

# Influencers of consumer choice – comparing international markets

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*This paper presents international results from GWRDC-funded research. The research is investigating the influencers on consumer choice for wine in the retail and on-premise situations in Australia and key export markets. The first papers, presented in December, showed the initial results and segmentation analysis from Australian data (Goodman, Lockshin & Cohen, 2006a; 2006b). This paper presents the sample level results of the countries completed so far. A later paper will present data from US, NZ, Brazil, Taiwan, Canada and France. When the data collection is completed, segmentation analysis will be carried out and presented showing if, and how, segments vary by market, continent, demographics or behavioural traits. These latter papers will be a series over several issues.*

*Over the next two years there will be a series of papers and reports published from this research. Notification of publication can be obtained by contacting [Steve.Goodman@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:Steve.Goodman@adelaide.edu.au)*

Most common surveys are with rankings or ratings and consumer panel data, which details individual purchases. Respondents to surveys do not use ratings or rankings the same way across respondents and the results are subject to a range of biases resulting in scores or ratings, which are too similar or too difficult to interpret.

This research uses a new method called Best-Worst Scaling (also known as Max-Diffs). In addition to the normal demographic data, involvement levels and consumption frequency, a section of the survey uses a series of 13 tables (see example Table 1) to measure the true importance of the attributes that influence wine choice. Each table consists of four ‘influence attributes’; each attribute appears an equal number of times across the survey and equally against each other attribute in the total set. This method allows better comparisons among countries and segments.

TABLE 1. EXAMPLE OF ONE TABLE OF A BEST-WORSE CHOICE EXPERIMENT.

Worst/least	Issue/attribute	Best/most
	1 Grape variety	X
	2 Brand name	
X	3 Medal/award	
	4 Origin	

Respondents are then asked the question related to the two situations: for on-premise, “Remember the last time you had wine with a meal with friends in a restaurant”; or for retail, “Remember the last time you bought a bottle of wine in a shop to have for dinner with friends” and instructed to, in each table, indicate the one that most (best) and the one that least (worst) influenced their decision. The specific situation for retail purchase was selected as a ‘standard’ to avoid situations where people’s criteria might vary due to purchases for gifts, cellaring, special occasions, etc. Respondents were asked on what types of occasions they would change their behaviour to allow some cues as to when these 13 choice influencers might vary. Data were collected using different techniques depending on our collaborators in each country; some data were collected online, others as mall intercepts, in-store surveys or various combinations.

The data is transformed and analysed, where the total number of times each attribute is mentioned as ‘worst’ is taken from the number of times it is mentioned as ‘best’, leaving a score which is then standardised to enable different samples to be compared. There is much more statistical rigour to the process, compared with the standard 1-7 Likert-type scale. For a detailed discussion of the method and its application in the wine sector, see Goodman, Lockshin and Cohen (2005, 2006c), which demonstrates a range of results that can be used to discriminate amongst various segments and used to assist in focusing the marketing effort. The

TABLE 2. AUSTRALIAN INFLUENCERS – RETAIL STORE.

AUS (n=305)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	Tasted the wine previously	65
2	Someone recommended it	31
3	Grape variety	23
4	Origin of the wine	15
5	Brand name	15
6	Medal/award	12
7	I read about it	0
8	Matching food	-7
9	Information on back label	-7
10	Information on the shelf	-22
11	An attractive front label	-26
12	Promotional display in-store	-35
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-66

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TABLE 3. UK INFLUENCERS – RETAIL STORE.

UK (n=303)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	Tasted the wine previously	56
2	Someone recommended it	22
3	Origin of the wine	12
4	Information on back label	11
5	Brand name	2
6	I read about it	-03
7	Grape variety	-03
8	Matching food	-05
9	Information on the shelf	-07
10	Promotional display in-store	-10
11	Medal/award	-11
12	An attractive front label	-19
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-44

TABLE 4. CHINA INFLUENCERS – RETAIL STORE.

China (n=197)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	Brand name	37
2	Tasted the wine previously	34
3	Origin of the wine	31
4	Someone recommended it	22
5	Medal/award	4
6	Information on back label	1
7	Grape variety	-7
8	I read about it	-11
9	Promotional display in-store	-11
10	Information on the shelf	-16
11	An attractive front label	-22
12	Matching food	-25
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-36

results are referred to as a 'level of importance'. Each attribute has a coefficient (number), which is a true representation of its value to the consumer. The nature of the method and resulting analysis means the numerical score is not just a rank order, but shows the degree of preference and can be compared between countries and segments to indicate similarities and differences.

It is important to note the negative scores are not necessarily negative influences, but just the way the scale is produced; the larger the negative, the less important the feature, the higher the score the more of an influence it is in the decision.

**RETAIL STORE CHOICE RESULTS – MARKET BY MARKET**

The Australian market was discussed in previous articles (Goodman *et al.* 2006a; 2006b), but the results are repeated here for reference to the other countries (Table 2).

Table 3 shows the results from the UK analysis. Having 'tasted the wine previously' is the most influential, more than twice that of any other attribute, whilst 'someone's recommendation' is nearly twice as important as the 'origin of the wine' or the 'information on the back label', giving some credit to those Australian brands that sell the sunshine and Aussie lifestyle on the back labels. Alternatively, of course, is that if this is not the information the consumer is looking for on the back of the bottle then we risk becoming tacky, cliched wines. This in itself is vital research as to what information UK consumers are looking for on the back label. 'Brand name' has a small influence and is not much different from 'reading about the wine', the 'grape variety', or 'matching food'. Interesting is the number of attributes that scored as 'least' including 'attractive labels', 'promotional displays in-store' and 'grape variety'. The 'alcohol content' is by far the least important.

The analysis of the Chinese market shows the importance of old fashioned (or is it now New Age?) need to build the brand (Table 4). Unlike the UK and Australian data, there is much less differentiation amongst the influencers, with the first three not having much distance between them. Overall, these have a much smaller coefficient than the top one in Australia or the UK, showing there is less overall effect of these than the top one in the other countries. Two of the top three are shared with UK and Australia, while 'information on the back label' was only a marginal influence, as was the 'presence of a medal/award'. Again, 'grape variety' was less important as was 'attractive front label'. The Chinese do not typically drink wine with food, except in Western restaurants, so 'matching food' has little importance. However, 'brand' and 'origin' are quite important there. The lower overall scores in China probably indicate an undeveloped wine market, where buyers do not have much experience.

The German data (Table 5) shows more differentiation amongst the attributes than the Chinese; whilst 'previous taste' is the most important, there is little difference between the 'influence of someone recommending it' and the 'need to match food'. The Germans score more highly than other countries on the 'influence of other people'. There is a gap of difference down to 'origin' and then again to 'grape variety', with 'back label information' a slight influence. Marketing efforts such as 'brand', 'attractive front labels', 'promotional displays in-store' and 'shelf information', all rate as less important influences.

In a quite different wine market such as Israel, one would intuitively expect quite different results. Table 6 shows this to some extent to be true. In a market that is developing more wine consumers, we see the importance of relying on previous experience, with 'previous tasting' being the most important influencer. It is three times more important than the second influencer of 'matching food' and four times that of 'someone's

TABLE 5. GERMAN INFLUENCERS – RETAIL STORE.

Germany (n=160)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	Tasted the wine previously	50
2	Someone recommended it	38
3	Matching food	33
4	Origin of the wine	24
5	Grape variety	14
6	Information on back label	7
7	Information on the shelf	-2
8	I read about it	-4
9	An attractive front label	-10
10	Medal/award	-14
11	Brand name	-21
12	Promotional display in-store	-45
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-68

TABLE 6. ISRAEL INFLUENCERS – RETAIL STORE.

Israel (n=184)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	Tasted the wine previously	76
2	Matching food	23
3	Someone recommended it	18
4	Brand name	18
5	Grape variety	17
6	I read about it	17
7	Medal/award	-4
8	Information on back label	-17
9	Promotional display in-store	-18
10	Origin of the wine	-21
11	An attractive front label	-30
12	Information on the shelf	-32
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-46

recommendation’, which is roughly equal to ‘brand name’, ‘grape variety’ and ‘reading about the wine’. The Israelis feel strongly about previous experience, since it has such a high overall score. It will be interesting to compare at a later date to see how these influencers develop in their differentiation over time as the market develops as a wine consumption marketplace. Over time, will the influence of ‘previous tasting’ become less pronounced? Will there be a split between influencers 3-6? Which ones will become more pronounced, which ones less important? Following this development and identifying patterns may assist in adapting, meeting and shaping the marketplace in developing marketplaces. Again, most ‘marketing effort’ is seen to have little influence with the exception of ‘reading about it’ and ‘brand name’.

We might say something about the low influence of label, packaging and display. Other work under a different GWRDC grant has also shown these to score relatively low. We are now running a ‘best worst’ experiment using label and bottle photos on the Internet to see if this is actually true. Our hypothesis coming from our own and our industry advisory group’s experience is that the label and package do have an influence, but it is subtle

and almost unconscious, so when people are asked, they can’t articulate the effect.

RETAIL MARKET COMPARISONS

Figure 1 compares the results of each country, ranked in order of the Australian data. Remember that the scale is of increasing, not positive and negative, influence. In all markets, except China, having ‘tried the wine previously’ is the most important.

China differs here due to brand suggesting that this is a market, with possibly others like it, where Brand Australia and the various generic and private sub-brands can form a beachhead to make way for later successful growth, although there is still an ‘origin’ effect that needs to be reinforced: ‘Australian Wine’ is good (or better!) vis-à-vis French. The influence of someone recommending a wine is much more pronounced in

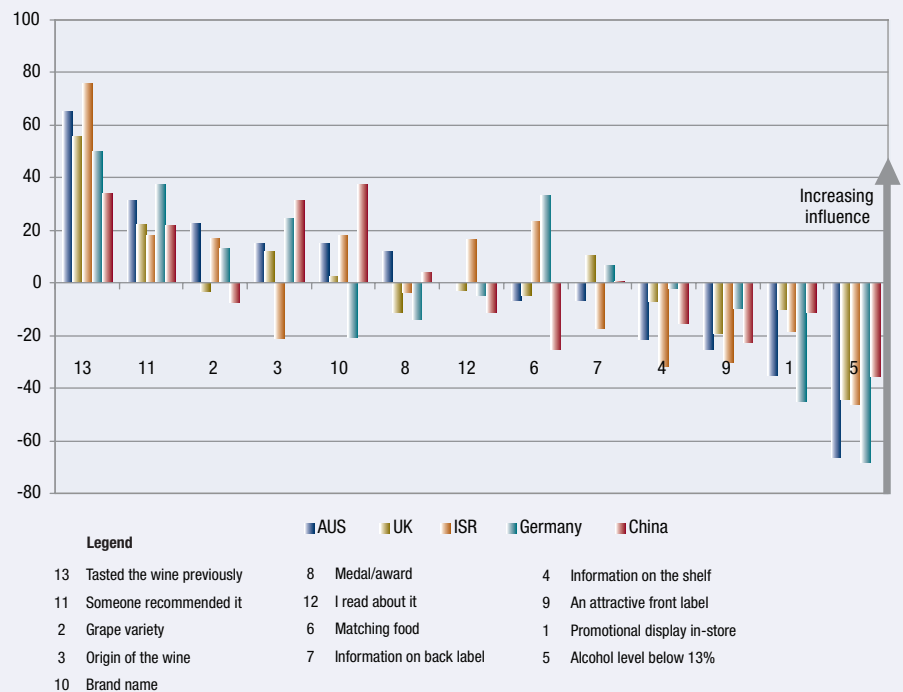


Figure 1. Choice influencers market comparisons – retail store.

TABLE 7. AUSTRALIAN INFLUENCERS – ON-PREMISE.

Australia (n=283)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	I have had the wine before and liked it	57
2	I Matched it to my food	35
3	Try something different	28
4	I had read about it, but never tasted	19
5	Region	14
6	Suggested by another at the table	13
7	Varietal	3
8	Available by the glass	0
9	Waiter recommended	-10
10	Suggestion on the menu	-15
11	Promotion card on the table	-38
12	Available in Half Bottle (375ml)	-46
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-60

TABLE 8. UNITED KINGDOM INFLUENCERS – ON-PREMISE.

UK (n=304)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	I have had the wine before and liked it	59
2	I Matched it to my food	30
3	Suggested by another at the table	23
4	Try something different	13
5	Region	06
6	I had read about it, but never tasted	5
7	Waiter recommended	-6
8	Suggestion on the menu	-7
9	Varietal	-9
10	Available by the glass	-20
11	Promotion card on the table	-24
12	Available in Half Bottle (375ml)	-28
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-42

Germany than the UK, China and Israel. Whilst the grape variety shows a significant difference in the UK and China, it is less influential in others. The origin of the wine was less important in Israel, but nearly twice as important in Germany and China than the UK and Australia.

Brand name is a 'least' influence in Germany, where marketers will have to work across a much broader approach than 'branding'. In the UK this is a marginal positive, has similar influence in Australia and Israel and is much more pronounced in China. Medals and awards are positive influencers in Australia and China but are negative influencers in Germany, UK and Israel – going into these markets with 'bling' might not work; in fact it might assist in achieving the opposite effect. Food matching is important in Israel and Germany but not so in the other markets. This offers the market scope to position product or brands as 'food pairs' – but it might have little effect in other markets where choosing wine is not a food matching issue, something that goes against the long worn out 'white with fish, red with meat' line! Perhaps in some markets consumers are enjoying the wine they want regardless of the old school rules? Research is needed in markets like Germany and the UK as to what sort of information consumers are looking for on back labels to better assist marketing meet demand as in both these markets this is a positive influence

**ON-PREMISE CHOICE RESULTS – MARKET BY MARKET**

To date research data have been collected in Australia, Germany and the UK for the influencers of wine choice in the on-premise environment. The results for Australia have been presented in previous articles, but are again shown here for reference to other countries (Table 7).

Table 8 shows the UK results. Similar to retail, having had the wine before and liking it is the number one choice at

TABLE 9. GERMAN INFLUENCERS – ON-PREMISE.

Germany (n=114)		
Rank	Attribute	B-W Std Score
1	I Matched it to my food	54
2	I have had the wine before and liked it	45
3	Suggested by another at the table	41
4	Varietal	20
5	Region	14
6	Waiter recommended	8
7	Available by the glass	4
8	Suggestion on the menu	1
9	Try something different	-11
10	I had read about it, but never tasted	-11
11	Promotion card on the table	-46
12	Available in Half Bottle (375ml)	-47
13	Alcohol level below 13%	-74

roughly twice the influence of food matching and a fellow diner's suggestion. Showing the opportunity to reach new customers is the positive influencer of 'try something different', which if marketing can match it as a food wine will reach two of the major influencers. What is interesting is the number of less important attributes that include menu and waiter suggestions, by the glass offerings, table talkers and varietal – the typical domain of marketing effort in on-premise situations.

Germany has three top influencers, which are all nearly double the role of varietal and region (Table 9). Matching food is number one but much closer aligned with 'previous

trial' and 'another diner's suggestion'. Still positive influencers, but to a lesser degree, are the waiter's recommendation, by-the-glass availability and menu suggestion. This suggests that in the German on-premise market, 'traditional' marketing approaches to on-premise selling may offer the good marketer an inroad to being selected by the consumer, although the pathway through 'trying something different' suggests the need to 'align' the offering with something that is known – maybe using the strength of cues such as varietal, region, or the reassuring recommendation of the waiter or menu suggestion.

Looking at Australia, Germany and the UK data (Figure 2) we see that having had the wine previously is important in all three markets, although matching food is more important than this in Germany, where it has nearly a third more influence than in Australia or the UK. For wine marketers in Australia it is promising to see that having the chance to try something different is a strong influencer, but this halves in the UK and has little influence in Germany, similarly with having read about it but not tried it. Availability by the glass is a strong positive influence in Germany, but not important in the UK and borderline in Australia. Germans appear to be more likely to be influenced by others than Australia or the UK,

with a fellow diner's suggestion in Germany being twice that of the UK which is in turn twice that of Australia. Further to this is that menu and waiter's suggestions are slightly positive in Germany and of 'least influence' effect in Australia and the UK. Remember, the scale is of increasing, not positive and negative, influence. Is this representative of the consumer's behaviour or the service delivery? Are Australian and UK waiters perceived as not knowing enough or are consumers intimidated by their wine knowledge? Are menu suggestions in Australia and the UK seen as 'making money' as opposed to offering service – or do consumers in Australia and UK simply choose the wine they want with their meal regardless of food matching, menu or waiter advice?

CONCLUSION

We have attempted to demonstrate the initial insights these first surveys show us about some of the different markets. Further work is needed with this data to conduct segmentation using demographics and behavioural variables. We may find that there are similar segments in most countries, or that some segments exist in some countries and not others. This will be conducted over coming months and presented in similar articles. Sample sizes will enable

at least one segmentation variable (age or gender or income, etc.) and possibly variable segments (gender and involvement or gender and consumption frequency, etc.). Whilst there are many common traits across the markets examined so far, there are some small differences that might offer the wine marketer opportunities to better match the offering with the influencers of consumer behaviour in the market targeted. The end goal of the project is to allow the data to drive the segmentation of the market, rather than using traditional 'gut-feeling' segmentation, leading to the compilation of 'maps' of the various segments and their influence profiles.

As we undertake each step of this we will publish the results in forums such as THE *Wine Industry Journal*. Readers interested in being alerted to upcoming results can email: [steve.goodman@adelaide.edu.au](mailto:steve.goodman@adelaide.edu.au)

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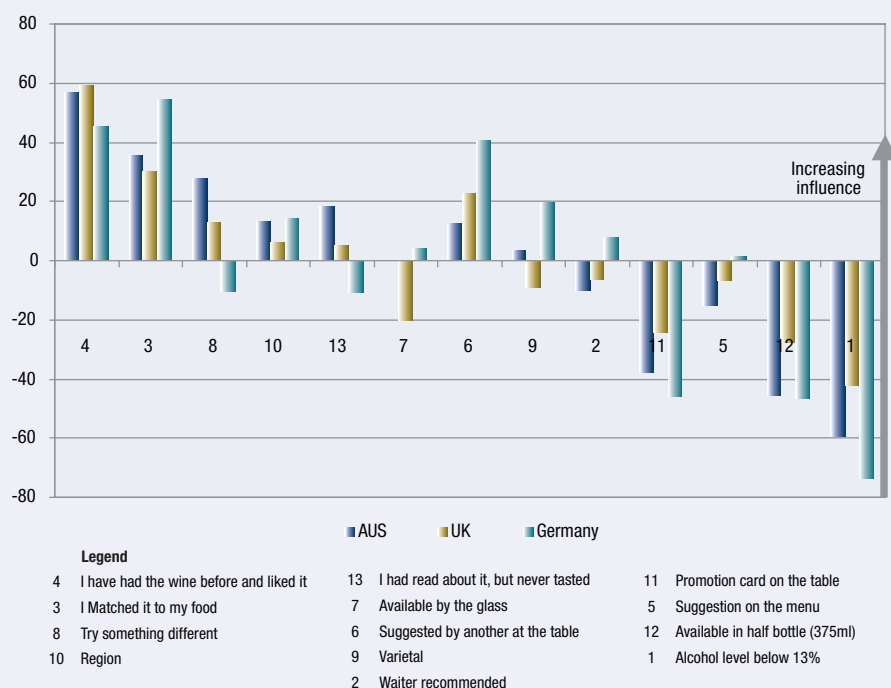


Figure 2. Choice influencers market comparisons – on-premise.