, 1995, pp. 119-121).

This is the case of Romanian winegrowing-viticultural enterprises, which are trying to enter the European Union markets and in particular the German market.

For an enterprise, the market entry of an innovative product (even of a slightly modified product, of similar products thereof or of a replica thereof Köhler, 1989, p. 223), represent, on one hand, a growing and stability potential, and, on the other hand, a risk related to the market reaction to a novelty.

In case of a failure, under the current market conditions, this can be quite severe and can automatically generate significant financial loss. This risk was in the focus of the economical specialists permanently in the last 35 years. That's we can find similar conclusions in older publications, like the ones of Urban and Hauser (Urban, Hauser, 1980, p. 2, p. 42).

The innovation specific problems can be found in the high rate of failures of the German food products trade, which, in 1995, has been of 45%, and in 2010 of 56% (Scharf et al., 2011, p. 26).

Among the main reasons of failure related to new products we could mention the inappropriate orientation, compared to the consumer's desires and needs, as well as the limited differentiation between products (Becker, 1988, p. 492).

In order to mitigate the number of errors, namely in order to increase the success rate, we recommend the integration of consumer – and competition –related information, from the very beginning, from the first product design and development stages (Urban, Hauser, 1980, p. 27).

In order to analyze the effect of certain product model preferences on the consumer, the practice often uses the Conjoint analysis method. This analysis method enables one to correctly evaluate the resulting utility in case of certain alternative product concepts and thus to support the Marketing Management in passing the decision

related to a product development or the design of a new concept, during a product best development stage (Mengen, Simon, 1996, p. 229).

In his article, we have selected the analysis method as perception research and preferences analyzing tool.

Conjoint method of analysis

Arzheimer defines the Conjoint analysis as a general term for the entire class of statistical methods, enabling one to split certain globally classified preferences (Arzheimer, Klein, 1998, p. 56).

The concept of items can include products, services, various investment funds products or political parties programs, all these characterized by a series of attributes (features). Such items are referred to in a global manner, due to the fact that these are evaluated by interviewees as a whole.

In fact, the concept of classified preferences means here stating a hierarchy based on which the interviewee is ranking the evaluation-related items. This means that the sequence of preferences takes place empirically. Based on these classified global preferences, the Conjoint analysis attempts to determine, for each interviewed person, which is the contribution of each item feature in determining the overall utility – thus, the method proving itself as a decomposing one. The Conjoint method aims at reconstructing the interviewed person's preferences development. The interviewed persons are not requested to weight and assess each separate feature, and consequently are not requested to decompose the products (Hair, 1998, p. 392).

In the Conjoint analysis, the items features represent independent variables, while the utility decisions of a set of items represent the dependent variables. A special element of the Conjoint analysis consists of the fact that the independent variables and features thereof are systematically changes by the researcher, in line with the method, and the interviewees solely decide the value assigned to dependent variables. Based on the research form (design), the Conjoint analysis is in fact an experimental method (Arzheimer, Klein, 1998, p. 1).

The Conjoint analysis is a method used mainly in order to assess the preferences, the opinions, as well as in order to develop buying intention forecasts (Sattler, 1991, p. 99).

By means of this method, one can evaluate the consumers' preferences, based on which certain "A posteriori" segmentations can be determined, to the extent accompanied by competition-related information, and certain statements related to trends and alternative marketing strategies success odds can be drafted. An

important benefit of the Conjoint analysis consists of noticing that this methods enables one to analyze the individual preferences of the interviewed person (Sattler, 1991, p. 100).

By means of Conjoint analysis, one attempts to identify the interdependencies between the preferences features and the features sub-features.

This is where the contribution of certain sub-features in the overall evaluation of a product is taking place. The aggregate and partial utility are measured at the same time and are additively connected (Schubert, 1991, p. 17).

"The Conjoint analysis is, in essence, an analysis of individual utility perception. Generally, we are interested in the utility structure of several persons" (Backhaus; 2005, p. 545).

In order to determine the preference of several consumers, an addition of individual results is required.

The main features of the Conjoint analysis are as follows:
- Approaching method: decomposition;
- Decisions related to several attributes (features) are required;
- The general evaluation is the result of partial decisions additive combination;
- The dependent variables may have a metric, ordinal or nominal scale;
- The evaluated parameters (utility values) normally (approximately) show a range scale;
- With respect to items, one can determine aggregate utility values, useful for the market share and options ratio forecasts (Hair, 1995, p. 558).

The main stages of Conjoint analysis are (Backhaus; 2005, p. 547):
- Features and sub-features determination;
- The analysis design;
- The stimuli evaluation;
- The utility values evaluation;
- The utilities values addition.

The first three steps are related to data collection, and the last two are related to data evaluation.

1. Selecting the features and sub-features thereof

The products are defined as a cluster of characteristics/features, gathered by an offeror in order to meet the desires and needs of its existing and potential customers (Brockhoff, 2003, pp. 464-481).

The features and sub-features should meet seven primary premises.

These premises are as follows (Backhaus, 2005, pp. 548-549):

1. No eliminatory criteria (K.O. criteria – as in boxing) should exist with respect to features and sub-features, respectively. The eliminatory criteria occur whenever one of the sub-features is mandatory for one of the interviewed persons.

2. A compensatory relation between the sub-features:

A negatively evaluated sub-feature can be replaced by the positive evaluation of another sub-feature.

This analysis is based on the assumption of an unidimensional decision-making process, meaning that all sub-features simultaneously become subject to the evaluation process.

3. Features independence: meaning that the utility of a sub-feature cannot be influenced by other features.

4. Limitation of the features and sub-features number: generates an exaggerated effort of the interviewed person.

5. The influencing degree: the possibility to change features (for instance, with respect to the product development).

6. The achieving possibilities: the manufacturer's product performance technical possibilities.

7. Relevance: should be selected features assumed as relevant for the buying decision, namely relevant for the aggregate utility evaluation.

2. Analysis design

"The stimuli represent a combination of sub-features, presented to the persons interviewed for evaluation purposes"(Backhaus, 2005, p. 550).

A complete or limited evaluation design may be selected, and the stimuli can be developed based on the profile or two factors method.

The two factors method is also known as the Trade–Off hypothesis. It is based on a systematic comparison two competing features. As evaluation stimuli, the features sub-features are being combined in the so-called Trade–Off matrixes.

In case of the profile hypothesis, the interviewed persons evaluate complete product concepts, which include all relevant product features. The test stimuli development basis consists of factorial experimental plans (factorial design), to which an incomplete fractional design generally applies (Perrey, 1996, p. 106).

This takes place amply, by taking into consideration features and sub-features of the products, fact that significantly contributes to the closeness thereof to reality, but this benefit based on partial data validity is inversely proportional with the possibility of evaluating the results. This is due to the fact that, for technical reasons related to data collection, in the Conjoint analysis, the number of stimuli

to be evaluated increases over-proportionally, and the interviewed person is overwhelmed by the information overload (Thomas, 1983, p. 313). The postulate stating that we should limit to relatively few features, but select characteristics relevant for the analyzed concept is directly connected with this.

The decision related to relevance and features selection should be taken, in addition to the beneficiary, who is generally interested in the effect of preferences on suggestible factors (that can be changed) within the concept, by some potential buyers, "because the companies often perceive their products differently than their customers" (Mengen, Simon, 1996, p. 234).

If we would compare the profile and the Trade-Off methods, we would note that it is easier for the interviewed persons to simultaneously compare only two factors at a time. That is why the "Trade-Off" method does not imply an individual in charge with the interview. However, during an actual decision-making process, complete products are generally being compared, regarding which the profile method provides a design closer to reality, and the stimuli may be presented by means of images or items. With respect to the time schedule, the profile method requires a longer period of time, implying a complete design (Backhaus, 2005, pp. 551-552).

With respect to the stimuli form of presentation, the decision is taken based on the product performance concept. In this case, we are mainly interested in the form taken by the evaluated products, when presented to the interviewed persons. The decision related to stimuli presentation form is strongly influenced by the data sampling method. With respect to the profile evaluation method, one may select a verbal, a visual or a physical presentation. Such forms may also be combined.

Due to the fact that the number of stimuli, in case of the profile method, exponentially increases with the number of features, a limited design is often required. This attempts to identify that part of stimuli that better represent the complete design. The design may be symmetrical or asymmetrical. A symmetrical design is the "Latin square" (namely three features, each with three sub-features, meaning 27 stimuli).

3. Stimuli evaluation

The interviewed persons should arrange the stimuli in hierarchical order, reflecting their perception on utility. Generally, each stimulus receives a score and is thus classified (Backhaus, 2005, p. 556).

4. Utility values estimation

From a methodical point of view, we are facing the issue of selecting the measurement elements that represent the primary variables basis. The estimation

of such dependent variables (total preference, buying probability, etc.) implies the use of certain measuring scales, able to translate the test stimuli features into values, based on preset rules.

The data, with the consumers' global ratings, may be measured both on the metric scale (range) and on the ordinal scale (Schubert, 2006, pp. 109-117).

The selection of the best parameters estimation method (of the partial utility value) depends on the measurement model and on the implied measurement levels (Schubert, 2006, pp. 109-117).

5. Utility values addition

The individual evaluations obtained by means of the Conjoint method have a secondary value in practice, due to the large differentiation thereof. In order to support the marketing management in identifying a solution regarding the development of a new product or in orienting the performance of a product concept, specific segment evaluations, representative for such segment are required. To this end, the data gathering/aggregation procedures should take into consideration both the general Conjoint analysis and the individual analyses (Thomas, 1983, p. 332).

In conclusion:

Due to the fact that, based on the Conjoint analysis results, the operational and strategic goals of an enterprise are being influenced, the estimated values should be valid and should enable an accurate interpretation.

Despite the fact that the Conjoint analysis ensures that the features preferred and defined by the customer represent, through its features, the product development starting point and target, the beneficiary of a Conjoint analysis (generally an enterprise) should not forget that this is an artificial testing circumstance required in order to evaluate the product concepts, which cannot perfectly reflect a real evaluation process. This issue should be considered in all Conjoint analysis application fields.

The Conjoint analysis method drawbacks become more and more insignificant due to the use in the market research practice of more and more modern procedures that solve traditional problems. Thus, by using, for instance, the adaptive method supported by computer software, one could develop a realistic stimuli concept, generating a higher validity of data and consequently test results closer to reality (Scharf et al., 2001, p. 28).

Conjoint analysis benefits

Undoubtedly, the Conjoint analysis is an analysis of the future, which, compared to the usual methods of a scale of values, shows several benefits, such as:

1) The products, offers, images, etc. are no longer decomposed into several components, re-summed during the analysis. The analysis focuses on the whole, and not solely on parts thereof.
2) This method is based on actual selection opportunities and generates an information overburden; consequently, the results are reflecting an actual buying circumstance.
3) The answers dissipation, for instance by means of certain social desires, is highly mitigated, due to the large volume of the issue presented to the interviewed persons who are more concerned about solving the problem.
4) The Conjoint analysis results enable progress, meaning that several combinations of features can be analyzed based on the buying attractiveness thereof, and generates data concerning the positioning odds, the price level, the offer improvement method, etc.

The Conjoint analysis shall not replace the scales development methods, but, in addition to the said methods, represents an extremely interesting and eloquent market research instrument (Beutelmeyer, 1986, p. 4).

Empirical research

In order to select the characteristics and the characteristics features, we have previously reviewed specialized magazines (such as: Weinwirtschaft – the economy of wine, Wein & Markt – wine and market, Lebensmittelzeitung – food products magazine), we have gathered information from certain marketing experts in the wine industry (such as: Gerd Adolph, Wolfgang Fehse, Dr. Hepp, Dr. Binder, Dr. Seiler) and from retail experts (such as: Adolf Czech, Gerhard Mayer, Ludwig Wengenmayer), and we have also questioned certain wine traders.

From my discussions with the experts, as well as from my survey performed between 2004-2012, started at Stuttgart Hohenheim, it results that the wine price, taste, color and origin represent important characteristics for the consumer, and are considered when buying wine.

The wine traders have been questioned in writing, by means of direct questions related to their wine buying criteria. Over 500 wine traders have received the questionnaires, and 58 have provided answers.

First question: "What requirements should be met by a wine in order to be included in your program?"

Summarizing, the wine traders have provided the following answers:

- The best price/performance ratio should be ensured.
- The package should be of high quality – an appropriate bottle presentation.
- Appropriate service – for instance, the smooth delivery is a requirement.
- Advertising support and high stock turnover required.
- The wine should meet the consumer's taste and should be of extremely high quality.
- During the tasting, the wine should convince me through a remarkable (excellent) taste, should not be a table product.
- The exclusivity of sale through specialized trade should be ensured. Unknown – yes, but en vogue (voguish).
- Handcraft manufacturing – not a consumer product.
- Should be a quality wine with set out origin – classification is important.
- The consumer is looking for grape categories and is interested in the growing region.
- The bottled wine should have a good maturation potential.

The second question is: "Which are the best sold wines?"

By means of this question, we intended to find out the requirements a wine should meet in order to be interesting for the trader.

The questioned traders have mentioned an average price segment between EUR 5.00 and 7.90.

A trend for red wine has been highlighted, as well as a reminder of traditional winegrowing regions and the orientation towards dry wine.

Being known that consumers have less time, and the offer gets bigger and bigger, one might ask: "How are you structuring your wine-related program?"

In addition too direct counseling, the traders are also attempting to satisfy their customers by means of a large assortments offer. The wine program is maintained attractive by means of the growing regions, countries of origin, price categories and actions subject to permanent change.

Due to the fact that this article mainly addresses origin, the forth question is related to the most appreciated, relevant winegrowing regions, namely the countries from where the most sold wine originates.

Most manufacturers have mentioned the following countries: Germany, France, Italy and overseas countries – mainly Chile. For France, the winegrowing regions have been mentioned directly. And, as we all know, the wine traders are trying to display a large range of assortments, but they cannot provide all.

That is why the fifth and the last question was: "From which countries you have no wines in your program?" Most wine traders failed to include in their offer wine

from East European countries. We refer to wine from Romania, Bulgaria, Albania etc.

"For the consumer, Hungary no longer belongs to Eastern Europe", has stated one of the traders. And the Greek wines have earned their place on the shelves.

"The other wines have an image problem" said the wine trader Regina Bröse from Kiel.

In the empiric survey performed with consumers, 260 persons have been requested to rank 25 product profiles, based on their individual preferences.

The product profiles showed the following characteristics:
  i.   The country of origin (origin)
  ii.   The price category (price)
  iii. The favor (taste)
  iv.   The wine color (color).

Table 1. *Features of the characteristics considered in the wine survey*

Characteristics	Characteristic expression
Country of origin	Germany
	France
	Italy
	Romania
	Chile
Price categories	Below EURO 1.99
	Between EURO 2.00 and 3.49
	Between EURO 3.50 and 4.99
	Above EURO 5.00
Taste (flavor)	Dry
	Demi-sweet
Wine color	Red
	white

Source: Own research.

Based on the performed research and the questionnaire results, the product description is ensured by means of the below mentioned objective characteristics and set of characteristics.

We have tried to focus on as few characteristics and sets of characteristics as possible, in order to avoid the questioned person's overburden and to perform an analysis as close to reality as possible.

From the discussion with experts, examination of the specialized trade, as well as from the market survey performed by Professor Hoffmann, "origin" has proved itself as an important characteristic.

While at the discount stores the customers spend less than 30 seconds in front of the wine shelves, at the specialized trade premises the situation is completely different.

At a discount store, the customer buys the wine he is already familiar with, or the wine that benefits from strong advertising.

The discount store itself and the customers thereof are not our target group. The discount store often has "already sold" products.

The questioned wine importers explain that, in the food trade, Romanian wines have managed to earn their place solely based on price. We are talking about more than 95% of the wines examined in Germany. Thus, Romania can be easily replaced, and due to the low price, which also includes simple qualities, it gets a bad image. Consequently, Romanian wines, the Romanian original wines remain unknown by consumers. The experienced wine drinker or the customer expecting guests or who intends to give a bottle of wine as present, the counseling provided by the specialized trader is welcome. Here, in the specialized store, we can find customers spending more time in order to choose a wine, customers willing to live new experiences and keen to find something new. These customers are not only looking for a simple bottle of wine, but they intend to gain the others' recognition for the quality of consumed products.

The specialized stores are arranged so that the customer is able to read the wine origin (country of origin) on the shelves. Statistics show that more than half of the wines consumed in Germany originate from abroad. Germany is also the largest wine import market and thus extremely interesting for the wine manufacturing countries. Italy and France are still fighting for the first place. Due to the importance of these countries characteristics, such as origin, have been selected for the set of products. Statistics show, on one hand, the explosive development of new countries, and, on the other hand, why one of the sets is called Chile. The basis of this analysis is the set Romania. Due to the questioning location and to the sold quantity, the set "Germany" is natural. Of course, other origins would also be interesting, but the goal of this paper consists of a better positioning of Romanian wines. The next characteristic is price, and here we have determined four sets (pricing classes) which, based on volume, are covering 90% of the sale of wine.

The next characteristic is the wines taste/flavor. Officially, the Wines Act - EU (comp. Law No. 494 on vineyard and wine) sets out the taste classification (dry, demi-dry, demi-sweet, sweet).

These are limited based on sweetness (quantity of sugar in wine g/l).

But, in practice, a consumer often refers to a less acid dry wine as demi-dry wine or to a more acid demi-dry wine as dry wine. Due to this reason, and in order to simplify the research, the taste/flavor characteristic shall only contain two sets, namely dry and demi-sweet.

The last characteristic is the wine color. Here, the nature has limited the selection options, the sets being red and white. The ratio of rose wines in the total quantity of sold wines has an average of approximately 7%.

That is why rose wines have not been considered in this survey.

Determining the preference pattern

The considered sets of characteristics are based on the fact that, for most of the questioned persons, a compensatory decisional rule applies. Although consumers often buy a certain wine, of a certain origin, with a certain price, certain taste and certain color, the research and the pre-survey results have suggested that most questioned persons would rather switch to a different wine with sets of characteristics less wanted, compared to the wine they usually buy, than to no longer buy any wine (as it would happen in case of non-compensatory decisional rules). Furthermore, it is considered that most questioned persons are evaluating characteristics independently one from another, so that the preferences pattern should not consider an interaction between characteristics, but could apply a cumulative association. This presumption is also supported, among others, by the fact that, for wine varieties, we can notice a certain variability of the expressions of characteristics combinations for each separate product considered by the questioned person for buying purposes, and thus familiar with. For instance, the red wines are often packed in Bordeaux bottles of the same color, mostly brown, and the white wines in green or white Rhin type bottles. For all characteristics, the partial benefit pattern is being used as evaluation function. No characteristics redundancy applies. The use of cumulative partial benefit pattern for the preferential pattern is supported by the fact that, in case of the cumulative partial benefit pattern, which is a robust and flexible pattern, which represents the dominant preferential pattern in the Conjoint analysis, all required premises are being met.

Data research structuring

In the Conjoint analysis, the used data structuring method consists of the global profile method. Typically, the Conjoint analysis uses the global profile method, which is much closer to reality than the two factors (bifactorial) method (Albrecht, 2000, p. 60).

In the previous paragraphs we have explained the preferential pattern selection as being the cumulative partial benefit pattern, which solely contains primary effects, with no interaction effects. That is the reason why, in order to systematically determine the type and number of stimuli, we are using an orthogonal design with primary effect. Due to the fact that various products, wines, are described by means of four characteristics, out of which: one with five features, another with four features, and by means of two characteristics, each with two features, the SPSS statistics software is being used for the orthogonal plan (Backhaus, 2005, p. 521).

After several permutation attempts, the 25 stimuli result and are consecutively presented to the interviewed persons, as cards, each describing a potential product. We are talking about an asymmetric design (5x4x2x2). The research design is developed based on the profile method. In case of a complete design, namely one that considers all possible combinations of characteristics' features, one would obtain (5x4x2x2) = 80 fictive products, called stimuli. The evaluation of all these 80 stimuli would definitely overburden the questioned persons, and consequently there has been decided to develop a narrower design. By means of SPSS, the ortho-plan procedure enables us to develop narrower designs (orthogonal arrays) (Backhaus, 2005, p. 570). Currently, the ortho-plan procedure operates based on Adelman plan. Through the orthogonal design, the 80 stimuli (5x4x2x2) of the complete design are reduced to 25 product profiles, which must be evaluated by the questioned persons. The ratio between the stimuli to be evaluated and the preferential pattern parameters to be estimated is of 1:3.

Setting out the decisions

The Conjoint analysis uses the buying intention and decisional criterion, due to the fact that it requires determining the structure of preference, which is the basis of the actual buying decision. In order to avoid the questioned persons' overburden and to reduce the survey size, the questioned persons are requested to arrange the stimuli, on a hierarchical scale, based on the buying intention. First of all, the questioned persons need to divide the 25 stimuli into five different categories, based on the buying intention, and, within each group, to create a hierarchical scale, prior to ranking all product profiles. This procedure has been selected in order to obtain a more intense

confrontation of the questioned persons with each set of characteristics, on one hand, and, on the other hand, in order to avoid the questioned persons' overburden caused by the immediate ranking of all 25 product profiles. The personal verbal questioning has been used as questioning form. It is essential that this survey, where the influence of several factors on the measurement of the structure of preferences is evaluated by means of the Conjoint analysis, shall not allow any other questioning form. In addition, it is considered that most of the questioned persons are not familiar with he evaluation tasks implied by the Conjoint analysis and, consequently, require support.

Developing the presentation form

This article uses the same presentation form for questioning the procurement agents of the food trade, specialized trade, consumption at the Romanian stand, as well as for consumer with no connection to Romania whatsoever. A mixed form has been selected as presentation form, where the bottle of wine has been figuratively illustrated, the origin has been highlighted, and the other characteristics have been illustrated by means of key words, based on the printed cards description.

Each questioned person, irrespective of his/her Cluster group, shall receive the same cards.

The 25 product profiles of the Conjoint analysis are mentioned on printed cards, namely one card for each product profile.

Each questioned person will be asked to arrange these cards based on his/her buying intention.

The questioning results are entered in a table for each questioned person, where the columns represent the product profiles, and the rows contain the hierarchical data of the questioned persons.

A table is drafted for each of the four Cluster groups, resulting four times four results, and at the end the results are being analyzed and compared.

Evaluation of the preferential pattern parameters

In this article, the decision concerning the hierarchical order is being evaluated by means of the Conjoint analysis of SPSS software.

The procedure can be briefly characterized as follows:

Table 2. *Input and output in the CONJOINT SPSS procedure*

INPUT	CONJOINT SPSS Procedure	OUTPUT
Characteristics: Sets of characteristics	Performance: Orthogonal design	Ortho Plan
Preference hierarchical order: pro subject person.	Data – file	Printed cards Partial benefit Relative importance of the characteristic Quality measure

The input consists of the characteristics and characteristics features considered by the survey, and the output thereof consists of the printed cards generated by SPSS within the orthogonal design. These will be evaluated by the questioned persons.

The next input consists of entering the product profiles-related preferences hierarchy set out by the questioned persons. Based on such data, the preferential pattern parameters are being estimated for each questioned person.

The output consists of the partial benefits, relative importance of the characteristics and a quality measure, which highlights the quality of obtained parameters.

Determining the aggregate results

The aggregate results have been obtained for each separate Cluster group (food trade, specialized trade, consumers with no connection to Romania whatsoever, consumption at the Romanian stand). For the food trade buyer, price has played the most important role. The relative importance of the price characteristic has exceeded 63%. This proves once again that the German consumer is looking for products at the best price. This result is also consistent with the information gathered from statistics, concerning the large quantity of wines bought from discount stores.

The discount stores have proved to the consumer that famous wines can also be bought at low prices. Based on the low margin of the discount stores and on the extremely large quantity of wine acquired directly from producers, such stores benefit from a different computation system than the specialized store trader.

The German consumers are trying to make savings wherever they can. Advertising logos such as "Geiz ist geil (avarice is cool)" have motivated ladies with convertibles to buy from Aldi. The wine producers all over the world are offering wine at more and more advantageous prices. Initially, the overseas countries were obtaining EURO 6.00 per bottle, and nowadays are offering bulk

wine for EURO 0.20/liter. Even the trade with French wines has been affected by the easy drinkable wines, with low acidity and tannin content imported from the overseas countries.

Even the French must lower their prices this year. From the East European countries, Hungary, as EU member state, is the first SOE country that has managed to maintain its positioning on the German market and, furthermore, to also create an image on external markets.

One of the less benefic liberalization outcomes, including for the Hungarian domestic wine market, consisted of the fact that the wine producers have been forced to adjust their prices, in line with the competition, which, in fact, has meant a severe decrease of the wine pricing.

These experiences faced by our neighbors should also represent a warning signal for our producers, which are currently obtaining on Romanian market prices other producers from different countries would not even dream to obtain on European markets.

A country with no image cannot face the harsh competition on the international wine market. The performed analysis is clearly showing that, after price, the brand, namely the origin, represents the second important characteristic for the food trade buyer.

The relative importance of the origin characteristic is around 29%.

The food trade buyer is looking for wines which, due to advertising, verbal propaganda and high notoriety, acquire a large turnover.

The taste and color features are also important for the buyer, but due to the large offer variety have not been the main focus.

Based on the analysis performed at the specialized trade segment, the price and origin characteristics are sharing the same place. In this case, the wine flavor has a relative importance of 11%. We can clearly see a preference for dry wines. Despite all massive advertising and the above mentioned trends, the white wines register more than half of the total consumption.

Here, in the specialized trade, Romania has the opportunity to create a name, because, according to the analysis, in the discount trade pricing is crucial.

The results of the analysis performed on consumers not connected to Romania in any way are similar to those obtained when questioning the food trade and discount store buyers. These results also represent an evidence regarding the relevance of the performed analyses, because part of consumers are buying from food and discount stores, and part of them from the specialized trade segment.

It is interesting to notice the large difference of the results of analyses performed on consumers visiting the Romanian stand or of those somehow related to Romania. Here, the consumers mostly focus on taste than origin. We could hear often, during the interview: "the wine must be tasty and must have a good pricing, and we will buy it". This statement represents a reaction of sympathy and kindness, in response to the hospitable welcome at the Romanian stand.

The survey performed by Meiniger Publishing House and signed by Professor Hoffmann shows us how little time the consumers are spending in front of the wine shelves, reason for which they are buying already (pre-) sold products.

Consequently, Romanian wines are positively perceived by consumers, based on quality and price, following a prior tasting, but for most consumers such wines remain unknown. It is even more severe when a consumer says: "oh, yes, I know Romanian wines, they are sticky, sweet and cheap. You definitely get a headache from these." Or, other Eastern Germany consumers, refer to these wines as: "grandpa's wines".

Conclusions

Through the specialized stores, Romanian wine producers would benefit from a specialized consultant, who would enable the consumer to become familiar with the product and to trust such product.

For an unknown product, with no positive image in the consumer's mind, it is extremely hard to sell otherwise than based on pricing.

The strategy of the lowest pricing is the wrongest solution for Romanian wines, which fail to exist in excess and must be sold despite any sacrifice.

Romanian wines require a story, a sign of recognition, a brand, in order to position them in the mind of the German consumer, for example, in the place they belong to be.

From the performed research, it results that Romanian wines need to be introduced on the market, to be subject to tasting campaigns and to be compared with other products of the same pricing category.

Romanian producers should stop neglecting the expert markets, which, strictly economically, are not yet interesting, just because the domestic market provides better prices, and should start creating, slowly, but safely, a positive image on the export markets.

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