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Message in a Bottle of Wine from Emerging Markets. Is the Country of Origin Still a Relevant Cue in Consumers' Perceptions?

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Abstract

Research shows that country of origin (COO) has a significant impact on product evaluations and purchasing behaviour. However, there is a lack of clarity regarding the effects of COO on Generation Y within the wine industry. Therefore, this study aims to provide clarity on the impact of COO on consumer perception when purchasing wine from emerging markets such as Chile, South Africa, and China. Qualitative research was conducted with a total of 28 individuals who participated in a qualitative survey. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The results indicate that COO is still an important cue for consumers when evaluating the quality of wine. However, other factors such as price, design, and type of grape are perceived as important factors that influence consumers' perceptions. The findings of this investigation can guide wine marketers in selecting appropriate cues for their international marketing strategies.

Keywords: Country of Origin; Emerging Markets; Wine; Consumer Perception; Generation Y

Introduction

Traditional European old winemakers have suffered from an unprecedented competitive challenge over the last years as new wine producers such as Argentina, Chile, South Africa, and China have become more prominent in the wine market (Chepkemoui, 2017; Hu & Baldin, 2018; Poelmans et al., 2022). The reputation of old wine producers such as Italy, France, and Spain was based on a core factor of differential advantage. However, due to the recent reorganisation of the marketplace as well as the global panorama of modern competition, old winemakers have been questioned regarding their competitive advantage (Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006; Eng et al., 2016). As a result, there is a recognition that marketing strategies need to be evaluated and taken seriously in the wine market sector (Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006; Lategan et al., 2017).

World wine producers such as Australia, South Africa, New Zealand, USA, Argentina, Chile, Brazil, and China have increased their popularity and their market share around the globe (Felzensztein & Deans, 2013; Chepkemoui, 2017; Poelmans et al., 2022) and are adopting powerful international marketing strategies to brand themselves as winemaker countries (Viot

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& Passebois-Ducros, 2010; Deans et al., 2014). However, emerging markets are still suffering from negative consumer perception regarding their poor-quality products (Tjandra et al., 2015; Cuervo-Cazurra & Ramamurti, 2017). It can be seen how firms from emerging markets have adopted marketing strategies with the deliberate intention to obfuscate the actual origin in which the product is made by using more positive associations (Magnusson et al., 2011). Particularly, Hair, Seagull, Eastcom, Jasnwood, Bird, and Draft are Asian firms that have changed their brands to more Western-sounding names in an attempt to hide their countries' negative perceptions (Zhou et al., 2010).

From a consumer's point of view, the entry of new emerging markets in the wine industry has led to advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, consumers have a greater choice to select a bottle of wine from a large variety of winemakers coming from various countries (Ramamurti, 2012). On the other hand, the vast assortment of wine bottles available in the marketplace may confuse the consumer as the wide range may complicate their final purchasing decision (Veselá & Zich, 2015). Drink products including wine can be considered low-involvement products because of their generally low or affordable price and their low implication of level of risk (Hamlin, 2010; Inch & Jackson, 2014). Therefore, the so-called COO is considered one of the most significant factors for consumers that influence their purchase decision, especially for low-involvement products (Veselá & Zich, 2015).

Research shows that consumers utilise extrinsic cues to evaluate and consequently purchase a bottle of wine. For example, previous research has pointed out that extrinsic triggers such as brands, product features or designs, retail reputation, price, and COO influence consumers' decision making (Verbeke & Ward, 2006; Hamlin, 2010; Deans et al. 2014). However, the current literature regarding COO (Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006; Magnusson et al., 2011; Inch & Jackson, 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015; Sutter et al., 2015; Tamaş, 2016; Diamantopoulos et al., 2017; Montanari et al., 2018) displays different views on products coming from emerging markets regarding whether they could generate an advantage when exporting to other countries. Furthermore, as the perception of COO may change over time and over different countries (developed or emerging markets), its effect may be different for each product categories and different generations may react differently (Deans et al., 2014; Felzensztein et al., 2014; Moulard et al., 2015; Tjandra et al., 2015).

Despite the burgeoning research in the field of COO (Sutter et al., 2015; Tamaş, 2016; Diamantopoulos et al., 2017; Montanari et al., 2018), it is still unclear how COO affects consumer perceptions of wine produced in emerging markets and how relevant the influence is. Most studies have concentrated mainly on tangible and durable products such as cars (Hamin, et al., 2014; Mfokeu, 2017); technologies (Magnusson et al., 2011; Souiden et al., 2011) and fashion (Tjandra et al., 2015; Kim et al., 2017). Apart from the very limited exceptions (e.g. Hu and Baldon, 2018) which analyse COO effect on wine purchase in China, there has been less focus on consumable and in particular food and beverage products, especially in the wine sector. In fact, agricultural products including wine, which COO is often a core attribute that differentiates the products from competitors, have been mostly ignored in this field of academic research (Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006). Even when COO is analysed using food and beverage products, it is often used as a multi-cue attribute when purchasing goods (Ahmed et al., 2004; Prendergast et al., 2010; Inch & Jackson, 2014; Lategan at al., 2017). Moreover, most research has focused on developed and newly industrial markets mainly in Western and Asian countries (Ahmed et al., 2004; Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006;



Magnusson et al., 2011; Insch & Jackson, 2014; Moulard et al., 2015; Gorostidi-Martinez et al., 2017). In addition, the vast majority of studies on COO employ quantitative research methods which may be limited in their ability to obtain depth in the reasons for consumers' behaviour and perception of the COO cue (Deans et al. 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015).

As a result, this research aims to explore the influence of COO on the purchasing decisions of Generation Y consumers, specifically for the purchase of wine from emerging markets, which is a product category that has not been thoroughly explored. It also, in part, responds to calls for research on "recent trends in the wine consumers' behaviour and need for effective marketing strategies" (Poelmans et al., 2022: 6). In this regard, this research helps marketers develop marketing strategies that reinforce the positive influence of COO and reduce the negative effects. Wine as an agricultural good is considered to be the most exemplary item when analysing the correlation between COO and consumers due to the strong association that the wine has with the country that it comes from (Veselá & Zich, 2015). The research therefore enhances the current literature regarding COO as well as considers its role for emerging winemakers when they internationalise.

2. Literature review

In today's globalised world, consumers are able to purchase products from across the globe no matter where they live. Globalisation has enabled increasing number of firms to relocate production abroad where products are more cost-effective and then sell their products to customers all around the world (Ahmed et al., 2004). Consequently, researchers have been investigating the value of COO cues where consumers' evaluation of foreign products has generated conflicting views. The concept of COO has been broadly investigated by academics and researchers bringing out numerous interesting findings (Ahmed et al., 2004; Felzensztein, 2004; Tjandra et al., 2012; Kim et al., 2017; Montanari et al., 2018). COO is the representation of a country where a product or brand originates, which can shape consumers' views and behaviour towards the marketed items (Chapa et al., 2006; Deans et al., 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015). COO can be seen as the country of assembling, manufacturing or production which is labelled "Made in", "Manufacture in" or "Product of" (Ahmed et al., 2004). COO is one of the extrinsic attributes to evaluate the quality and performance of products from a specific country in which consumers have limited previous knowledge of the country or the experience of it (Silayoi & Speece, 2007; Tjandra et al., 2015). However, academics have pointed out that the COO cue has become less important in the evaluation of an intention to purchase a product because other extrinsic attributes, such as brands, price, and retail outlet, have become more influential and relevant in shaping consumer behaviour (Kardes et al., 2004; Kesic et al., 2004; Tjandra et al., 2012; Insch & Jackson, 2014). This conflicts with views that COO appears to have some influence on wine consumers (Foroudi et al., 2020), hence the need for further investigation for clarity on the effects of COO.

One of the reasons why COO has become less crucial is because the majority of firms produce and supply their products from different countries than their headquarters, which makes it difficult for consumers to comprehend where the product is coming from (Prendergas et al., 2010). For instance, consumers may associate various well-known brands and their products with a particular country, even though the items being evaluated are not produced or manufactured in the company's country residence (Ahmed et al., 2004; Sutter et al., 2015). Conversely, others argue that COO is still one of the key extrinsic cues that influence

consumers' product judgments and buying processes (Magnusson et al., 2011; Deans et al. 2014; Sutter et al., 2015; Veselá & Zich, 2015). The strength of COO in opposition to other informative cues has still significant importance to international marketing researchers and practitioners, since this information can assist them to design more efficient strategies to help companies in trading their products internationally (Ahmed et al., 2004, Hamin, Baumann & Tung, 2014). According to Felzensztein and Deans (2013), and Bianchi (2014), the strength of COO is especially accentuated in the wine industry, where its effect plays a fundamental role as it positively influences consumers' wine preferences. For instance, the white wines (Sauvignon Blanc and Chardonnay) coming from the Valle de Casablanca in Chile are internationally emphasised and perceived as high-quality wines (Macke & Sttofel, 2015). Therefore, the COO attribute can be implemented within the traditional marketing mix (7Ps) that primarily has a key influence on consumers' evaluation of products and also affects international marketing strategies for exported products (Deans et al., 2014).

2.1 Country of Origin Effect

In exploring the concept of COO, authors have pointed out that when consumers are exposed to COO cue with other extrinsic cues such as brand, design and price, the consequence of COO in their mental process can be examined in two directions namely the “halo” effect and “summary” construct (Han, 1989; Kleppe et al., 2002; Ahmed et al., 2004; Saran & Gupta 2012; Veselá, & Zich, 2015). This is because in several cases consumers are not able to evaluate the quality of a country's products before they buy them, so instead of purchasing blindly, consumers can utilise the perception of COO for evaluation (Hossain, 2015). Hence, the “halo” effect and the “summary” construct are fundamental aspects that influence the COO by shaping the consumers' perception relating to products coming from different countries (Saran & Gupta 2012; Veselá, & Zich, 2015).

The former occurs in the mind of consumers that are not familiar with or aware of the product of a specific country. In this case, the country image behaves as a “halo” effect that would not only directly influence the consumers' opinions regarding products attributes, but also it would indirectly influence the general consumer's evaluation of products coming from this country (Ahmed et al., 2004; Saran & Gupta, 2012). The reference to a specific country provokes beliefs, positive or negative, in the consumer's perception. Thus, even though consumers do not have any experiences or awareness of the product's origin, they will still create a characterised image of COO as the origin of such goods (Veselá, & Zich, 2015). For instance, consumers who have no prior familiarity or experience with a bottle of wine “Made in Italy”, but consider Italian wines high-quality products, would judge Italian wine more positively (Zdravkovic, 2013).

By contrast, the COO construct is generated and activated when consumers trust information as well as personal experiences about the goods for the purpose to generate an image of the relative country in their mind (Lu & Heslop, 2008; Veselá & Zich, 2015). The familiarity or awareness of a country's products may be because consumers may obtain knowledge from consuming one of the goods from a specific country and assumes that the information gathered from consuming it would be important for assessing other products that are coming from the same country (Han, 1989; Zdravkovic, 2013; Hossain, 2015). Thus, consumers will create generalisations of the product's information into a COO image which would later



implicitly influence their attitude towards the product or brand attitudes (Lin & Chen, 2006; Sharma, 2010).

2.2 Stereotypes Effect

It has been recognised that the use of COO is utilised in product evaluation as a “stereotyping process” that aids consumers to anticipate the presumption of a product produced in a specific country possessing certain characteristics (Ahmed et al., 2004; Veselá & Zich, 2015). Precisely, consumers use their previous experience or knowledge about a country's (stereotype) image when judging products from that country and generally, they will perceive a product more positively if the country has a positive COO image (Yang et al., 2015). The term stereotype can be described as the beliefs concerning the attributes, characteristics, and behaviours of specific individuals (Chattalas et al., 2008). As a result, research indicates that consumers' perceptions concerning COO (positive or negative) are found on the “stereotype” image assumed by consumers regarding the country itself (Urbonavicius et al., 2011; Inch & Jackson 2014; Xie et al., 2018).

The stereotype image influences product evolution in three different ways. Firstly, it can be seen that COO acts as a signal that influences consumers' perception (Veselá & Zich, 2015; Lategan et al., 2017; Xie et al., 2018). Consumers have previous perceptions and images regarding the general perceptions of goods from a specific country. Moreover, consumers utilise these perceptions to anticipate the intrinsic cues including quality, taste and smell and consequently the whole product evaluation (Felzensztein & Deans, 2013). Secondly, COO can be considered as an independent cue utilised in addition to other cues when evaluating a product (Chattalas et al., 2008). Thirdly, it can be utilised as a heuristic shortcut to facilitate the evaluation of a product even if there are other product cues available (Xie et al., 2018). As reported by Ahmed et al. (2004), heuristic shortcuts happen when consumers face too much product information or in the opposite case when a consumer is not familiar with the products.

Consequently, the “mental” image that consumers have about COO can be built from consumers' experience namely visiting, knowledge, political beliefs, and ethnocentrism of the country which are not directly related to the product attributes (Tjandra et al., 2015; Veselá & Zich, 2015). According to Chattalas et al. (2008) and Veselá & Zich (2015), the consumers' perception of COO is likely based on the stereotype image instead of opinion regarding a specific aspect of the products. For instance, the most common stereotype is that the products coming from developed countries like the USA, France, Germany, and Italy are seen as producers of better quality with more trustworthy products rather than products coming from emerging countries such as South Africa, Lebanon, Morocco, Chile, Turkey (Baker & Ballington, 2002; Deans et al., 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015). The reason for this is that advanced markets are usually recognised for quality, reliability, and trust in their products whilst emerging markets are labelled with negative stereotype images (Baker & Ballington, 2002; Montanari et al., 2018). In other words, the influence and perception of COO on a bottle of wine may originate from the stereotypical evaluations, i.e. positive or negative, that consumers have of different countries (Lazzari & Slongo, 2015).

Although COO has been investigated for a long time (Schooler, 1965), the topic still creates discordance on wherever or not it is a fundamental extrinsic cue to estimate the quality of products (Magnusson et al., 2011; Deans et al., 2014; Sutter et al., 2015; Veselá & Zich, 2015)

or if it has become an obsolete cue over brand and price in shaping the consumers' perception (Kardes et al., 2004; Kesic et al., 2004; Tjandra et al., 2012; Inch & Jackson, 2014). Clarity is still needed concerning whether products coming from emerging markets are perceived as high-quality (Magnusson et al., 2011; Felzensztein & Deans, 2013; Tjandra et al., 2015) or low-quality products (Inch & Jackson, 2014; Gorostidi-Martinez et al., 2017; Lategan et al., 2017). Due to globalisation and the reduction of entry barriers, COO needs to be managed with caution and properly evaluated in the wine industry because the industry is experiencing severe competition from countries around the world (Deans et al., 2014). Therefore, this research aims to investigate if and how utilising COO as a marketing tool can confer a competitive edge in international wine marketing strategies, specifically in emerging markets (Viot & Passebois-Ducros, 2010; Sutanonpaiboon & Atkin, 2012; Bruwer & Buller, 2013).

3. Methodology

The methodology used in this research is grounded in the inductive approach, which involves drawing general conclusions based on specific observations supporting insightful conceptual generalisations (Bell & Bryman, 2019). Previous investigations in the field of COO are predominantly based on a quantitative method rather than a qualitative approach (Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006; Le et al., 2013; Veselá & Zich, 2015; Tamaş, 2016; Cuflic & Cazacu, 2017; Lategan et al., 2017). As this study aims to explore the underlying reasons for customers' perceptions and behaviour when buying a bottle of wine, the quantitative approach would be less effective within this regard (Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006; Deans et al., 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015). Hence, this study provides an alternative approach that not only differentiates from existing research regarding COO by using a qualitative research technique, but also overcomes the limitations of a quantitative approach.

Data was collected by using a qualitative survey which allowed the researchers to capture the participants' own words, thoughts, feelings, perceptions and experiences (Liamputtong, 2009). Using a qualitative survey is a practical approach for conducting research that enables researchers to reach a vast number of individuals from diverse locations and socio-cultural backgrounds (James, 2007; Liamputtong, 2009; Hubrich & Wittwer, 2014; Sue & Ritter, 2016). Furthermore, as the study's participants are from Generation Y, indicating their familiarity with using technology as a regular part of their daily lives, a qualitative survey was deemed as appropriate to collect the required data (Zhang et al., 2017). According to research, a qualitative survey is a thorough research approach because participants tend to adopt a more introspective stance, resulting in more sincere and trustworthy data (McCoyd & Kerson, 2006; James, 2007; Guber et al., 2008; Bell & Bryman 2019).

The survey questions are based on the literature review related to COO and the perception of consumers at the time of buying a bottle of wine. The questions were entirely open-end format apart from the introduction questions regarding age groups, gender, education level and how many times participants were buying wine, which were structured (Saunders et al., 2019). The open-end format questions allowed participants to generate insightful answers that helped the researchers to gain depth in the study (Hubrich & Wittwer, 2014). Thus, the questions were designed to encourage the participants to produce extensive answers to facilitate the understanding of how COO shape participants' mind when choosing a bottle of wine. An initial email was sent where participants found an introduction regarding the investigation as well as the consent form which allowed the research to start. Once the selected



participants agreed to take part in the investigation, a second email was sent using Google Forms which contained the qualitative survey questions.

A convenient sampling method was adopted in this study (Tjandra et al., 2012; Bergh & Behrer, 2013; Zdravkovic, 2013; Lategan et al., 2017). The sample was selected based on the year of birth (Generation Y) and level of education (University level). 15 participants were initially contacted via social media and the sample size has been extended until no new information was identified. The investigation reached its "saturation point" at 28 participants (Liamputtong, 2009; Saunders et al., 2019), and consequently a total of 28 participants were included in the study, all of whom were aged between 24-35, had a university degree, and purchased wine at least once a month. The use of small, carefully selected samples in qualitative studies is intended to generate and probe new and insightful interpretations (Collis & Hussey, 2013).

The data was analysed using thematic analysis, which is a beneficial approach for examining, highlighting similarities and differences, and producing unanticipated findings (Liamputtong, 2009; Evans & Lewis, 2018). Thematic analysis was chosen due to its theoretical freedom and flexibility which can be adjusted to the needs of the investigation (Braun & Clarke, 2013). One of the most common tools to analyse qualitative data is NVivo software which provides a structured and organised approach to data analysis. Thus, NVivo was used to undertake the first cut, theming, indexing, searching and analysing the data once it had been collected and entered into the software (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Woolf & Silver, 2017). The software was useful for data display, data reduction, verification and drawing a conclusion (Fisher & Buglear, 2007; Woolf & Silver, 2017).

4. COO and Emerging Markets

According to the findings, it appears that an overwhelming majority of the participants who participated in the research express a desire to learn about the origin of the wine. For instance, Participant 25 said "Yes, I would like to know it, because it is the main feature that you are looking for when buying wines". Another participant alluded to the notion of COO stating "Yes, I would like to know. I think, the country of origin is part of a wine's identity. If I do not know where it comes from, I feel like an essential information is missing" (Participant 10). The findings showed that the majority of the participants wanted to know where the wine is coming from. The primary explanation for this was that the participants could anticipate the wine's quality based on the COO information. They believed and felt that different countries provide different levels of wine quality. Hence, the results agree with previous research which affirmed that consumers use COO to predict the wine's quality (Tamaş, 2016; Lategan et al., 2017).

The results of this study, however, contradict what has been shown by previous research, which suggests that COO can be used as a powerful marketing tool that has a relevant influence on Generation Y's perception when purchasing a bottle of wine (Sutanonpaiboon & Atkin, 2012; Bruwer & Buller, 2013; Deans et al., 2014). The responses indicate that the wine industry in emerging markets, such as Chile and South Africa, faces stiff competition from long-established wine-making traditions in countries like Spain and Italy. The participants suggested that in this case they are more affected by other marketing and product-related strategies such as "*style, type, label, price, technique*" when purchasing a bottle of wine coming from an emerging market. For example, Participant 8 said:

“I would consider buying wine coming from Chile or South Africa if their strategies are right and not just because of the “Made in”. If the price is right, the bottle looks fancy and if I want to go for something special, I would definitely buy it”.

Regarding marketing strategies, our findings suggest the COO cannot be an effective tool for an emerging winemaker like South Africa or China. As Participant 12 said, “I believe that we buy wine based on pure marketing strategies we see, but I think that if a wine is coming from Italy, for example, has a better possibility to be good than a wine coming from South Africa”. This is because other players like Italy or France have a long history of making wine and they are perceived positively. Thus, emerging markets have to “play” with other cues such as price, labels, and style to compete against well-known and strong COO in the wine industry. As a result, emerging markets in the wine industry should not be focused solely on COO (Zhou et al., 2010; Cuervo-Cazurra & Ramamurti, 2017), but should focus their international marketing strategies on aspects such as price, style, design, and label that influence consumer’s perception and their purchase decision (Ahmed et al., 2004, Hamin, Baumann & Tung, 2014).

4.1. Halo effect

A recurrent theme in the qualitative surveys was a sense amongst participants that there is a strong connection between COO and the quality of the wine. The participants on the whole demonstrated that they use COO cue to predict the quality of a bottle of wine that they intend to buy. For instance, Participant 3 stated, “Even if a bottle of wine is cheaper and may be more appealing, I would buy a bottle if it comes from a well-known wine country”. An interesting aspect which emerged from participants’ responses is that participants are influenced by their personal experiences with the country where the wine originates from. As described in the literature, the halo effect plays a crucial part in the evaluation of the quality of a bottle of wine as consumers tend to convert and recall discrete pieces of information into more complex and cohesive units, which in this context leads to influencing the perception of wine (Han, 1989; Kleppe et al., 2002; Ahmed et al., 2004; Saran & Gupta 2012; Veselá, & Zich, 2015).

A common view amongst interviewees was that the perception of the quality of a bottle of wine can be influenced by consumers’ experiences with these countries. For instance, Participant 28 stated that “Countries like Italy or France, which I personally visited, still suggest to me that the wines have a good quality because of their long tradition as winemakers”. When participants were asked to evaluate the quality of wine that comes from specific emerging markets including Chile, South Africa and China, the “Halo effect” linked to those countries can be observed. For example, Participant 6 stated that “at first instance, I would say I would not go for a wine from China. This is me because it comes to my mind that everything that is “Made in China” is inexpensive and not high quality... so, I would not go for them”. On a similar note, Participant 2 said:

“I think the relationship is caused by your own experiences with the country of origin. I personally experienced wine in South Africa and California. There, wineries seemed to embrace their potential to not only produce and sell wine but to create a whole experience around the wine and with the wine being the centre of interest (e.g. wine tasting, vineyard walks, providing accommodation, vinery-hopping etc.) which lead to me having the impression of good quality”



As a consequence, the results of this study suggest that there is a link between COO and the perceived quality of wine. Therefore, this research is consistent with previous research in confirming a relationship between COO and perceived quality of products (Md Wang et al., 2014; Hossain, 2015; Tjandra et al., 2015). The participants confirmed that there is a link between COO and quality when evaluating a bottle of wine. However, when it comes to evaluating wine coming from emerging markets the link is not positive. For example, participants state that they do not associate Chinese wine with high quality due to the “poor- and low-quality image” that they have regarding the country. Whereas wine from France or Italy is perceived to be a high-quality product “because you just know it”. This can be described as the “halo effect” which influences positively the perception of Italian or French wine and negatively the perception of Chinese or South African wine (Saran & Gupta 2012; Veselá, & Zich, 2015).

4.2. Moving beyond COO

The majority of participants concur that external cues, in addition to COO, play a role in shaping their perceptions when purchasing a bottle of wine. The price cue, for instance, is considered to be one of the most important cues when consumers have to purchase a bottle of wine. For example, Participant 26 said, “when I have to buy wine, the price is definitely the most important information that I consider and influences me”. Similarly, talking about this issue, Participant 6 stated that “price is the first and most relevant piece of information when I choose which bottle of wine I want”. The literature review indicates that the COO may affect the consumers’ perception of products, especially agricultural products (Ahmed et al., 2004; Felzensztein & Dinnie, 2006; Berry et al., 2015; Tamaş, 2016). Many authors consider COO as the most important information that shapes consumers’ minds when buying a bottle of wine (Bergh & Behrer, 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015). However, although the sample confirmed the outcomes of previous researchers where COO is a relevant piece of information (Bergh & Behrer, 2013; Wang et al., 2014; Tjandra et al., 2015), there is other information that is equally, if not more, significant. Taken together, the results of this investigation suggest that the price cue is more important than COO when purchasing a bottle of wine.

Similarly, a common view amongst participants was that the type of wine such as red, white and rose, as well as the type of grapes, including Sauvignon Blanc, Merlot, and Pinot Noir, are considered more important than COO. For instance, Participant 2 said “To be honest, I mostly check the sort of the wine first, as I rather prefer white wine. Then I evaluate the type of grape, because I am buying sweet and fruity wine like Sauvignon Blanc ... and then I take into consideration its origin”. An interesting aspect that emerged from the investigation was that Generation Y consumers have become more sophisticated when they have to purchase a bottle of wine. In fact, rather than COO, the participants are looking for specific areas, such as the regions in which the wine is produced (Nassivera et al. 2020). This can be seen in the following statement from Participant 8 who said:

“Within Spain I would only buy a bottle of wine from one particular region because I have already tried several wines from that region, and they are all very good and I prefer buying those ones rather than wine Made in Spain”.

The region of origin is strongly emphasised because COO is “vague information because countries are big” and consumers prefer “wine from a particular region”. As Engelbrecht et

al., (2014) and Chamorro et al. (2015) underline, consumers, when purchasing a bottle of wine, look for specific regions such as Mendoza (Argentina), Rioja (Spain), Napa Valley (California), Chianti (Italy). Consumers preference for wine from a particular region has been echoed by (Nassivera et al. 2020). When it comes to selecting a bottle of wine, the price is the primary consideration for the majority of the sample, followed by the type of grape and region of origin. Among wine buyers, it was found that the significance of factors such as price, region of origin, and type of grape outweighed that of COO. Thus, the primary findings of this investigation could be seen in line with one stream of literature which state that COO has become less important compared to other cues (Kesic et al., 2004, Tjandra et al., 2012, Insch & Jackson, 2014).

4.3. Stereotypes and Ethnocentrism

The findings of this study demonstrate that the vast majority of participants are influenced to some degree by Ethnocentrism when it comes to evaluating a bottle of wine coming from emerging markets. For instance, Participant 7 stated that “in Germany there are a lot of wine producers very close by and I prefer supporting and buying them”. Similarly, Participant 24 said that “even though I like South African and Chile wine, I would prefer buying wine from developed countries such as France or Spain. The reason is that these countries have been claimed to be of good quality and therefore, I trust it”. Talking about this issue, Participant 3 said:

“If you think of wine of France, the whole French lifestyle (*savoir-vivre*), the culture and all the stereotypes come to your mind and therefore influences how you perceive the quality of the wine itself. I think, if you buy a bottle of wine, you don't only buy alcoholic liquid in a bottle. It either represents a treatment for yourself, a symbol to celebrate something or a present for someone”.

The results showed that the participants were influenced by ethnocentrism, which is in agreement with the outcomes of previous studies (Le et al., 2013; Veselá & Zich, 2015; Cuflic & Cazacu, 2017). The participants considered the unfamiliarity with the country where the wine is coming from a key factor in their decision-making. For instance, they prefer to buy their local wine like Portuguese or Italian. One suggestion that can explain this circumstance is that the sample was more familiar with their local wine producers and as a result, they trust more their national wine than wine coming from emerging markets including South Africa or China which they had no direct or indirect experience before. Moreover, the participants mentioned that they were “proud” of their national wine and therefore they would purchase it first. For example, Participant 26 said:

“If I know that the wine is coming from a country that I have never heard or tasted, my perception could change a bit, because emerging markets like South Africa doesn't have a secular tradition in making wine and the image that I have of the country is not positive. So, I will be critical or cautions if I decide to buy a South African wine”.

As a result, when thinking about emerging markets, the majority of the sample stereotyped their wine. This confirmed that consumers were heavily affected by what happens around them as it changes their perception based on political, environmental or ethical issues (Urbonavicius et al., 2011; Insch & Jackson 2014; Xie et al., 2018). In particular, the



environment and working conditions negatively influenced the perception of wine coming from China. Hence, winemakers from emerging markets need to focus on not only the quality of their wine but as well on the overall image that is associated with the country (Felzensztein & Deans, 2013).

5. Conclusion

Understanding the degree to which COO matters to the consumers when purchasing a bottle of wine is fundamental for the development and growth of the wine industry. As a result, this investigation developed new insights into the perception of COO when consumers have to buy a bottle of wine coming from emerging markets. Although COO is considered useful information for its purchasing purpose, it has limited impact on Generation Y's perception of the wine industry. Other cues such as price, type of grape, region and design have a major inference on consumers' choices. The analysis also showed that consumers use COO cues to evaluate the quality of a bottle of wine, especially in a situation of non-familiarity with the country. However, the participants evaluated the quality of the wine by using COO based on personal experiences with the country. For example, even though China is the sixth largest wine producer in the world (Blake, 2018) and its wine tourism (e.g. Bohai Bay region) attracts people from around the world, consumers still perceive Chinese wine as low-quality (Zhang Qiu et al., 2013; Zheng & Wang, 2017). This supports the argument that consumers are deeply influenced by additional factors when purchasing a wine bottle (Hamin et al., 2014; Veselá & Zich, 2015). The findings also indicate that COO cannot be used as an effective marketing tool for emerging winemakers when they go internationally. This is because consumers still consider the "old" winemakers like Italy, France or Spain far better than wine coming from emerging markets. Thus, emerging winemakers have to utilise different marketing strategies based on other tools if they want to compete internationally.

5.1. Theoretical Contribution

This study has made a significant contribution to the literature on country of origin (COO) by addressing several gaps in existing research. Specifically, the study's findings challenge prior criticisms of the relevance of COO in consumer decision-making (Deans et al., 2014; Sutter et al., 2015; Veselá & Zich, 2015) by demonstrating that the influence of COO on consumers' perceptions of wine produced in emerging markets is relatively low. This conclusion is consistent with earlier research conducted by Kesic et al. (2004), Tjandra et al. (2012), and Inch & Jackson (2014), who also found that other factors, such as price, region of origin, and design, are more influential in shaping consumers' preferences. Although participants felt that without COO cue "an important information is missing", price, region of origin or design have become more important. This contribution is significant as previous research has mainly focused on the effect of COO on high-involvement products, such as cars and electronics (Hamin et al., 2014; Kim et al., 2017; Mfokeu, 2017). In contrast, this study examines the impact of COO on wine, extending current literature focused on the context of wine preference and perception (Foroudi et al., 2019; Rodrigues et al., 2020; Valentin et al., 2021; Williamson et al., 2016).

Another contribution of this study is its examination of emerging markets such as Chile and South Africa. The study's findings suggest that consumers perceive wine from these countries more positively than in previous studies (Souiden et al., 2011; Eng et al., 2016; Gorostidi-Martinez et al., 2017). Furthermore, the research participants expressed a willingness to

purchase wine from these countries, indicating a potential shift in consumer preferences. Finally, the study sheds light on the role of Ethnocentrism in shaping consumer attitudes towards wine from different countries. For example, the study found that consumers still prefer wine from their own country or developed markets over emerging wine-producing countries like China, which suffer from negative country image. This discovery emphasises the significance of investigating how social and psychological factors impact consumer choices for products from various countries of origin, which can further enhance our understanding of consumer behaviour and preference. Overall, this study's findings provide valuable insights into the complex factors that influence consumers' perceptions of wine from different countries, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the role of COO in consumer decision-making for international marketing strategies.

5.2. Managerial Implications

Based on the study's findings, managers in the wine industry may adopt several practical implications to improve their marketing strategies. Despite criticisms by some authors on the effect of COO on consumer perception in today's globalised world, this study highlights the continued importance of COO as a crucial piece of information for emerging winemakers seeking to expand their market internationally. Consequently, managers should attach significance to COO cues while also combining them with other effective marketing tools to remain competitive in the wine market. Another key aspect addressed in the study is the need for emerging winemakers to determine whether their country and/or market have a positive or negative COO, as this can significantly influence their future marketing strategy. Emerging winemakers should accentuate and highlight a positive COO cue in their marketing strategies, which will improve the consumers' perception when purchasing wine. In contrast, negative COO cues, as observed in Chinese wine, should also be considered in the marketing strategies of emerging winemakers, albeit with the opposite effect. Therefore, managers should emphasise other essential cues in their marketing strategies such as price, design, and brand to minimise the negative impact of COO on consumer perception.

The study reveals that although COO has lost its primary importance, consumers still prefer to know the origin of the wine. However, their purchase decision cannot be based solely on COO, particularly if the country is not widely recognised as a reputable winemaker. Consequently, emerging markets in the wine industry should concentrate on other cues that have a more significant effect on consumer perceptions, such as price, label, or style. The study findings suggest that other cues have a more significant influence on consumer perceptions. For example, the price, type of grape, and bottle design are crucial factors that shape consumers' perception when purchasing wine. Therefore, emerging winemakers must focus on these cues to shape consumers' perception of their wine. The study further reveals that stereotypes and ethnocentrism significantly affect consumer decision-making when purchasing wine from emerging markets. Consumers base their perception of wine from emerging markets on the stereotypes they have in their minds. These stereotypes are primarily based on factors such as political, environmental, or ethical issues that affect consumer perception when buying wine. Thus, winemakers from emerging countries need to consider external issues that are not directly related to the wine industry such as political, economic or environmental that may play an important part when they go internationally, in terms of the image they project in their market. To strive internationally, winemakers from emerging countries are called to maximise as much as possible the positive aspects of their wine (e.g.



quality of the wine, fair work conditions, brand) and minimise negative aspects (e.g. unfair work conditions or pollution) that influence consumer's perception.

5.3. Limitation and Recommendations for Future Studies

As an exploratory investigation, this research should be seen as a first step for future research on the topic. As the current study adopts a qualitative method, the results cannot be generalised to Generation Y's perception when purchasing a bottle of wine. Thus, future research could adopt quantitative methodologies to enhance the generalisability of findings. Another limitation was the use of a qualitative survey that restricted the interaction and feedback with the participants that would have been offered by a one-to-one interview. Hence, further research should consider using personal interviews or focus groups which may have had more interaction and feedback with the participants, and it may improve the quality of the data collected, in terms of the richness and depth. The research took into consideration a specific consumer segment (Generation Y) as well as three emerging winemakers including Chile, South Africa and China. Thus, further studies should consider other consumer segments as well as different emerging winemakers and discover if there are any additional factors to consider when evaluating a bottle of wine coming from these countries. Finally, further studies on the topic could be conducted in different product categories, as well as different consumer groups, which may contribute to enhancing the existing marketing literature.

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