

Deterrents to wine consumption in the emerging market of India: A qualitative study

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Article history

Received: 2 February 2016

Received in revised form:
10 June 2016

Accepted: 11 June 2016

Keywords

Wine consumption
 Wine consumption
 deterrents
 Indian wine market
 Thematic analysis

Abstract

India is among the fastest growing economies in the world. With increase in population as well as in disposable income, India is expected to see a growth in wine consumption. However, that is not seems to be the case. Although, consumption of alcohol is widely prevalent in India and has been growing steadily over the years, the same is not seen with regards to wines in particular. The present paper attempts to investigate the deterrents to wine consumption in the emerging market of India. Sixty-three customers from Delhi and Bangalore metropolitan cities participated in the study. An unstructured interview technique was employed to find out the reasons for less wine consumption among Indian consumers. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data. Five main reasons for low wine consumption emerged out of the study, namely: low value for money, lack of awareness, low self-image congruence, special occasion drink and low socio-cultural relevance. Based upon the results of this study, possible managerial implications suggested are: targeting wine to consumers who prefer healthy, low alcoholic alternative to existing beverages, promoting various wine varietals, positioning wine as a celebration accompaniment, mentioning suggested food pairing along with wine labeling etc.

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Introduction

Over the years, wine consumption has been mainly concentrated in the European region where around 70 percent of wine produced globally is sold (Bernetti *et al.*, 2006). In recent times, focus has shifted to new markets such as US, Latin America, and emerging countries in Asia, like India. India is the second-most populous country in the world (World Bank Statistics, 2014). According to the latest World Bank statistics, Indian economy is third largest in terms of purchasing power parity (World Bank News, 2014). While the global per-capita consumption of wine is estimated at 4 liters per annum, the Indian estimate stands merely at 0.009 liters (Ahuja, 2011) which is significantly less compared to per-capita beer and whisky consumption in India which currently stand at 1.6 liters (Mazumdar, 2014) and 1.24 liters (Perlberg, 2014) respectively. However, Corsi *et al.* (2013) finds India as one of the most promising markets for wine due to growing affinity among Indians towards high quality products that serve as status symbols. Off late, the wine industry in India has just started to take shape and is growing at around 20-30% every year (Patnaik and Sahoo, 2009). This indicates a

tremendous growth potential for the Indian wine market.

India is bestowed with the environmental conditions necessary for the cultivation of wine (Veseth, 2011). Indian demography is also conducive to wine consumption, as people have high disposable income and display low resistance to the adoption of western cultural habits (Sivakumar and Mehra, 2007). However, neither the production nor the consumption of wine has boosted significantly in India. The reluctance towards wine consumption amongst Indians can be traced to historical, socio-economic and cultural values prevalent in this country. This paper attempts to characterize this phenomenon from a consumer perspective by identifying the factors deterring wine consumption amongst urban Indian consumers through a qualitative inquiry. It is anticipated that the results of the study will enable the wine marketers appraise prevalent imagery pertaining to wine consumption and aid them in crafting brand images and promotional campaigns that induce greater wine consumption.

Wine is found to be associated with food in three ways: as a complement to food, as a signal to communicate social sophistication, and to refresh

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the palate while eating (Pettigrew and Charters, 2006). While wine has emerged as a staple drink in countries like France, Italy and Spain; in other markets, especially non-European, wine drinking is still considered a ceremonial activity. In emerging markets like India, wine represents only one percent of the total alcohol consumption (Corsi *et al.*, 2013). Corsi and colleagues further report that India is different from other Asian markets because in India white wine varietals are more popular than red wine varietals. The authors attribute this phenomenon to the style of the Indian cuisines, which are spicy, vegetable rich and rarely using red meat.

History of alcohol consumption in India

Ancient Vedic Indian literature dated back around 2000 B.C. mentions about beverages that contained ethanol (Chopra and Chopra, 1965), and extol the beneficent effects of alcohol on the mind and body (Saxena, 1999). During their colonial rule, the British promoted alcohol beverages to curb the then prevailing local cannabis and opium consumption in India (Das *et al.*, 2006). The result was a gradual increase in alcohol consumption, which in turn was associated with a grandeur Western way of life (Wig, 1994). Even though wine consumption is prohibited by religions such as Hinduism, Stancu *et al.* (2015), find that India has relatively higher per-capita level of wine consumption. The authors also find that in India the tourists' wine consumption level is considerably higher than the country's wine consumption. Over the years, the pattern of drinking alcohol in India has slowly changed from occasional to habitual and social consumption. Today, the predominant purpose of consuming alcohol in India is pleasure seeking (Mohan *et al.*, 2001) with attenuated emphasis on consumption for medicinal values.

Grape cultivation is one of the most remunerative farming enterprises in India (Ahuja, 2011). However, only one percent of Indian vineyards are used for wine production (Anderson and Nelgen, 2011). There are a few wine varietals that dominate India's domestic wine production namely, Chenin Blanc and Sauvignon Blanc in white wine variety, and Shiraz and Cabernet Sauvignon in the red wine variety (Patnaik and Sahoo, 2009). The biggest consumption of wine (up to 80%) is confined to the major cities, of which the largest are Mumbai, Delhi, Bangalore and the foreign tourist dominated market of Goa (Jadhav, 2011). It is conservatively estimated that 10 million Indians (around 1% of the Indian population) could be termed as potential consumers of imported wines (Ahuja, 2011).

Factors influencing wine consumption

Literature on wine consumption lists a variety of factors influencing consumption, primary factors being socio-economic status and taste (c.f. Cacic *et al.*, 2011; Silva *et al.*, 2014). Sutanonpaiboon and Atkin (2012) found information regarding region of origin as the prime factor influencing wine selection in US and Australia. Other determinants of consumption are price, quality and cultural practices (c.f. Bernetti *et al.*, 2006; Pettigrew and Charters, 2006; Bernabéu *et al.*, 2012). Tzimitra-Kalogianni *et al.* (1999) mentioned taste, clarity, appellation, aroma and label as the most important wine selection attributes.

Pettigrew and Charters (2006) find that product involvement and wine quality assessment, during wine selection, are related. Contrary, to the findings of Montgomery and Bruwer (2013), the authors found that customers who are less involved with wine use subjective characteristics such as, packaging, price, smoothness, drinkability etc. to assess perceived quality during wine selection. While consumers in high involvement category use objective characteristics such as, region of origin, image of the wine maker, territory, grape quality to assess perceived quality.

There is some degree of disparity among researchers regarding the effect of demographics on consumption of wine. While researchers like Montgomery and Bruwer (2013) and Silva *et al.* (2014) finds no significant difference between the genders or age with respect to wine selection, other researchers such as Barrena and Sanchez (2009), Cacic *et al.* (2011) and Bernabéu *et al.* (2012) find distinctive behavioral pattern in wine selection with respect to age and gender. Further, these researchers also ascribe the influence of level of education, income and knowledge of consumer in selecting wine varietals.

Benefits of wine consumption

Studies have proved that consumption of wine in moderation is good for health (German and Walzem, 2000). The benefits of wine consumption are reduction in body fat and cholesterol levels (Flechtner-Mors *et al.*, 2004). Wine is purported to boost the immune system by increasing the antioxidant concentrations in the body (Thomas and Pickering, 2003; de la Torre *et al.*, 2006). Li *et al.* (2011) finds 27 percent of Chinese young adults drink wine for health reasons. Regular consumption of wine in limited amounts is said to increase the life span and ameliorate heart related problems (German and Walzem, 2000). However, on the contrary, Law *et al.* (2011) find that

indigenous fermented beverages such as rice wine and palm wine, popular in Southeast Asia, contain high amount of ethanol and other alcohol-related compounds and hence pose health risks.

Deterrents to wine consumption

One significant issue that acts as a deterrent to consumption of wine is the assessment of perceived risk. Greater risks entail in those products whose perceived quality is not easily assessable. According to Casini *et al.* (2008), “consumer confusion”, a misunderstanding arising out of excessive available information, leads to confusion in assessment of wine quality in the buying process. Drawing parallels between the works of Gil and Sánchez (1999), Yeung *et al.* (2010), Adinolfi *et al.* (2011) and Chrysochou *et al.* (2012), wine origin, brand image, store image, relying on satisfying brand and consumer reviews are identified as the influential risk-reducing strategies that consumers use in selecting wine brands.

Main reasons spotted among non-consumers of wine are dislike of taste and lack of knowledge (Li *et al.*, 2011; Silva *et al.*, 2014). Silva notes the subjective norms that act as deterrents to wine consumption are parents, peer group, society, culture and public image. In addition, prior alcohol related studies show that tax imposed on alcohol consumption and the associated legal prohibitions determine the variability in consumption to some extent (Mast *et al.*, 1999). With respect to countries having Muslim dominated population, such as Malaysia, Chan *et al.* (2012) find that de-alcoholised wine, despite having perceived health benefits, is considered as non-halal, hence not preferred due to consumers’ culture of mild to no alcohol drinking.

Materials and Methods

The consumption of wine in India is not yet prominent, while other alcoholic beverages are enjoying a massive patronage amongst Indians. There is no substantial research, which investigates various deterrents to wine consumption, and research in this area in the context of an emerging market is almost unavailable. This article, accordingly, attempts to fill this gap by exploring the deterrents of wine consumption in an emerging wine market - India from an individual consumer’s (social – psychological) perspective through a qualitative method of inquiry.

Sample

The population of interest is the consumers who consume alcohol in India. Owing to the exploratory character of the study, criterion-sampling method

was adopted for selecting the sample (Patton, 2002). Criterion sampling is a qualitative sampling method involves selecting those cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance (Patton, 1987; Patton, 2002). The choice of criterion sampling was prompted by the reason that in India, alcohol is not consumed regularly by a significant proportion of its population. Hence, it was pertinent to filter out those probable respondents who do not drink alcohol on a regular basis. Probable informants for the study were identified by asking two sequential screening questions. Firstly, participants were asked about their frequency of alcohol consumption. Those who reported consuming alcohol more than once month were only retained and they were further probed whether they prefer variety in their alcohol beverage consumption. Only those participants who answered ‘yes’ were confirmed as informants for this study. This process helped us in refraining from selecting brand loyal drinkers and occasional drinkers.

The sample comprised of people who live in New Delhi and Bangalore. These two cities were chosen because of their rich cultural variability with respect to linguistic, religious, and ethnic groups. Both the cities are considered densely populated, rich, and cosmopolitan and are known for the urban agglomeration (De, 2008). Only cities were considered for sampling because wine consumption is predominant only in urban areas in India (Jadhav, 2011).

Sixty-three consumers participated in the study. The participants ranged in age from 25 to 50 years ($M = 35$ years, $SD = 10.4$ years). Most of the participants were from New Delhi, India ($n = 38$), followed by Bangalore, India ($n = 25$). The mean years of alcohol consumption was 8.9 years. Informants recruited for the study were categorized into three types: (a) casual drinkers (CD: who consume alcoholic drinks once in a month on an average) ($n = 22$); (b) regular drinkers (RD: who consume alcohol at least once in fortnight) ($n = 23$); (c) excessive drinkers (ED: who drink almost on daily basis) ($n = 18$). Please refer Table 1 for demographic profile of respondents.

Study design and procedure

This study investigates the reasons for less wine consumption among Indian consumers. Since the topic is intricate, a depth interviewing technique was adopted for collecting data (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Depth interview technique is a qualitative method of data collection that is used when the issue of the investigation is a complex phenomenon, which may not be easily unraveled through surface responses, hence requiring exhaustive probing (Fontana and

Table 1. Demographic profile of the respondents

Characteristics		Number	Percentage
Gender	Female	26	41.27%
	Male	37	58.73%
Age	21-30	21	33.33%
	31-40	23	36.51%
	41-50	19	30.16%
Income per annum (Indian Rupee)	Less than 6 lakhs	17	26.98%
	6 Lakhs to 12 Lakhs	20	31.75%
	Above 12 lakhs	26	41.27%
Education Level	Under Graduate or below	16	27.80%
	Graduation	22	33.30%
	Post Graduation and above	25	38.90%
Frequency of Alcohol Consumption	Once a day	18	28.57%
	Once a week	14	22.22%
	Fortnightly	9	14.29%
	Once in a month	22	34.92%
Frequency of Wine Consumption	Weekly	13	20.63%
	Fortnightly	7	11.11%
	Monthly	16	25.40%
	Occasionally	27	42.86%

Frey, 1994). Unstructured depth interview was used in this study. In this technique, the interviewer does not use a discussion guide or preset questionnaire to conduct the interview; on the contrary, the researcher asks the informant few causal surface level (ground mapping) questions to understand the extent of the phenomenon, thereafter depending upon the responses elicited, further questions are extemporized by the researcher to comprehensively understand the phenomenon in depth. This form of interview technique is especially useful when the researcher has no preexisting knowledge about the phenomenon. Additionally, this type of interview helps to delve deeper into the latent context behind socially sensitive phenomena which individuals are not very comfortable to talk about (Boyce and Neale, 2006). Since the study involved asking participants about their alcohol drinking preference, which is generally considered a taboo in Indian society; depth interviews helped us to probe deeper into our respondents' perceptions.

Interviews were conducted over a 3-month period (March 2014 to May 2014). Thematic analysis was used to determine, interpret, and report themes in the data (Aronson, 1994; Sayre, 2001; Braun and Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is used to cluster the repeated patterns of meaning from data sets, which usually consist of interviews, focus groups or textual data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). It is a flexible tool, which is used to minimally reorganize data to

bring out inferences (Sayre, 2001). It is the preferred method to summarize large body of data (Aronson, 1994). Thematic analysis is often described as a preferred tool that is to be used if the results are unanticipated (Roulston, 2001). Considering the exploratory nature of the study coupled with inadequate previous literature on this topic; thematic analysis was preferred choice as method of data analysis. QDA miner software was used to perform thematic analysis.

Patrons in restaurants and pubs were approached after they had settled down and placed order for alcoholic drink(s). Only those who qualified the screening questions were probed further. Consistent with previous studies (Fournier, 1998; Schembri *et al.*, 2010), interviews followed a conversational style, where respondents' largely set the course of the dialogue. Questions and probes followed the course of the dialogue and were formulated in unison with the respondent's reflections (Thompson *et al.*, 1989). Insights gained throughout the process of interviewing aided in further probing (Thompson and Haytko, 1997). The interviews began with a few structured questions regarding consumer's demographics and then unstructured questions about their feelings and experiences concerning alcoholic drink preference and consumption were asked. Informants were assured about the anonymity of their responses. By doing this they were allowed to develop their own narrative by exploring their experiences of alcohol consumption without any inhibitions. The researcher allowed participants to speak for themselves (i.e., the emergent themes were participant led rather than researcher led). This allowed participants to take control of the interview process and prevented researchers' subjective bias entering the analytic stage. All interviews were audio recorded after informed consent.

The interpretation began with the researchers transcribing the interviews and engaging in active and repeated reading the transcriptions set to familiarize themselves with the data sets (transcribed interviews). All significant lines corresponding to the research question were identified and summarized in participants' own words. The summaries were then explored for finding descriptions across interviews, which express similar meanings. Such descriptions were tagged using a concise code name, which represents the synopsis of the description. The authors have used QDA Miner software for this purpose. Since inductive thematic analysis was used, naming of codes depended on what transpired from the data.

After coding of all significant lines, the entire data sets were, once again, reviewed and inspected

Table 2. Tabular summary of thematic analysis

THEME (Factor)	CODE (Variables)
Low value for money	Expensive
	Low alcohol content
	Cannot get wasted (low intoxication)
Lack of awareness	About varietals
	About storage
	About consumption modalities
Low self image congruence	Non masculine
	Limited bonding opportunities
	Fruit flavored drink
Special occasion drink	Signal of life style
	Signal of aristocracy
	Drink served during formal occasions
	Achievement drink
Low socio-cultural relevance	No historical roots
	Not a hot climate drink
	No nostalgia
	Consumption modalities contrary to other alcoholic beverages

for plausible omissions and misinterpretations. The coded data extracts were then reviewed to consider whether they formed logical patterns. Codes that were homogeneous with respect to context of information conveyed were grouped into potential themes, and the relevant coded data extracts were gathered within the identified themes so as to define the themes. Accordingly, themes were defined and further refined. This process resulted in generation of five themes corresponding to deterrents of wine consumption in India. Please refer Table 2 for summary of thematic analysis.

The framework for reliability and validity was based on work by Whittemore *et al.* (2001), wherein the reliability of this research was strengthened by documenting the stages of analysis (audit trail) and obtaining corroboration between the researchers about data interpretation that had been previously analyzed independently (investigator triangulation). Member check was carried out with subset of the sample (n = 18) so as to validate the findings. The findings are presented below.

Results

The reasons for sparing or non-consumption of wine were identified from the combined analysis of these interviews. Five broad themes emerged from the interview transcriptions, which are discussed

below.

Theme 1: Low value for money

This theme came out as a predominant theme behind the reluctance towards wine purchase. Most of the respondents felt that wine is very expensive compared to other alcoholic beverages like beer, whisky, vodka, etc (n = 52; 42 male, 10 female). Quite a few male informants felt that they can get extra mugs of beer for the same price (n= 19).

“The price of a 750 ml bottle of a branded wine is about 1000 Rs (approx 20 USD) whereas the price of 650 ml branded beer is less than 100 Rs (approx 2 USD)... hence it makes more economic sense to prefer beer over wine as both of them are considered be relatively mild in alcohol content” (male, aged 32, CD).

Most of the respondents reported that they usually drink alcoholic beverages for pleasure seeking or to temporarily alleviate the distress they are facing (n = 41, 22 male, 19 female). In either of the cases, they preferred beverages which have high alcoholic content so as to enable mood elevation. Drinking wine did not suit the purpose because of low alcohol content (Kramer *et al.*, 2006).

“I do not feel the same intensity of mood elevation after taking wine that I get after consuming same amount of whisky”(female, aged 44, RD).

Some male participants reported that they would consume alcohol until ‘they get wasted’ (a feeling of complete inebriation) (n = 22; 16 male, 6 female). Such participants reported that they would not consider consuming wine because they cannot get wasted by drinking wine, owing to its moderate to low alcoholic content.

“I can drink as much wine as you pour, and still be sober, I bet.... it does not get me high... I can never get wasted (intoxicated) by drinking wine” (male, aged 32, ED).

The responses throw light on three specific categories of wine drinkers in India. The first category comprised of the ‘value-seekers’ people who would justify their choice of alcohol by the content present in a bottle and the price associated with it. India is a country predominantly comprising of the price-sensitive middle class (Goswami and Mishra, 2009). This socio-economic orientation of Indian consumers may be one of the major factors behind the lack of enthusiasm for wine consumption in India.

A second category which emerged was that of people who drink alcohol for the purpose of alleviation of stress. This category was labeled as the ‘stress-relievers’. Such behavior can be related to cognitive social leaning model of alcohol

use (Abrams and Niaura, 1987) which state that individuals who believe that drinking will reduce their ongoing life related tension and trauma will try to consume more alcohol (Steele and Josephs, 1990). India, a developing nation, has a significant number of people dealing with everyday stress related with their personal life, work and society. Wine, with its low alcohol content would not be good substitute for beer or whisky and consequently it may not appeal to Indians whose objective is to forget every negative outcome that has happened to them in a day.

A third category of consumers were identified who drank alcohol for the sake of the sensation of intoxication and for the appreciation of the taste. This category was named the 'Alcohol aficionados'. The responses indicated that Indian alcohol consumers wanted a sense of intoxication to completely enjoy their drinking experience. Wine with its low alcohol content was not a preferred drink for such type of sensation seekers.

Theme 2: Lack of awareness by both buyers and sellers

Most of the respondents opined that were not completely aware of the different types of wine (n = 49; 25 male, 24 female) which was available in the market and also they stated that they have very limited knowledge about wine brands. Few informants remarked that even the waiters in plush restaurants lacked knowledge on wine varieties when inquired during ordering of wine (n = 18; 16 male, 2 female).

"I was surprised to know about these wine varieties called sparkling and dessert wine when my friend casually remarked about them. All I knew were white wine and red wine" (female, aged 42, CD).

Only five informants exhibited comprehensive knowledge about wine varieties and wine consumption modalities since they keep traveling abroad for business meetings (n = 5; 3 male, 2 female). These informants exclaimed that some well known brands were not available in the Indian market.

"Sometimes I take wine with my business partners, but the Bangalore club does not have the brand which I prefer. Since, I am a member I placed a request with the authorities to start selling that brand" (female, aged 35, CD).

One expert informant remarked that wine storing modalities were not known to many of his friends. He stated that this knowledge about wine storage is only known to few professional hoteliers.

"There is a method to store wine... it's very sophisticated procedure as I understand. Wine has to be kept in cool location with wine always touching

the (wooden) cork... I also read that the wine cellar should not be in the premises of any noisy location, otherwise it disturbs the composition of wine" (male, aged 37, RD).

Many informants stated that they were not completely aware about wine ordering and consuming modalities like smelling, swirling and gargling wine for assessing quality and flavor of wine (n = 35; 29 male, 6 female). These informants remarked that they would never consume wine in occasions where the plausibility of their ignorance being pointed out is high.

Theme 3: Low self image congruence

Few male respondents stated that the taste of the wine does not match with the taste of other alcoholic spirits as it is slightly sweet. When probed further, they attributed sweetness with a fruity taste and equated wine with fruit beverage instead of an alcoholic beverage (n = 31). As a consequence, most of the men excluded wine during alcohol consumption occasions. Another consequence of considering wine as a fruit based drink or sweet drink was attributing wine as a feminine drink. Few men successfully rationalized this proposition by stating that females have a sweet tooth and they prefer wine over other alcoholic beverages, if at all they have to consume alcohol (n = 24). Upon probing about feminist associations of wine with female respondents, most of them agreed that they prefer wine to other alcoholic beverages as they found it more tasty and palatable than other alcoholic drinks (n = 19).

"Amongst all the alcoholic beverages I have tasted until now, I liked wine... and I order only wine in all occasions. I like it because it's slightly sweet and hence tasty" (female, aged 24, CD).

Few other female respondents stated that they ordered wine just to give company to their husbands and to drive back home safely in case their husbands lose their sobriety (n = 6; 6 female). Some male respondents were conducive to sampling wine, but expressed their incapability to order wine during social bonding occasions. They expressed their apprehensions about being left out when they order wine while their friends do not.

"When you go out in a group, you have to drink what everyone orders otherwise you will feel out of place. The majority of my friends takes either beer or whisky and not the wine" (male, aged 31, RD).

Few others stated that it was against their personality to order wine, as they attributed wine consuming as a non-masculine phenomenon (n = 11; 11 male).

"When I attend public functions, I prefer ordering

whiskey or brandy, because real men do not consume mild alcoholic drinks” (male, aged 49, ED).

Theme 4: Special occasion drink

Few high profile informants attributed that they drink wine in special situations like when they have to make a conscious effort to display their improvement in social status or accumulation of wealth (Sirgy, 1982) or to celebrate special moments (n = 23; 18 male, 5 female). Few other informants stated that they engage in conspicuous consumption of wine to reflect their sophisticated lifestyle and classy personality (n = 21; 13 male, 8 female).

“In our family gatherings, every celebration has to culminate with the drinking of wine” (female, aged 42, CD).

A class of senior executives stated that they always resorted to ordering wine so as to express social distinctions (n = 46; 24 male, 22 female). Few other informants recollecting wine drinking mostly during special formal gatherings and during corporate dinners. One respondent storied an incident of the branch achieving high sales targets, culminating in wine drinking by all staff members, sponsored by the branch head.

“Drinking wine shows more sophistication. So, I normally take wine in corporate parties. Otherwise, I take vodka more frequently in informal settings” (male, aged 36, ED).

These responses indicate the typical mindset of Indian alcohol drinkers towards wine. There is a mental positioning of beverages among the daily Indian with respect to the class divisions in the society. When inquired about how different alcoholic beverages can be associated with the different types of social strata, respondents readily came up with three classes of segregation:

Indian brands of cheap wine → Lower class of manual workers, poor daily wage workers, lower middle class people

Foreign brand alcoholic beverages (beer, rum, whisky, vodka etc.) → Middle class white collar workers, government officials, upper middle class youth,

Foreign brand expensive beverages (wine, champagne etc.) → High society people, special occasions such as fancy restaurants, gala parties, marriage ceremonies etc.

In a country such as India, which has such a long history of social class division, it is not easy to dissolve such social segregation in the minds of people. This may be one of the major obstacles for popularization of wine in India.

Theme 5: Low socio-cultural relevance

India is a warm country; hence consumers prefer to drink chilled beverages (n = 65; 45 male, 20 female). Wine, on the contrary is generally served at room temperature. Some informants stated that, because of this reason, they would prefer other alcoholic beverages over wine and opined that wine would be preferred only in relatively colder regions (n = 35; 29 male, 6 female). Food pairing is very predominant with wine, implying that wine should be consumed alongside with food. Interviews indicated that customarily, Indians drink their beverage along with snack before they resort to eating the main course.

“At my place, we don’t normally consume alcohol during meals. In case we are hosting a party at home then as starters we take snacks with beer or whiskey and then move to main course” (male, aged 32, CD).

Few respondents remarked since the culture of family wine dining is extremely rare in India, Indians do not attribute nostalgia with wine consumption (n = 28; 25 male, 3 female). Few respondents inferred low consumption of wine amongst the Indians to no historic, family or cultural associations rooted to wine consumption. Few others opined that in Western countries, people are introduced to wine in various occasions like visiting church, family gatherings, marriages, etc.; such phenomenon being scarce or absent in India, they are not accustomed to drinking wine (n = 19; 10 male, 9 female).

Means-end laddering chain depicting Indian consumers’ attitude towards wine consumption

A means-end chain (MEC) laddering technique (Gutman, 1982) is used to link the various manifest and latent thought processes in the minds of the respondents in a sequence preceded by the means (perception and knowledge about wine as a product) and followed by the psychological and cultural influences justifying the end (value congruence, social need etc.). This technique is useful to bring out the unconscious thought processes of the respondents, which would otherwise remain unanswered.

During the interview stage, care was taken to stimulate such unconscious cognition of the respondents by allowing them to initially discuss about only the concrete attributes of wine as a product. Then, they were probed further to uncover their hidden psychosocial attitudes and behavioral intentions towards wine consumption and finally relating such consequences to the respondent’s terminal and instrumental values which influence their consumption pattern.

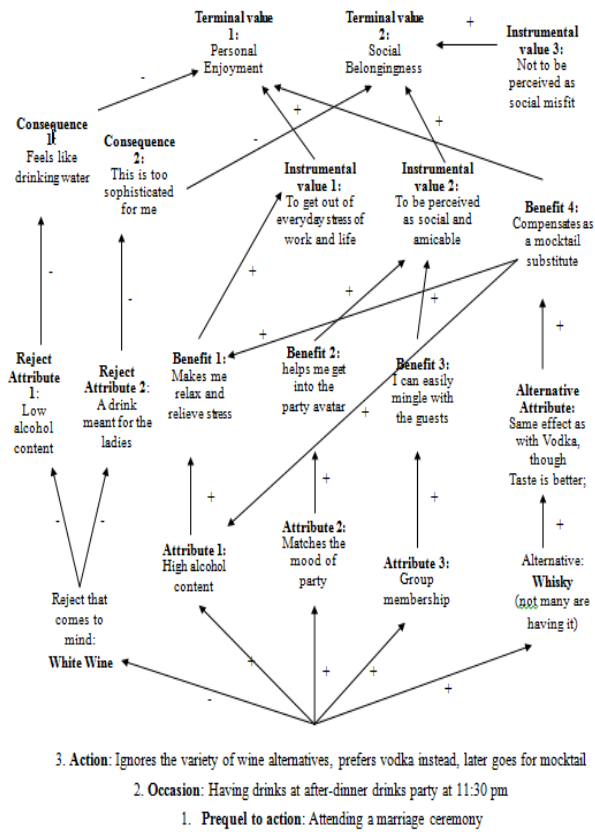


Figure 1. Means end laddering chain for Indian consumers' perception towards wine in context of social occasion

The laddering technique is conducted following the prescription of Fournier (1998) who used Heider's (1958, ch7) Balance Theory in MEC research. Respondents have been prompted to relate their mental positioning of wine as an alcoholic beverage and then compare it with their perceptions regarding alternate products such as whiskey, beer, rum and vodka. The responses are then arranged in the sequence of prequel to action, actual action, attributes of likes and dislikes, benefits, instrumental values and terminal values. A parallel chain captures the actions and attributes associated with alternatives and the related terminal and instrumental values. A (+) sign signifies a positive association with the attributes and a (-) sign implies an unfavorable relationship. A (?) implies an unjustified or unrelated assumption. Due to space and word restrictions, a couple of instances of MEC scenarios of Indian consumers' perception towards wine purchasing are described.

The first scenario is about a respondent who described his experience of choosing from a variety of alcoholic brands during an after-dinner drinks party at his cousin's marriage. The different alternatives that were present at the table were whisky, vodka, rum, gin and one brand of white wine. The means-end chain diagram (refer to figure1) begins with the prequel to the actual action, slowly building up the

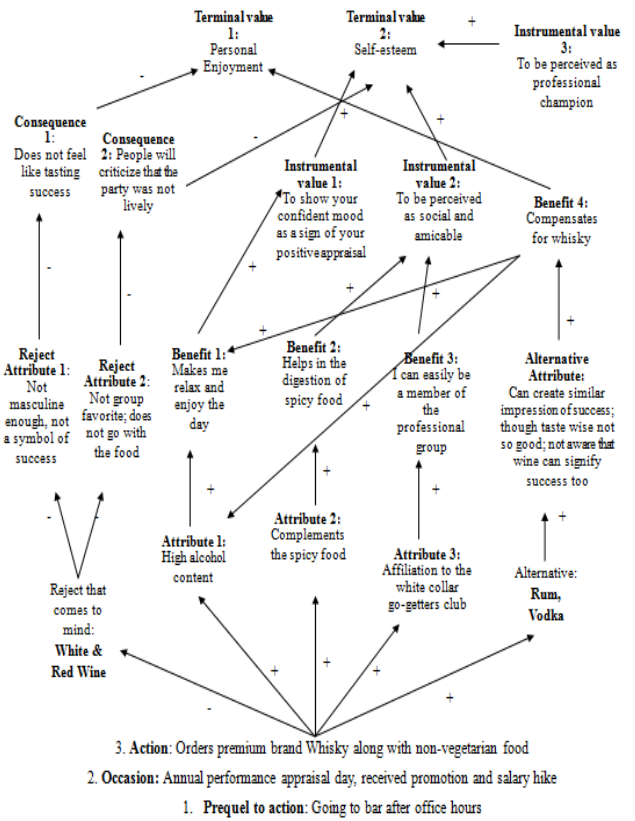


Figure 2. Means end laddering chain for Indian consumers' perception towards wine in context of organizing personal success party for colleagues

chain of cognition going through the respondent's mind.

The chain of thought processes reveals that the person chose vodka over wine mainly due to three attributes of the former- level of alcohol content, for alleviating the party sensation and for being considered as a part of a group of people comprising largely of vodka drinkers. Any other choice of drink would not create the desired impact in the mind of the respondent. Even if the respondent did not like vodka, he still went for it to show that he has similar tastes and habits as the majority of the party people. The choices subsequently gratify the individual level instrumental and terminal values of the individual. Alternate logic is also developed in his mind as to why he did not consider red or white wine as an option attributing it to the low alcohol content and perception of wine as a feminine drink.

In another occasion, a corporate manager was promoted to a higher level and received an increase in salary as well (refer to figure2). Therefore, he decided to take some of his friends out for a party. At the restaurant, the group ordered non-vegetarian dishes with 'Rice and Chapathi' (as is case with most Indians at dinner) and had whisky as a substitute drink. The reasoning of the manager for choosing whisky was once again the factors such as high alcohol content

and a good digester of the rich and spicy food. Add to that, the brand that was ordered signified success through its name- the term 'numero uno' (slightly modified to maintain anonymity) being associated with the brand's name itself. This respondent repeatedly mentioned that he wanted to express his success to the other people in his surroundings. He was able to communicate his success story through the choice of the drink. Wine never came to his mind as a possible option since he himself is not very knowledgeable about wine varietals. He also wanted a drink, which would complement the choice of main course and appetizers. With the Indian spicy assortment of 'kababs and currys', whisky came more readily to his mind.

Discussion

Instead of looking at these themes as challenges for wine marketing in India, they can be posited as opportunities to tap this relatively 'blue ocean' market. Following paragraphs, detail possible marketing strategies, which marketers could adopt to improve wine consumption in Indian market. The strategies proposed are based on the themes obtained.

The paper uncovered that many Indians are not formally introduced to wine. If marketers develop appropriate promotional campaigns by offering free trials to prospective consumers during dining occasions such as in premium bars and restaurants, awareness about wine brands may be considerably enhanced. The study reveals that lack of awareness about wine varietals and wine consumption modalities as a deterrent. Marketers can conduct special events like the wine festivals in different cities so that the consumers can get an opportunity to understand the basics of varietals, wine tasting modalities (Pettigrew and Charters, 2008), food pairing and modalities related to wine dispensing and storage. Marketers can sponsor special events, which are cost effective and can target those socioeconomic groups that can afford wine.

Identifying appropriate market segments for wine

This research points out that wine is low in functional value because of less alcohol content. The results infer that targeting wine to veteran consumers is not an appropriate choice, as wine drinking does not gratify them. However, low alcohol content is an attribute that is sought after by occasional drinkers or first time drinkers. If wine can be marketed as low alcoholic content beverage, it could attract the attention of this segment, which is currently served by light beer and branded 'vodka based fruit punches'.

The research also posited that wine has considerable epistemic or novelty value (Sheth et al., 1991). Wine drinking has special rituals associated with selection, consumption and storage, which are not prominent with other alcoholic beverages. This study also reveals that there is a lack of awareness about those rituals among both the consumers and sellers in India. If wine marketers can pack branded wine tutorial DVDs educating the consumers on these aspects, it might generate sufficient interest and continuing patronage amongst the Indian consumers who seek novelty.

Positioning wine brands

This research has explored that wine has high social value (Sheth et al., 1991) since wine is used to communicate success, lifestyle, higher social status and a suave personality. These attributes can be persuasively conveyed by no other alcoholic beverages except wine. Accordingly wine can be suitably promoted as a premium gift or a celebration accompaniment so as to improve the consumption occasions where wine can be the only suitable beverage. This research underscored feminist associations with wine. Predominantly, alcoholic beverages are consumed by male Indian consumers (Mohan et al., 2001). Instead of breaking popular perceptions about wine consumption, imagery surrounding exclusivity and life style connotations may be carved for a wine brand, which targets premium consumers. Positioning exercises on a health platform can also be undertaken to cogently convey the ancillary benefits of wine consumption.

The study shows that wine has low socio-cultural relevance in India. Marketers should aim at demystifying decision making related to wine choice. Apart from mentioning regular appellations and other wine labeling requirements, if a brief description of 'Indian food' that can be consumed along with that variety is also mentioned in packaging, wine selection could become quite easy for first time wine drinkers.

Conclusion

The objective of this paper is to contribute to the body of knowledge by identifying consumer perceptions that deteriorate or detriment wine consumption amongst Indians. It is unique, being the first qualitative research of its kind conducted in India. An unstructured interview was employed to find out the reasons for less wine consumption among the Indian consumers. The results of this study identified five themes or possible reason factors related to low wine consumption, namely, low value for money,

lack of awareness, low self image congruence, special occasion drink and no social and cultural relevance. Though the study was of exploratory kind, it is anticipated that the deterrent factors identified can be applicable in the context of other emerging wine markets to a varying extent.

Based on the results of the study, marketing strategies aimed at improving wine consumption are proposed by the authors. These suggestions are derived based on the themes derived from the exploratory study. It is posited that the strategies proposed will enable the marketers to improve awareness and recognition about wine brands, enhance the relevance and perception of wine brands and enable appropriately positioning wine brands in Indian market.

While this research has focused on wine deterrents, future research can take a contrasting approach and focus on investigating what kind of Indian consumers prefer to consume wine and what motivates them to buy wine. Such research will give a more comprehensive insight about Indian wine consumers' consumption behavior and it will enable the marketers to devise more effective wine marketing strategies. The study being qualitative in nature has attempted to empirically verify the findings. However, a follow up survey with questionnaire based on the results of this study may be used to empirically confirm the themes using exploratory factor analysis and evaluate the relative importance of each of these dimensions using a regression framework.

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