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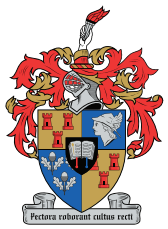

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Modelling Consumer Choice Behaviour: A South African Wine Case.

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Modelling Consumer Choice Behaviour: A South African Wine Case.

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Biography of author

Marlize Terblanche-Smit has held the position of professor at the University of Stellenbosch Business School since 1 July 2019. Marlize joined the Business School in 2013, where she mainly lectures MBA students in Strategic Marketing and Branding. She held the position of head of the MBA programme from 2014 to 2016. She is a skilled business professional with more than 25 years' experience. She has served in senior and executive management positions in industry and senior leadership positions in academia. She consults as a strategic marketing practitioner and her industry experience includes the position of managing director of a strategic marketing consulting company and group marketing executive and general marketing manager of a global fast-moving consumer goods company in South Africa. She has supervised over 80 master's and four PhD candidates and has published more than 40 articles in accredited journals and peer-reviewed international conference proceedings and six peer-reviewed chapters in books. Her research interests include branding, marketing communication and consumer behaviour. Marlize has a daughter, Manesha (25), and a son, Calldo (19).

MODELLING CONSUMER CHOICE BEHAVIOUR: A SOUTH AFRICAN WINE CASE

Prof Marlize Terblanche-Smit

ABSTRACT

Increased product diversity and changing consumer demands require marketers to gain an indepth understanding of consumer behaviour and choice – a fundamental outcome of the consumer purchasing process. Consumer behaviour is influenced by several internal and external factors, including perception and motivation (internal), and culture and marketing elements such as price and product (external). Consequently, the analysis of attribute-based product choice contributes to market and product development. The increased number of wine brands, choice of wine styles and prices as well as the complexity of wine attributes (intrinsic, relating to actual product and extrinsic, relating to variety, brand name, etc.) motivated this study. The purpose of the study was to investigate consumer choice behaviour pertaining to the extrinsic product attributes of South African wines. Primary data collection included wine consumers (minimum 18 years old; purchased wine before). A fractional experiment was used to investigate wine consumers' attribute-based choices. Thirteen attributes were selected based on various global and local studies. A questionnaire with a best–worst measurement scale and balanced incomplete block design was utilised to gather data via social media (Facebook). Using judgement sampling, 300 responses and an additional 100 responses, after adding a screening question for premium wine consumers (paid minimum R200/bottle), were obtained. The results showed a significant difference between wine attribute scores, and "Tasted the wine previously" ranked the highest, followed by "Someone recommended it". This study's findings differ somewhat from those of similar global studies, given that "Origin of the wine" and "Brand name" received higher rankings in these studies. The main insights of the study may improve understanding of attributes influencing wine-purchasing behaviour and the influence of price effects.

INTRODUCTION

In a rapidly changing consumer-oriented society with increasing alternatives, technological advancements and information overload, and in which digital and social media have become a way of life, consumers, especially younger consumer generations, display diminishing brand loyalty in their purchase decisions, which directly influences brand equity or value (Evangelidis & Van Osselaer, 2018; San & Yazdanifard, 2014; Willman-Iivarinen, 2017). Knowledge of consumer behaviour and purchase decisions based on product or brand choices are crucial to marketers in attaining market success, brand loyalty and consumer value. Numerous external and internal factors influence consumer purchasing behaviour, product valuation and choice. By modelling consumer choice behaviour, significant product attributes considered by consumers can be identified (Aurifeille et al., 2002; Evangelidis & Van Osselaer, 2018; Nunes, 2000). Certain product categories, such as wine, involve complex attribute-based product choices based on intrinsic and extrinsic product qualities. Internationally and in South Africa, consumers consider different subsets of product attributes when making wine-purchasing decisions (Charters & Pettigrew, 2003; Ginon et al., 2014; Lockshin et al., 2006; Ruso et al., 2021). Wine is of significant economic importance to South Africa, the eighth-largest international wine producer, whereas local consumption of wine compared to global counterparts is low (Sikuka, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions caused major losses in direct wine sales (International Organisation of Vine and Wine [OIV], 2020; SA Wine Industry Information and Systems [SAWIS], 2021). An indepth understanding of consumer choice behaviour pertaining to the most important wine attributes could assist marketers in developing marketing strategies to increase wine consumption. Many global and some South African research articles have explored the importance of wine attributes, but no research could be found that investigated premium versus non-premium wine consumers' attribute-based choice behaviour. Consequently, this study investigated premium and non-premium wine consumers' choice behaviour pertaining to wine attributes, where premium wine relates to price.

CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR AND PURCHASE DECISIONS

Consumer decision models serve as foundation for consumer behaviour theory and describe the consumer purchasing decision process. Advancing from consumer decision models, additional comprehensive models of consumer behaviour and the consumer purchasing process (Kanagal, 2016; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019) are useful to assist marketers in understanding consumers' purchase decisions. Consumers face varied choices during the consumer purchasing process (depicted in Figure 1), in which the following three distinct stages and five steps occur:

- **Input stage:** This stage entails external factors that influence the consumer, including the marketing mix or variables (e.g. product, price, etc.) and sociocultural factors (e.g. culture, demographics, social status, reference groups, etc.) (Mishra et al., 2021; Zaltman, 2003).
- **Process stage:** This stage includes the following:
    - Consumer's need/problem recognition
    - Pre-purchase searches
    - Evaluation of alternatives, which is influenced by the consumer's internal psychological factors (e.g. motivation, perception, learning, etc.) and which leads to experiences that in return influence internal psychological factors (Anilkumar & Joseph, 2012; Chudry et al., 2011; Mishra et al., 2021).
- **Output stage:** This stage relates to the following:
    - Actual purchase
    - Post-purchase evaluation, which leads to experiences that also influence internal psychological factors and ultimately the consumer purchasing process.

The ideal outcome from a marketing perspective is to obtain repeat purchases that can lead to brand loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Le Roux et al., 2017; Lye et al., 2005; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014).

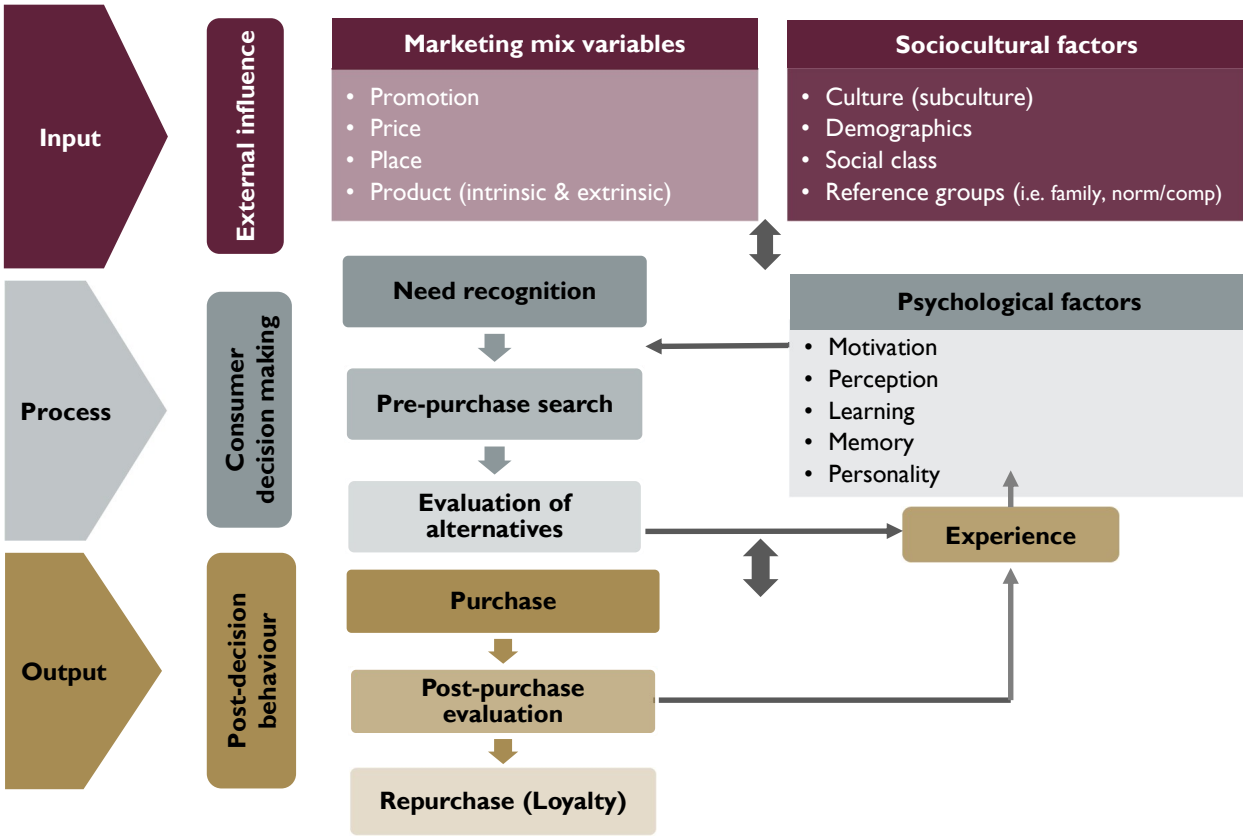

Figure 1: Consumer purchasing process

Source: Adapted from Le Roux et al., 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019

The ideal outcome from a marketing perspective is to obtain repeat purchases that can lead to brand loyalty (Kotler & Keller, 2016; Le Roux et al., 2017; Lye et al., 2005; Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014).

The consumer purchasing process is complex and not merely a simple five-step process. During the purchasing process, consumers receive information from a myriad of factors and have to integrate information to reach a purchase choice. In order to integrate information during the purchase situation, consumers use two strategies: i) an existing strategy that worked in a previous similar decision situation and ii) revision of the former strategy, or they develop a completely new strategy (Jisana, 2014; Sachdeva, 2015). According to Schiffman and Wisenblit (2019) and Vlašić et al. (2011), these strategies are influenced by the product category to which the decision pertains as well as time pressure. Consumers can also form a subset of products or brands, a consideration set, from which decision-making strategies are applied. A reduced consideration set becomes a choice set from which a final purchase choice is made (Aurifeille et al., 2002; Mishra et al., 2021). Importantly, the consumer purchasing process is not necessarily planned or rational. Choice decisions can often be relatively unconscious or based on habit and influenced by the consumer's physical or social situation. The former is a low-involvement decision process and does not necessarily follow all the purchasing process steps chronologically (Lye et al., 2005; Zaltman, 2003). When consumers employ cognitive effort and place a high level of importance on acquiring products that deliver specific benefits, social acceptance or psychological benefits, a high-involvement decision process is applied (Aurifeille et al., 2002; Lye et al., 2005; Mishra et al., 2021; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019).

Consumer choice and product attributes

When modelling consumer choice behaviour pertaining to specific products, the complexity of consumer choices becomes clear, given the varied external and internal factors that influence consumer purchasing behaviour and different decision-making strategies applied by consumers. This is further complicated by information overload and products sold in store and online (Evangelidis & Van Osselaer, 2018). Choice complexity intensifies as the number of product alternatives and attributes increases, especially if the value of attributes is not clear or if products have fewer attributes in common (Ginon et al., 2014; Mishra et al., 2021; Nunes, 2000). Research by Evangelidis and Van Osselaer (2018) confirms the importance of common attributes and found that product options with common attributes have a stronger influence on consumers compared to product options with unique attributes. They affirm that consumers purchase products that are superior on a common attribute because they expect these products to perform best on that attribute. Product attributes are pertinent to understanding consumer purchase behaviour, and analysing their importance and level of influence on consumers will assist marketers in developing appropriate strategies (Liesionis & Pilelienė, 2007).

During the consumer purchasing process, consideration is given to external factors from the marketing mix, such as brand, price and promotion, which influence this process and final product choice (Beneke et al., 2013; Fader et al., 1996; Zaltman, 2003). Brands influence consumer purchase behaviour given that consumers form emotional connections with brands based on their symbolic characteristics and unique features. In addition, brands represent certain product attributes and perceptual benefits to consumers (Mishra et al., 2021; Zhang, 2015). Price can influence consumer purchase decisions in various ways, for instance as an indication of quality or a monetary expense (Beneke et al., 2013). Aligned with the price–quality inference, some researchers established that consumers use certain product cues as heuristics to indicate quality (Hansen, 2005; Liesionis & Pilelienė, 2007). Promotion focuses on communication with consumers via various media channels and formats. Media, specifically digital media, have become a way of life. Consumers become participants, producers and distributors of content via social media platforms where they share information about products and their consumption or purchasing experiences. Consumer product choices have become more complex because of increased alternatives, features and information. Consequently, in a more complex world, consumers want to reduce effort when making decisions and the demand for outsourcing their decision making is of growing importance (Botti & Hsee, 2010; Deuze, 2009; Willman-Iivarinen, 2017).

It is clear from the consumer purchasing process that on top of marketing mix factors, sociocultural factors also influence consumer decision making. These include culture, demographics, social class or status, reference groups and family (Beneke et al., 2013; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). South Africa has a diverse and unique culture with varied subcultures. Cultural groups have similar norms, values, shared knowledge and behaviour within their various groups. Differentiating cultural groups and considering how they influence consumer decision making will empower marketers to develop pertinent marketing strategies (Bailey & Peoples, 2013; Cohen et al., 2009; Wells & Foxall, 2013; Jisana, 2014). Researchers and marketers use demographics to understand consumer purchasing behaviour. Demographical characteristics such as age, gender, income, life stage and education individually or collectively impact consumer behaviour (Jaeger et al., 2009; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019; Shouvik & Mohammed, 2018). The social class consumers belong to can have a significant effect on their purchasing behaviour. Consumers' social class gives them a certain social status, which aligns with their occupation, income, lifestyle, power and prestige (Köster & Mo-jet, 2015; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019). Studies found that consumers with similar occupations, lifestyles and affluence or income adopt related purchase behaviour and tend to socialise (Ligthelm, 2008; Stets & Burke, 2000). Different consumer choice behaviours are evident based on social context (Boothby et al., 2014; Higgs & Thomas, 2016) and similarly influence food and drink choices (Herman et al., 2003; Köster & Mojet, 2015). Consumers tend to learn and adopt similar values and behaviour to their reference groups. Normative reference groups to which consumers belong include their family or peers, or more formal groups such as clubs or associations. It is well known that families and family structure significantly influence consumers' norms, values, beliefs and buying behaviour. Consumers also compare themselves to groups they respect and admire and adopt some of these comparative reference groups' values or imitate their behaviour; these can include social media groups followed or aspirational groups (Lee & Beatty, 2002; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019; Schulz, 2015).

It is clear from the discussion how marketing mix and sociocultural factors have an external influence on the consumer purchasing process. Adding to the complexity of consumer choice behaviour, internal psychological factors (i.e. motivation, perception, learning, memory, personality and attitudes) are unique to each individual and influence how a consumer makes purchasing decisions. These complex factors are researched to ascertain their significance pertaining to specific product categories or brands (Schiffman & Kanuk, 2014; Swaminathan et al., 2008). From the indepth discussion of the consumer purchasing process and the way in which the numerous external factors influence consumer choice behaviour, the following sections will apply this to wine as a product to analyse wine attribute-based choice behaviour.

WINE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

Wine is a complex product and various studies have investigated wine consumption segments, sociodemographic factors, consumer types and classification of consumers by level of expertise (Ahlgren et al., 2005; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019; Hollebeek et al., 2007; Szolnoki et al., 2010; Yang et al., 2002). Consumers view wine purchasing as complex, with a large variety of product choices, which increase their perceived risk. Perceived risk experienced by consumers consist of uncertainty and unfavourable consequences when buying certain products, these include whether the product performance will be as expected, and paying for a product that do not deliver the functional value anticipated (Bruwer et al., 2013; Keller, 2003; Lockshin & Corsi, 2012).

South African wine market overview

Wine is of significant economic importance to South Africa, the eighth-largest international wine producer. Local consumption of wine is relatively low, and ranks 17th among countries that consume the most wine. Per capita wine consumption in South Africa is low (11 litres) compared to countries such as Portugal (59 litres), France (51 litres) and Italy (44 litres) (Sikuka, 2020). The Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent restrictions over the last year have had a devastating effect on the wine industry, including an R8 billion loss in direct sales, excessive stock and pressure on price (OIV, 2020; SAWIS, 2021). South African consumers' alcoholic beverage of choice is not wine, but beer, which accounts for 75% of total consumption, followed by alcoholic fruit beverages and spirit coolers at 12%. Wine consumption is only 10% of the total, while spirits account for 3%. Female wine drinkers comprise approximately 56% of the wine-drinking population and male wine drinkers 43% (OIV, 2020; Sikuka, 2020).

Wine product, brand name and packaging

Wine is a complex product category, given the large variety of cultivars, and because consumers cannot distinguish the taste or quality until they open the product. Moreover, wine has intrinsic (relating to actual product) and extrinsic (relating to variety, brand name, packaging, etc.) attributes that consumers and marketers have to consider (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). Researchers agree that taste is an important intrinsic attribute that consumers consider during the purchasing process (Fandos & Flavián, 2006; Ginon et al., 2014). Consumers also make purchase choices based on the brand name when they cannot taste wine in a retail environment. Researchers found a link between wine brand choice and consumer benefits, such as expressing a socially acceptable image and improving their self-image (Ahlgren et al., 2005; Yang, et al., 2002). Marketers use a brand name to create a brand image and to relay perceptions of the product's attributes and quality (Boshoff & Malherbe, 2016; Bruwer et al., 2013; Kotler & Keller, 2016). Wine packaging is closely linked to the brand based on package design elements such as the bottle and the front and back label, and can influence consumer choices (Boshoff & Malherbe, 2016; Escandon-Barbosa & Rialp-Criado, 2019; Szolnoki, 2010).

Wine price and place

Wine price can be an important indication of the consumer's quality perception of a wine brand, forming an accepted price quality link (Ginon et al., 2014; Zelený, 2017). Ruso et al. (2021) report that consumers who are prone to extrinsic quality attributes are willing to pay a higher price. Changes to where (place) consumers purchase wine from speciality stores where they could taste the product to retail stores have created a complex environment for consumer purchase decisions (Lick et al., 2017), because supermarkets stock a wide variety of brands and an extensive price range (Goodman, 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2007; Mehta et al., 2020).

Premium wine

Premium or high-end wine is a relative term, and does not refer to luxury wine brands, which is a completely different category. A study by Pomarici et al. (2017) revealed that premium wine is directly related to intrinsic product attributes and uses all five sense to influence consumers. Consumers also associate specific product attributes with premium wine, which include "Good brand reputation", "Premium quality" and "Country of origin" as important. Premium wine consumers also see themselves as knowledgeable and attach the highest product attribute importance to "Previous experience" and "Recommendations", which indicates their high level of subjective knowledge and confidence. They rely on the former attributes first when making product choices, and will then also refer to product attributes such as "Price", "Brand name", "Medals" and "Grape variety" (Perrouty et al., 2006; Vigar-Ellis et al., 2015).

The price of premium wine normally indicates that the wine has specific intrinsic and extrinsic attributes that make it worth the price (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). Wine prices differ per country and region, but the retail market also uses market segmentation to determine the price of an average bottle of wine as well as premium or high-end wine (Keller, 2009). For the purposes of this study, the focus was on premium or high-end wine as per segmentation in South African retailers (i.e. supermarkets). A specific price point was derived at after visits to different retailers to obtain a South African retail price point that defines wine as premium or high-end. This retail price point, R200, was chosen to denote the entry point for the premium or high-end wine category (Roots, 2019).

Consumer choice and wine attributes

It is clear from the previous sections that the modelling of consumer choice behaviour pertaining to wine is complex. Various external and internal factors influence consumer purchasing behaviour pertaining to wine, together with extensive wine product alternatives and attributes.

Compared to global studies, a limited number of South African studies have explored wine product attributes and their level of importance to consumers. Herbst and Von Arnim (2009) studied the importance of wine awards compared to other product attributes, resulting in "Variety", "Vintage" and "Producer" as most important and "Wine awards" receiving a low importance. Lategan et al. (2017) investigated the wine attribute choices of Generation Y (i.e. young adults), and "Tasted previously" was found the most important attribute, followed by "Someone recommended it". "Alcohol level below 13%" was found least important. A recent study explored differences between younger versus older consumers pertaining to wine attribute choice, and "Tasted previously" was revealed as the most important, followed by "Someone recommended it" (Pentz & Forrester, 2020).

Numerous global studies have explored the importance of wine product attributes, with varying results. The following paragraphs give a brief chronological overview of studies. Research among novice wine consumers highlighted the importance of "Region of origin"; it seems that consumers selected this attribute to minimise risk, as it was independent from "Brand" and "Price level" (Perrouty et al., 2006). Hollebeek et al. (2007), who used price, price discount and region, indicated a

further distinction between consumer types and wine attributes influencing purchase intention. Their findings revealed that "Region of origin" was more important for high-involvement consumers, whereas "Price" had the highest importance for low-involvement consumers.

Casini et al. (2009) explored wine attributes that influence consumer choice in Italy. Their findings revealed nine attributes that significantly influence consumer choice when purchasing wine, namely (i) wine packaging, (ii) wine cultivar, (iii) wine brand, (iv) the origin of the wine, (v) recommendations by others, (vi) medals/awards, (vii) the wine's alcoholic content, (viii) interest from personal research and (ix) wine information presented in the store. As an extension of the former study, Goodman (2009) contributed four additional wine attributes that influence consumer choice, namely (i) a food pairing, (ii) label information, (iii) previously tasted wine and (iv) label information. Lockshin and Corsi (2012) reviewed the additional attributes of Goodman (2009) and found that these attributes influenced consumer choice significantly.

Goodman (2009) conducted an extended study across 12 wine-consuming countries to measure cross-cultural similarities and differences of 13 wine attributes influencing consumer choice behaviour via a best–worst (BW) measurement scale. The results of the study indicated that wine attributes that influenced consumer choices most were "Tasted wine previously", which was rated highest across most countries and second highest for many, while "Someone recommended it" was rated second highest for most countries, followed by "Grape variety", "Origin of wine" and "Brand". A systematic literature review of approximately 100 refereed journal articles on wine consumer behaviour and wine-purchasing behaviour in retail stores revealed that no specific additional wine product attributes could be found, and that the influence of "Grape variety" and "Origin of wine" remained constant (Lock-shin & Corsi, 2012). A Brazilian study tested the same 13 attributes as Goodman (2009), ten years later, and the results indicated mostly similar outcomes as previous studies. The most important wine attributes were "Previous experience/tasted before", "Gastronomic harmonization/food paring" and "Recommendations by someone" (Neumann da Cunha et al., 2019).

Two recent studies explored consumers' preferences for wine attributes that will influence purchase behaviour related to specific changing societal contexts. Stanco et al. (2020) investigated wine attributes related to tradition, sustainability and innovation. The most important attributes included "Geographical indications", "Grape variety", "Sustainable certification", "Vintage" and "Price". Maciejczak (2020) investigated wine attributes pertaining to wine from climate change-adapted production. Attributes that significantly influenced purchase behaviour included "Monthly spending on wine", "Price of wine" and "Label indicating eco-friendly methods of production". The findings from these studies differed from those of other global studies because of the context, but it is interesting that price was indicated as an important attribute that influences consumer purchasing behaviour.

It is clear from the literature review that the consumer purchasing process is complex and subject to various internal and external factors that can influence consumer choice. Literature established the importance and influence of wine attributes (e.g. origin, brand, recommendations and label) on consumer purchasing behaviour. No research was found that investigated premium versus non-premium wine consumers' attribute-based choice behaviour. This study therefore builds on previous research in order to add to the body of knowledge on consumer purchasing behaviour pertaining to wine. The aim of this study was to investigate and compare the influence of wine attributes on premium and non-premium wine consumers' choice behaviour.

METHODOLOGY

Primary data were collected from wine consumers of legal drinking age (minimum 18 years) who had to have purchased wine before. Because wine consumers' attribute-based choice was investigated, selection variables had to be manipulated to examine their choice. Experimental designs allow researchers to manipulate variables to examine an outcome. In investigating consumers' wine attribute-based choice, various attributes should be included in an experimental design to confidently allow researchers to examine consumer choice. Consequently, for purposes of investigating wine consumers' attribute-based choice, a fractional experimental design was applied to gather data from wine consumers. Fractional experimental designs allow researchers to reduce the number of treatment combinations in an experiment (Kirk, 2014). In factorial experimental designs, combinations of levels of decision attributes can be given to respondents (Louviere, 2011). Factors that are of interest in wine consumers' attribute choice include aspects such as whether the consumer has tasted the wine previously, whether someone recommended the wine before, the origin of the wine, grape variety, brand name, whether the front label of the wine is attractive, information on the back label of the wine, whether the wine has received a medal and/or award, whether the consumer has read about the wine, whether there were promotional displays in store, whether the wine matches specific food, whether there was information on the shelf and whether the alcohol level of the wine is below 13% (Goodman, 2009; Lockshin & Corsi, 2012; Neumann da Cunha et al., 2019).

Measurement

To assess wine consumers' attribute-based choice, a questionnaire was designed using the BW measurement scale. Researchers typically use simple rating scales in consumer behaviour research, as it is easier to execute and analyse responses (Cohen, 2009). It is often also easier for respondents to complete questionnaires that utilise rating scales; however, it slightly discriminates against the researcher's objectives, as the survey does not account for cultural differences and thereby does not capture the consumers' true evaluation (Cohen, 2009; Goodman, 2009; Hein et al., 2008). In addition to confirming that cultural factors influence rating scales, Cohen (2009) recommends that a different method should be used to measure consumer choice relating to food preference. The BW method does not use verbal anchors to rate consumer preference and is an appropriate method to be applied over different cultures (Hein et al., 2008). Although it is more time-consuming to complete a questionnaire in which the BW method is utilised (Cohen, 2009), it should render less biased results, as the method does not discriminate between cultural diversity and response styles (Goodman, 2009). Because South Africa is a culturally diverse country, the BW method was deemed an appropriate scale to use to measure the influence of consumer choice on wine attributes in the South African market.

The BW method requires of respondents to identify an attribute from a subset or choice set that is most preferred (best) and an attribute that is least preferred (worst), randomly allowing respondents to indicate choice based on four to six randomly assigned attributes (Cohen, 2009). In other words, in gathering data from wine consumers, each set of attributes in a questionnaire was different, allowing respondents to indicate their wine attribute choice selection based on four wine attributes (out of the possible 13 attributes, as discussed).

As 13 wine attributes were assessed, and being cognisant of respondents' time, the approach followed by Lockshin and Corsi (2012) and Cohen (2009) was applied. In this approach, a simplistic design known as the balanced incomplete block design was used. In other words, in utilising this design, each of the 13 attributes appeared only four times in the survey, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Balanced incomplete block design for 13 attributes

Choice set no.	Attribute no.			
1	1	2	4	10
2	2	3	5	11
3	3	4	6	12
4	4	5	7	13
5	5	6	8	1
6	6	7	9	2
7	7	8	10	3
8	8	9	11	4
9	9	10	12	5
10	10	11	13	6
11	11	12	1	7
12	12	13	2	8
13	13	1	3	9

Source: Adapted from Cohen (2009)

Social media offer researchers access to a broader geographical reach of consumers and have become a popular tool to collect data (Sormanen et al., 2016). Facebook was utilised to collect data from wine consumers, as it is the biggest social network worldwide and had approximately 2.85 billion monthly active users at the beginning of 2021 (Tankovska, 2021). In addition, Facebook is a top source of online discovery for consumers, where they are 2.4 times more likely to find new products than on a retailer website (Facebook IQ, 2018). Ethical approval was obtained prior to data collection.

Sampling

The link to the questionnaire was distributed via Facebook using judgement sampling. Judgement sampling was used to ensure that only wine consumers participated in the study; consequently, a screening question was used asking respondents "Do you drink wine?" Once 300 respondents completed the questionnaire, an additional screening question was included to target premium wine consumers. Respondents completing this questionnaire needed to have paid a minimum price of R200 for a bottle of wine. After 100 respondents completed the second questionnaire, data analysis commenced for non-premium and premium respondents.

RESULTS

Realised sample

In the first instance (non-premium/regular wine consumers), 332 respondents completed the questionnaire; in the second instance (premium wine consumers), 104 respondents completed the questionnaire (n = 436). Preliminary analysis showed no significant differences between gender, age and wine consumption within the two groups. More than half of the respondents were female (55%) and the balance male (45%). The respondents' gender profile corresponded with that of the South African wine-drinking population, with female wine drinkers comprising 56% and male wine drinkers 43% (OIV, 2020; Sikuka, 2020). Most of the respondents were between 25 and 40 years old (45%). Almost half of the respondents (45%) indicated that they consumed wine once a week or less and 43% indicated that they consumed wine once or twice per month. Only 10% indicated that they consumed wine less than once per month. No comprehensive demographic information on wine consumers in South Africa was available with which to compare the sample, but the age group was proportionately aligned with the national population size (SAWIS, 2021). Preliminary analysis showed a significant difference between monthly income levels within the two groups. In the non-premium consumer group, most (43%) respondents indicated that they earned between R21 000 and R60 000 per month, with only 23% of premium wine consumers indicating this income range. The majority (35%) of premium wine consumers indicated that they earned more than R120 000 a month, with only 12% of non-premium wine consumers indicating this income range. The difference in indicated monthly income could be expected, as the additional screening question in the second instance (premium wine consumers) required that respondents had to have bought wine of more than R200. The first group (non-premium) fell within the middle to upper-middle class income groups, with a monthly income between R20 000 (lower) and R75 000 (upper), and the second group (premium) fell within the upper-middle to top-end income groups, with a monthly income between R40 000 (lower) and R75 000 or more. On average, each of these groups was responsible for 24% of total consumer expenditure by income segment (Lappeman et al., 2021). significance) confirmed that the number of KPMG clients decreased significantly in 2018.

Manipulation check and results (non-premium group)

As the focus of the research was to assess consumers' wine selection choice by giving wine consumers wine selection attributes from which to choose, an analysis of wine attribute scores and wine consumption was required. Preliminary analysis showed no significant difference between frequency of wine consumption and choice scores ($F(2, 329) = 0.301$, $p > 0.05$). In addition, preliminary analysis showed no significant differences between gender and frequency of wine consumption ($F(1, 330) = 1.464$, $p > 0.05$).

BW scores for the 13 wine attributes of the non-premium group were analysed and are depicted in Table 2.

Table 2: Wine attribute choice scores (non-premium group)

Attribute	n	BW score (100) mean	BW score std dev.
Tasted the wine previously	335	64.93	37.83
Someone recommended it	335	36.87	38.63
Grape variety	335	23.43	54.99
Brand name	335	22.84	41.86
Medal/award	335	22.24	42.36
Origin of the wine	335	5.82	43.56
I read about it	335	2.69	37.22
An attractive front label	335	-1.57	40.89
Information on the back label	335	-10.75	16.53
Matching food / food pairing	335	-14.10	49.21
Promotional display in store	335	-26.12	34.29
Information on the shelf	335	-38.96	33.19
Alcohol level below 13%	335	-65.00	36.46

From Table 2 it is clear that "Tasted the wine previously" obtained the highest score (mean score = 64.93, s = 37.83) and "Alcohol level below 13%" obtained the lowest score (mean score = -65.00, s = 36.46). Results from a South African study (Lategan et al., 2017) indicated similar highest and lowest scores on these attributes, whereas another South African study (Pentz & Forrester, 2020) reported a similar highest score. Results from a global study across 12 countries reported similar highest and lowest attribute scores across most countries (Goodman, 2009). Similarly, findings from a Brazilian study indicated the same highest and lowest attribute scores (Neumann da Cunha et al., 2019).

By comparing the BW scores, the results showed significant differences between the various scores ($F(12, 4020) = 234.82$, $p < 0.00$). The post hoc test revealed that most BW scores differed significantly from one another, as indicated in Figure 2.

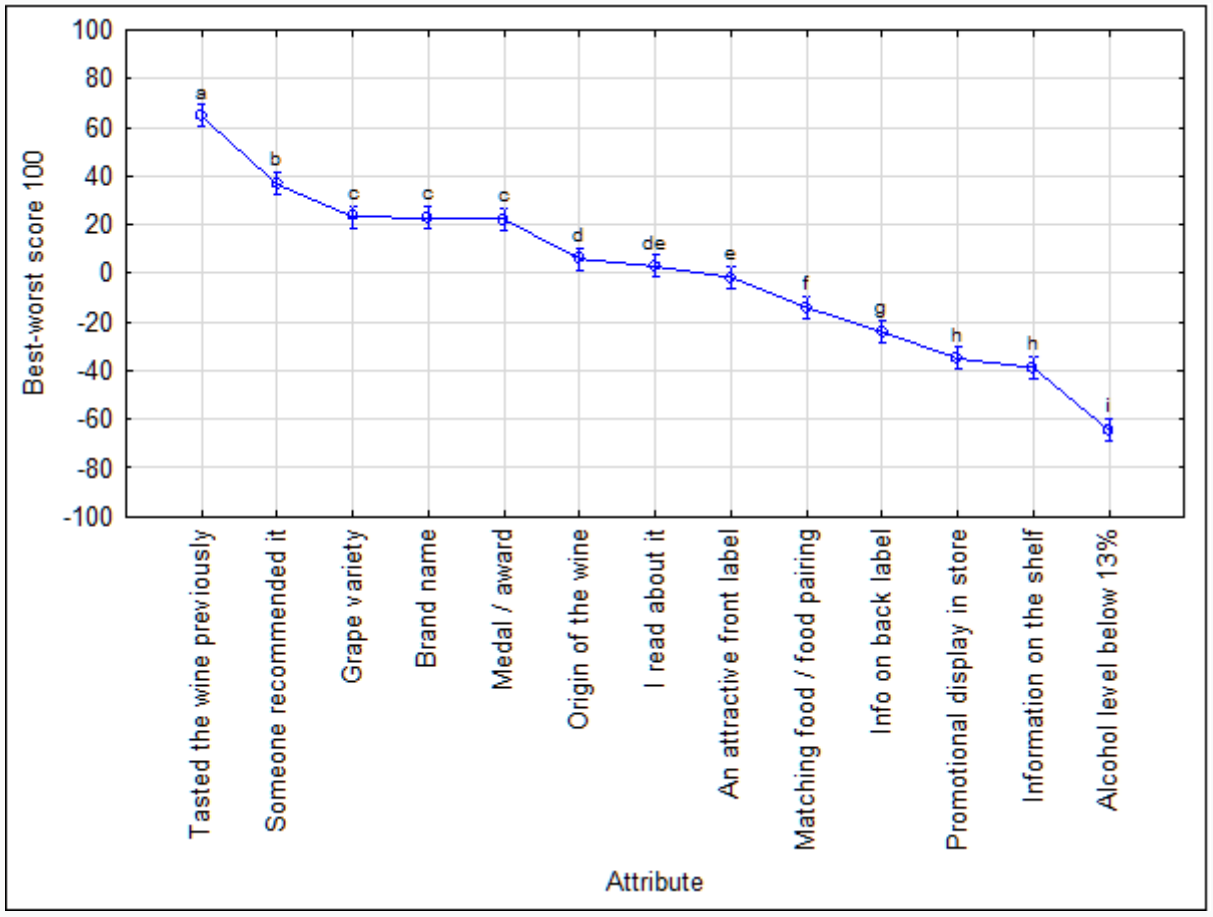

Figure 2: Significant differences between best–worst scores

From Figure 2 one can conclude that the wine attribute score for "Tasted the wine previously" (indicated with the letter "a") significantly differed from "Someone recommended it", "Grape variety", "Brand name", "Medal/award", "Origin of the wine", "I read about it", "An attractive front label", "Matching food / food pairing", "Information on the back label", "Promotional display in store", "Information on the shelf" and "Alcohol level below 13%". The second-highest wine attribute score for "Someone recommended it" (indicated with the letter "b") also significantly differed from all other wine attribute scores. The wine attribute scores for "Grape variety", "Brand name" and "Medal/award" (all indicated with the letter "c") did not differ significantly from one another. The wine attribute scores for "Origin of the wine" and "I read about it" (indicated with the letters "d" and "de", respectively) also did not differ significantly from each other; similarly, no significant differences were found between the wine attribute scores "I read about it" and "An attractive front label".

Manipulation check and results (premium group)

As the focus of the research was to assess consumers' wine selection choice by giving wine consumers wine selection attributes from which to choose, an analysis of wine attribute scores and wine consumption was needed. Preliminary analysis showed no significant difference between frequency of wine consumption and choice scores ($F(1, 330) = 1.372$, $p > 0.05$. In addition, preliminary analysis showed no significant differences between gender and frequency of wine consumption ($F(1, 330) = 5.619$, $p > 0.05$).

BW scores for the 13 wine attributes of the premium group were analysed and are depicted in Table 3.

Table 3: Wine attribute choice scores (premium group)

Attribute	n	BW score (4) mean	BW score std dev.
Tasted the wine previously	104	2.77	1.46
Someone recommended it	104	1.63	1.50
Brand name	104	0.99	1.71
Medal/award	104	0.73	1.90
Origin of the wine	104	0.55	1.59
I read about it	104	0.27	1.41
Grape variety	104	0.2	2.04
An attractive front label	104	-0.37	1.75
Matching food / food pairing	104	-0.61	1.85
Information on back label	104	-0.92	1.63
Promotional display in store	104	-1.48	1.58
Information on the shelf	104	-1.54	1.47
Alcohol level below 13%	104	-2.22	1.55

From Table 3 it is clear that "Tasted the wine previously" obtained the highest score (mean score = 2.77, s = 1.46) and "Alcohol level below 13%" obtained the lowest score (mean score = -2.22, s = 1.55). Interestingly, these results showed similar highest and lowest scores on these attributes as the non-premium wine consumers, as well as local and global studies mentioned under the non-premium group. When these results were compared with the non-premium group, the highest and second-highest scores were the same, but in the non-premium group, "Grape variety" received the third-highest score compared to "Brand name" for the premium group. Both groups' third-highest scores were similar to the results of the study of Goodman (2009) conducted across 12 countries, where both these scores were indicated as third highest. Results from international premium wine consumer studies differ in some ways from this study by stating that "Premium quality", "Country of origin" and "Good brand reputation" had the highest importance for premium wine consumers (Vigar-Ellis et al., 2015). Results from Perrouty et al.'s study (2006), however, indicated similar highest scores for "Previous experience/tasted previously" and "Recommendations/someone recommended".

By comparing the BW scores, the results showed significant differences between the various scores ($F(12, 1236) = 72.870$, $p < 0.00$). The post hoc test revealed that most BW scores differed significantly from one another, as indicated in Figure 3.

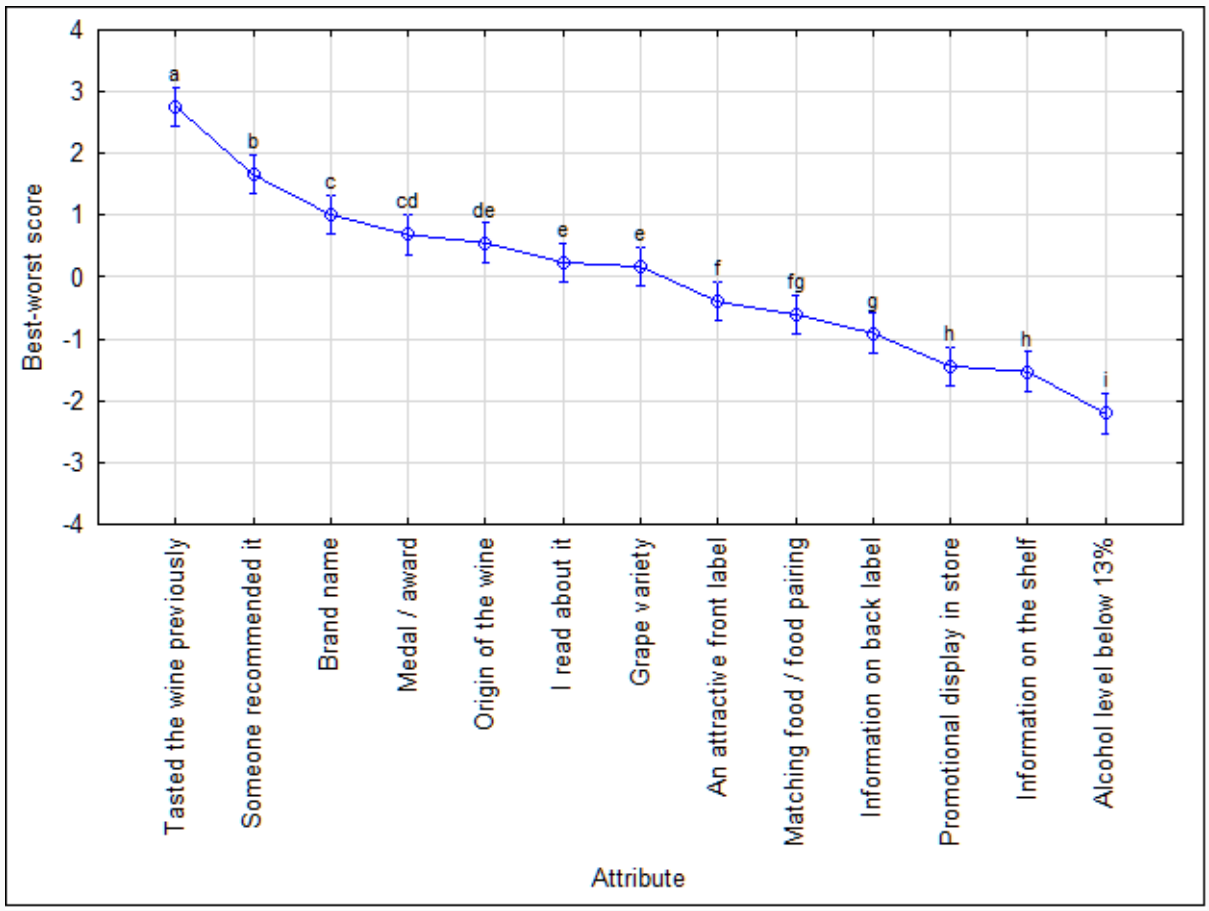

Figure 3: Significant differences between best–worst scores (premium group)

From Figure 3 one can conclude that the wine attribute score for "Tasted wine previously" significantly differed from "Someone recommended it", "Brand name", "Medal/award", "Origin of the wine", "I read about it", "Grape variety", "An attractive front label", "Matching food / food pairing", "Information on the back label", "Promotional display in store", "Information on the shelf" and "Alcohol level below 13%", as indicated with the letter "a". The second-highest wine attribute score for "Someone recommended it" (indicated with the letter "b") also significantly differed from all other wine attribute scores. The wine attribute scores for "Brand name" and "Medal/award" (indicated with the letters "c" and "cd", respectively) as well as "Medal/award" and "Origin of the wine" (indicated with the letters "cd" and "de", respectively) did not differ significantly from one another. The wine attribute scores for "Origin of the wine", "I read about it" and "Grape variety" (indicated with the letters "de", "e" and "e", respectively) also did not differ significantly from one another. Some of the other attribute scores that rated lower also did not differ significantly.

CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The result of the study did not indicate any significant differences between gender, age and wine consumption within the premium and non-premium groups. There was a significant difference between monthly income level between premium and non-premium groups. This was expected and reaffirms that wine price was a primary differentiating factor between the two groups.

For both non-premium and premium groups, consumer choice was affected by the same wine attributes with the highest and second-highest scores, namely "Tasted the wine previously" and "Someone recommended it"; similarly, "Alcohol level below 13%" was rated as the least important factor influencing consumer choice behaviour. These results concur with findings from local studies (Lategan et al., 2017; Pentz & Forrester, 2020) as well as international studies (Goodman, 2009; Neumann da Cunha et al., 2019). Although both non-premium and premium wine consumers attached the same importance to the two attributes "Tasted the wine previously" and "Someone recommended it", different contextual bases could be applicable.

The results of this study differed somewhat from those of international premium wine consumer studies, where "Premium quality", "Country of origin" and "Good brand reputation" had the highest importance for premium wine consumers (Vigar-Ellis et al., 2015), whereas in other premium wine studies, similar results were reported, i.e. "Tasted the wine previously" and "Someone recommended it".

Wine attributes that were rated third and fourth in terms of importance differed between the groups. "Grape variety" received the third-highest score for the non-premium group compared to "Brand name" for the premium group. It is important to take note of the wine choice attributes that did not show significant differences, since these attributes cannot be interpreted via a ranking format as they are essentially of similar importance to consumers.

Marketers, wineries and retailers can use the results of this study to target premium and non-premium wine consumers. Marketing strategies should incorporate wine product attributes most preferred by consumers in order to increase purchasing behaviour.

Figure 4 highlights fundamental factors pertaining to wine choice behaviour resulting from this study. "Tasted the wine previously" may be a post-purchase evaluation linked to learning or may be based on memory when making purchase choices. It is important for the wine industry and marketers to create opportunities for trial. Wine festivals or tastings at wine cellars can be used to create trials. Premium consumers will be more likely to buy directly from a wine farm or wine cellar. Tasting opportunities should be created during consumer purchasing processes to influence choice. With an increase in online purchasing, other opportunities for trial have to be generated. Retail stores have created a complex environment via increasing numbers of product alternatives and attributes that drive consumer choice complexity. In order to influence consumer choices, retailers can use the most important wine attributes identified and organise their wine area accordingly, i.e. they can have recommended wines, information about grape varieties, brand name, etc.

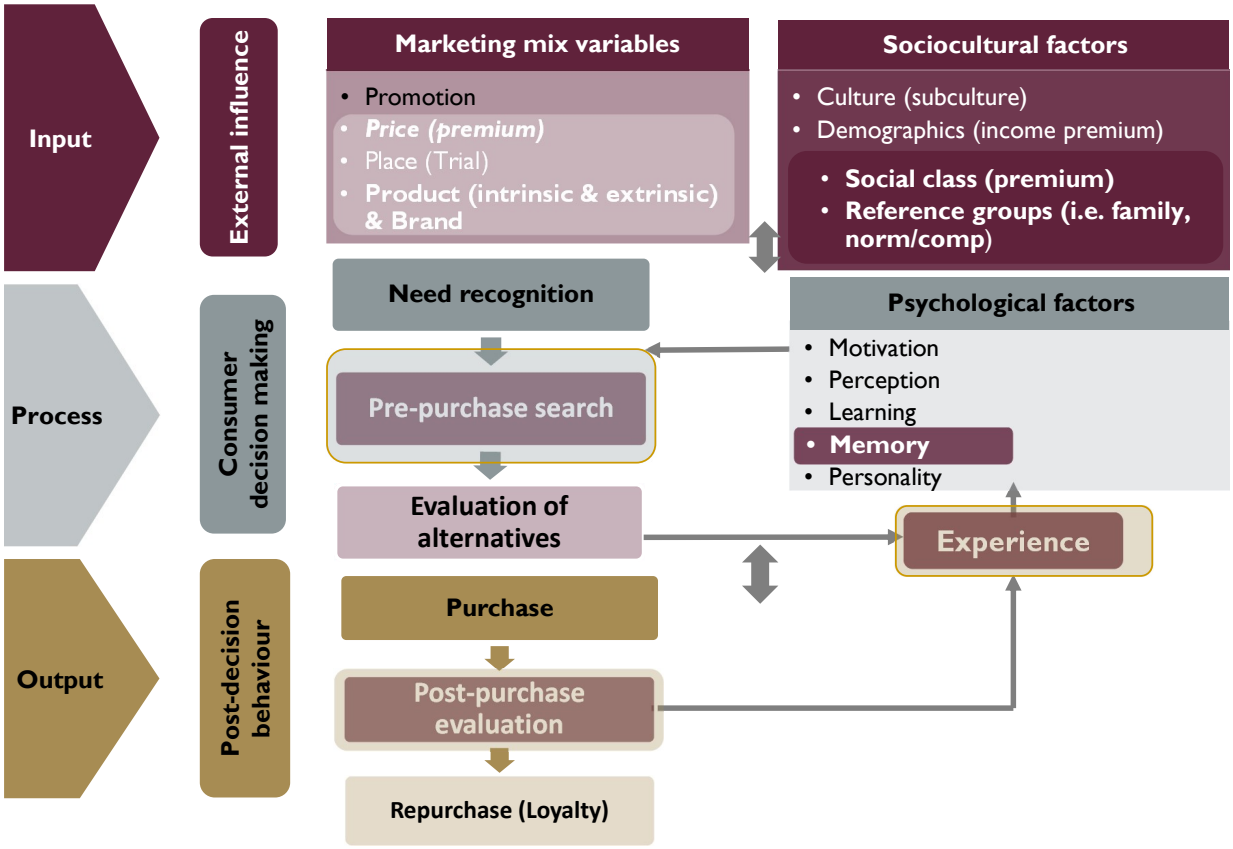

Figure 4: Consumer purchasing process and wine choice
Source: Adapted from Le Roux et al., 2017; Kotler & Keller, 2016; Schiffman & Wisenblit, 2019

"Someone recommended it" relates to sociocultural factors and reference groups or family members. It is possible that non-premium consumers rely on recommendations from others (e.g. reference groups) before they make purchasing choices in order to minimise risk; these could refer to friends, bloggers, etc. Marketers, given consumer's growing need for outsourcing decision making, can use social media very successfully. Recommendations for premium wine consumers may relate to social context and social status. There is an established link between wine brand choice and consumer benefits; in this instance, a socially acceptable image. Premium wine consumers will most likely follow a high-involvement decision process and will require recommendation information. The wine industry and marketers can give recommendations, for example tasting information in specialised wine magazines, or can use recommendations from experts such as winemakers or wine critics.

"Grape variety" received the third-highest score for the non-premium group compared to "Brand name" for the premium group. The importance of brand and the image it portrays must be communicated to the premium wine market segment to build brand loyalty, given the importance of this attribute. "Grape variety" can be used in marketing communication to non-premium wine consumers; this can include specific recommendations linked to certain grape varieties.

Premium wine consumers placed more emphasis on "Origin of wine" than the type of cultivar ("Grape variety"). Premium wine consumers are often wine enthusiasts and wine quality could be linked to "Origin of wine". Vigar-Ellis et al. (2015) indicated "Premium quality", "Country of origin" and "Good brand reputation" as of the highest importance for premium wine consumers. Non-premium wine consumers did not experience "Origin of wine" as a strong influencing attribute in terms of wine choice. This is an important difference that marketers and wine makers of premium wine should take note of and use in the marketing of premium wines and on packaging.

Respondents of this study were mostly from two main provinces of South Africa and not nationally representative. Future research could investigate possible provincial differences by conducting a nationally representative study. Judgement sampling inherently limits respondent participation; therefore, future studies could expand the timeframe of the study to include a larger group of premium wine consumers. The results of this study were similar to those of other local and global studies in terms of wine product attributes that are rated as of low importance to consumers. Qualitative research can be conducted to ascertain whether other attributes, such as price, sustainability, etc., should be included to replace the aforementioned attributes.

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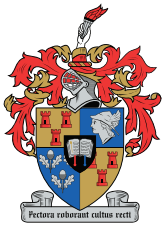

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