

Generation Y and sparkling wines: A cross-cultural perspective

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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of this study was to investigate and compare the engagement of Generation Y consumers with champagne and sparkling wine across five Anglophone countries.

Design/methodology/approach: A qualitative approach was adopted using focus groups with young consumers, including images and wine tasting as projective stimuli.

Findings: There were significant trans-cultural similarities between consumption behaviour (sparkling wine is a women's drink, and a separate category from still wine, and that they will 'grow into' drinking it) but also noticeable differences (responses to images and colours varied substantially, as did attitudes to price and the particular status of champagne).

Research limitations/implications: Research into the behaviour of Generation Y as a cohort needs to take account of cultural as much as generational context. However, as a qualitative study the findings need further quantitative validation.

Practical implications: Marketers cannot view Generation Y as a single group; even within countries marketing strategies may need to be refined depending on where a product is being sold.

Originality/value: No trans-cultural study on Generation Y has been carried out to date, nor has their engagement with sparkling wine been specifically explored.

Keywords: Generation Y; sparkling wine; champagne; cross-cultural.

Research paper

1.0 Introduction

One important current area of focus for marketing research is the next generation of consumers – the group known as Millennials, Echo Boomers or Generation Y (the term used in this article). Generation Y comprises those born between 1977 and 1999 (Lancaster & Stillman, 2003). For the next 40 years, this generational cohort will become increasingly important as wine consumers; indeed, they already seem to be spending substantial amounts of money on wine (Peskett, 2006) and anecdotally in some countries they are showing increasing interest in wine (although in other places their interest is said to be declining).

The wine industry generally seems aware that it needs to pay more attention to this cohort (e.g. Anon, 2006; Halstead, 2006; Kevany, 2008; Peskett, 2006). Additionally, a certain amount of academic research has examined their perceptions towards wine consumption – although much of this has been within a North American context (Nowak & Newton, 2008; Nowak, Thach, & Olsen, 2006; Thach & Olsen, 2005, 2006), and all the research to date appears to have focused on single markets.

Given this context, it seems useful to extend current theoretical understanding by gaining a broader geographic perspective, looking not just at the USA but a range of Anglophone countries. This article reports on an exploratory project which attempted to do that. In order to provide some focus for the study and make it more manageable, the research focused on sparkling wine and champagne. This was considered to be particularly useful given the specific importance of symbolic consumption motivations when drinking sparkling wine (Charters, 2005). Compared with previous research, there is an increased product concentration on sparkling wines but with a greater geographical breadth. The study thus brings together two previously studied consumption categories (Generation Y and sparkling wines) which have not yet been explored in tandem. The former of these two is particularly

interesting due to the inherent variability which exists in the cohort, given that wine consumption practices appear to change rapidly as the cohort ages.

The aim was to create an exploratory research project, designed to generate a range of ideas about and responses to champagne and sparkling wine across a variety of different young adult populations. This allows the examination of overall perceptions, unconscious drivers which affect the response of young people, the interpretation of and response to images surrounding champagne, and an evaluation of the relative significance of the motives that influence young consumers' drinking behaviours. The key question explored by this research was how consumption attitudes and behaviour towards sparkling wine and champagne varied between members of Generation Y in a range of Anglophone countries.

2.0 Context

2.1 What do we know about Generation Y?

Until now there has only been a little academic research into Generation Y although slowly this is changing (Martin & Tulgan, 2001; Sheahan, 2005). Previous studies suggest that Generation Y is a cohort which is confident, self-reliant, ambitious, generally tolerant of others (thus positively welcoming diversity) and keen to face challenges (Martin & Tulgan, 2001). However, there may be limits to their self-confidence, as it is claimed that they appreciate being validated by those around them (Sheahan, 2005). They enjoy stimulation in all aspects of their life, and they are very focused on the sensory, valuing it for fun and entertainment (Sheahan, 2005). This is a group which is comfortable with new and ever changing technology, having been raised in the midst of the information revolution (Noble, Haytko, & Phillips, 2009). Some research has examined marketing to Generation Y. The fact that they have lived in a rapidly changing world, and are very accepting of it means that marketers have a substantial opportunity to identify new products and experiences which they

will enjoy. It has been suggested that value – rather than merely low price – is important to them (Noble et al., 2009) and a concentration on promoting this idea has been suggested as key for marketing managers (Thach & Olsen, 2005). The use of consumption to define who they are and to distinguish themselves from their parents has been proposed as an important trait, and brands seem to be very important for their identity and comfort (Noble et al., 2009). Some research has suggested that they are not brand loyal, but a more recent study has questioned that proposition (Noble et al., 2009).

Crucially, recent studies have suggested that although they are seen as a single generation, transcending national characteristics, there may be differences in behaviour between the cohorts in different countries (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2008). This is specifically true in relation to alcohol usage, and perhaps within the cohorts themselves based upon age and education (Ritchie, Ritchie, & Ward, 2009). Additionally, it is worth noting that many Generation Y studies have focused primarily on university students. They are, therefore, of limited usefulness – and this study has consciously sought to avoid that constraint.

2.2 What do we know about Generation Y and wine consumption?

A little academic research has been carried out into the general wine preferences of Generation Y – but most of it has focused only on the USA. Thach and Olsen (2006) suggest that they tend to prefer red wine, like the taste and its relationship with food, its ability to make them relax, but that wine is not ‘hip or cool’. Indeed, some see wine as ‘expensive, snobby and snooty’ (2006 p.319). On the other hand, wine is also seen to be a natural drink – which is positive. Value is important – but quality less so than for older consumers (Qenani-Petrela, Wolf, & Zuckerman, 2007). Specifically, in both the USA and Australia wine consumption amongst this group is quite high, with over 60% drinking wine in each country (Thach & Olsen, 2006; Treloar, Hall, & Mitchell, 2004).

It has also been noted that the appearance of the label is particularly important to Generation Y consumers and that some overseas wines (Australian and Italian) are especially appealing (Qenani-Petrela et al., 2007). However, Qenani-Petrela et al. (2007), while noting the significance of friends as influential on consumption behaviour, also suggest it is no more important for this cohort than for older generational groups, at least in the USA. It may be, however, that this cohort is particularly influenced by the perception of apparently ‘cool’ social situations with friends as depicted in TV advertisement and soaps (Coyne & Ahmed, 2009).

2.3 What do we know about the consumption of sparkling wine and champagne?

While no previous published studies have focused on Generation Y and sparkling wine or champagne, some previous research crosses or ignores generational difference, and it is useful to consider it as context for this study. It is evident that at least for some consumers, champagne enjoys a certain competitive advantage over other sparkling wines, based on its origin (Charters, 2005), and its luxury associations (Charters, 2009). Yet this view is more emotionally held than rationally established – as is suggested by the difficulty consumers have in product evaluation. It has been proposed that they cannot distinguish wines blind without the assistance of the label (Lange, Martin, Chabanet, Combris, & Issanchou, 2002) although this view has been challenged (Vignes & Gergaud, 2003), with the suggestion that consumers can make hedonic judgments independently of market image. Meanwhile, in a pair of Australian studies, Charters (2005; 2009) has observed that due to its effervescence (and perhaps also the high level of acidity) sparkling wine may be much harder for consumers to engage with organoleptically (Charters, 2005). Because of this, and the situation in which it is regularly consumed, there are even some hints in an Australian study that consumers see

it as a separate product type entirely – and not a category of wine (Charters, 2009), something supported by Thach and Olsen (2005) in their study of young Californian consumers.

3.0 Method

3.1 *Research Design*

This project was designed to be a cross-cultural examination of young peoples' views on sparkling wine and champagne. Given the paucity of research in this field, qualitative research was considered ideal. The project brought together nine researchers across five Anglophone countries, comprising Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and the USA. The research team wanted to work in an English-speaking environment and these countries were chosen to give a wide range of consumption contexts, including some with a domestic wine industry, and some with a non-British cultural heritage. It was decided to use focus groups, as a useful tool for exploring deeper, more unconscious feelings about a product (Morgan, 1988). It was anticipated that three focus groups per market would yield sufficient data to reach saturation. However, the two largest wine markets (the USA and the UK) were also the least homogenous. In order to obtain diverse data in these countries, focus groups were targeted at different places (seven different towns in the UK and two states in the USA – California and Texas). Additionally, the researcher in New Zealand felt saturation had not been reached after three focus groups, and a fourth was undertaken.

3.2 *Procedures*

The focus groups were conducted on campuses of the university the researchers were associated with, or at other venues convenient to the participants. Moderators led the discussions through a series of questions directed at consumer perceptions related to champagne and sparkling wine. To ensure a cohesive approach, a protocol for the

management of the research, the expectations of researchers and the means of collecting data was prepared and supplied to those involved in the project by one of the researchers ('the coordinating researcher'). This included the development of a common focus group guide. In order to most effectively obtain information on consumer attitudes – especially more subconscious perspectives – a series of nine pictures (mainly, but not exclusively, advertisements for champagne and sparkling wine) was used as a stimulus to encourage affective and cognitive perspectives on the topic (McGrath, Sherry, & Levy, 1993). In addition, the focus groups involved wine tasting to explore the impact of tasting on the consumers – a process which has previously been successfully adopted in exploratory consumer research (Pettigrew & Charters, 2008). Three masked sparkling wines were used to explore the impact of tasting on the consumers attitudes:(a) quality champagne, (b) a cheaper non-French sparkling wine, ; and (c) another local sparkling wine, always poured in the same order in each country . The participants tasted the wines and discussed each. Later, the bottles were revealed in a different order from pouring and participants commented on the packaging. Finally, the bottles matched to the poured samples, and participants were asked to compare their responses to the wines to their views about the presentation of the bottles. This process used wines as a projective technique (Pettigrew & Charters, 2008), not as a means of assessing overall preference for different wines, and the fact that varying wines were used in each country meant that comparative preference was not feasible. Thus the purpose of the use of images and tasting was not to obtain a precise, numeric analysis of consumer preference but as tools in understanding why consumers have the ideas and responses they do about champagne and sparkling wine.

3.3 Sample and participant selection

Specific participant selection criteria were: (a) participants should meet the requirement of the legal drinking age in their appropriate country ; (b) participants should be in the Generation Y group - a range of ages 18 to 30 was specifically sought; and (c) participants should have some interest in wine, with moderately frequent wine consumption, interpreted as at least a few times a year, and especially in champagne and sparkling wine. To avoid the tendency to source participants from students (which would only yield a partial perspective on the target cohort – predominantly under 25 and educationally engaged) the researchers ensured that no more than 50% of their sample were students.

As an exploratory project, it was not intended to employ a truly random sample. Generally a type of snowball sampling was adopted; participants were selected mainly from personal nominations by neutral parties, consumer databases compiled by individual researchers, and by email announcements.

Given the ‘self-selecting’ nature of the focus groups and existing evidence that wine is a preferred alcoholic beverage of women (at least in Australia (Pettigrew, 2003)), it is not surprising that more women than men were recruited to these focus groups – a split of 57-43% . Additionally, the participants tended to be fairly regular wine consumers: 63% declaring that they drank wine at least once per week, and a further 21% claiming to drink at least monthly, although the Australian and British participants tended to be more frequent, and the New Zealanders rather less so. Full details of the sample are contained in table one.

Table 1: Table of informant demographics

Country	No.	Gender	Consumption Frequency	Age
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	M	F	rare	mthly	wkly	daily	18-21	22-24	25-27	28-30	
Aus.	19	4	15	1	1	17	0	4	9	3	3
NZ	31	12	19	6	12	13	0	7	10	13	1
SAf	27	9	18	3	10	13	1	9	12	5	0
UK	48	23	25	3	6	34	5	17	17	14	1
USA	49	26	23	6	7	33	3	10	24	9	6
TOTAL	174	74	100	19	36	119	9	47	72	44	11

3.4 *Data collection and analysis*

The discussions were audio taped for data analysis. Participant names were replaced by a code for identification purposes. The focus groups were then transcribed locally into MS Word; and later were imported into QSR NVivo by the co-ordinating researcher. The coding was a three step process; open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1994). This produced around 300 nodes which were used for fine analysis. The initial conclusions were developed and then refined by exchange of email with the participation of all those involved in the research team, to ensure precision, a nuanced approach and credibility for the findings. The overall process offered a high level of locational and researcher triangulation (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989) and helped to provide trustworthiness. A number of the researchers (n=7) then met during a conference to discuss the analysis, offering an additional means of triangulation. This resulted in a further development of the

ideas and a refinement of understanding (Janesick, 1994), a process which was subsequently developed by regular email contact and discussions.

4.0 Findings

A substantial amount of data was obtained with oOver thirty hours of focus groups took place, resulting in 490 pages of typescript for analysis. Much of this confirmed existing knowledge of wine consumption behaviour, and specifically of attitudes to sparkling wine and champagne. This paper will concentrate on major areas of unanimity and difference between the various national groups of young consumers. Table 2 highlights areas of similarities and differences.

Table 2: Similarities and differences for Gen. Y relating to champagne and sparkling wine

Similarities	Differences
1. Sparkling wine is considered to be a women's drink.	1. UK respondents more knowledge on champagne brands; those in other countries more knowledgeable on production methods.
2. Gen Y will 'grow into' sparkling wine as they gain maturity.	2. UK respondents drink champagne, whereas others drink local sparkling wine.
3. Sparkling wine is a social drink.	3. The price participants are willing to pay for champagne/sparkling wine varies by country.
4. Sparkling wine is considered to be a separate category from still wine.	4. Response to champagne advertisements varied by country.

4.1 *Shared perspectives*

The first significant area of unanimity was over the fact that sparkling wine is considered a female drink. One informant suggested that even the shape of the traditional champagne flute is a female shape, reflecting the nature of the wine. A comment was also made by one researcher that it was harder to recruit males as the topic was not felt to be relevant to males. One South African group jointly developed the following metaphor for a sparkling wine description:

SAC9¹: It's a woman (Male, 23).

SAC5: It's a bottle with legs [laughter] (Male, 22) ...

SAC9: In a dress.

SAC8: In a short mini skirt (Male, 23).

SAC9: I say a queen with a little sparkly thing on her head... Yes. I picture a queen...

SAC2 Happy ... [Wine is more] formal (Male, 22).

SAC7: Dress code... The champagne is more loudly dressed [than wine]; has high heels; goes out on Friday. Wine would make it more formal as in going out for supper (Male, 25).

When asked if they would like to meet this metaphorical woman the general response was positive, with one participant saying she would be easy to get on with, and another

¹ The identifiers for focus group participants not their country of origin, the focus group they took part in (A, B, C, etc.) and their number as a participant within the group.

commenting that he would definitely like to get to know her. This story, and the enthusiasm the group showed in developing it, reveals an ambiguity in attitudes to sparkling wine; it is a girl's drink – but men can relate to it, and few men disliked it or refused to drink it. Those who had started to drink it often noted that it was the influence of their girlfriends which had caused the interest. The only exception was the UK, where champagne (though not sparkling wine) was considered normal as a drink for males on certain social occasions.

This leads to another factor which cut across gender; the explicit suggestion by respondents that their tastes will change and that they will grow to like wine generally, and perhaps sparkling wine, more in the future. This was especially the case in the British and Australian groups, as the following exchange from the latter country shows, but was evident everywhere although perhaps less in New Zealand.

Q: Do you have a preferred drink or are you a non-drinker?

AUB4: Beer or spirits (Male, 23).

Q: Is that the same with your friends?

AUB4: Yeah, beer and spirits pretty much... not many wine drinkers 'cos I think you kind of grow into wine as you get older, [your] palate changes.

One sensed, with this cohort, three general stages of alcohol behaviour. Until the age of about 22 or 23 their focus was on clubbing, which tended to involve regularly getting drunk, and thus focusing on drinks which provided the most alcohol content for the lowest price (for example, depending on the country, beer, or vodka and lime were often mentioned). From around the age of 22 to 25 the cohort was in transition; they were tending to drink more wine and were enjoying it. The oldest cohort; 26-30, also drank more wine and especially sparkling wine and champagne but seemed overall to be drinking less. Thus one New Zealand participant commented:

[I drink] less in one go. Yeah, I drink it more in the week than I used to. I used to just purely drink it on Saturday night and you'd have a couple of bottles of sparkling - but now I tend to have a couple of glasses during the week and not as much on the weekend, I hope (female, 26).

Such a development accords with previous anecdotal analyses of young peoples' drinking behaviour, where conversations between students in their mid twenties and some of the researchers has previously suggested that this may be the case.

Another regular comment about the consumption of sparkling wine was that it is a social drink. This had two aspects: the first was negative – it is not to be drunk alone. Thus, in an Australian focus group:

Q: Yet to sit at home and have a glass of sparkling would seem rather odd?

AUC6: Yeah (female, 23).

AUC1: Yeah (female, 28).

AUC4: It would be strange but still acceptable, not like seeing someone who was having sparkling at home by themselves was an alcoholic - I would just think they were a bit strange (female, 21).

The final comment is revealing. To drink sparkling wine on one's own was not so much a matter of seeming to be an alcoholic (although there were some who made that point) but rather it did not fit with how the wine was perceived. The converse of not drinking it alone is that sparkling wine is – in the words of one American informant – a dynamic drink. It is a drink of action, of liveliness, of moving on; still wine is a drink of reflection, of being static (sitting at dinner) of restraint. The very term used regularly, 'bubbly' reflected a sense of the dynamic impact of drinking it. One 19 year old South African female remarked that it gave her energy much more than wine. In this context, however, it is interesting to note that for

many informants, in all countries, sparkling wine tended not to be a drink for bars and clubs. It was often thought too expensive in those situations and felt to be impractical; carrying a glass around was not as easy as taking a premixed drink or beer in a bottle.

Inevitably, sparkling wine tended to be seen as a product related to celebration; the South African participants were unanimous about this, and it was regularly commented on everywhere. In South Africa it was considered only relevant as a drink of celebration – whereas in other countries there were some consumers who felt that a wider variety of consumption situations were available (for instance, a day at the races in New Zealand and Australia). Interestingly, however, whilst a number of references were made to drinking it at twenty-first birthday celebrations, there were few mentions of eighteenth birthdays - possibly it would have been considered inappropriate at the younger age. The one situation in which it was unanimously considered inappropriate, referred to a number of times, was at funerals.

It has previously been suggested that some consumers – probably a minority – consider sparkling wine to be an entirely different product category from still wine (Charters, 2009; Thach & Olsen, 2005). The findings from this study reinforce that idea substantially, and suggest two reasons for this. The first is the differentiation resulting from the product itself – it has bubbles. The second is the situations in which it is drunk; they are social, and celebratory (the latter in part because of the impact of the bubbles). In some locations (notably South Africa and New Zealand, though less so in Australia and the UK) the participants were unanimous that the two are different. Clearly, the images of sparkling wine (in contradistinction with those of still wine), the idea that it is a female drink, its symbolic role in celebration and its social nature - all combined to create a different perception of what it was. It may well be that older, high-involvement drinkers, who focus on production processes and ideas such as terroir cannot divorce sparkling wine from other forms of wine,

but for a younger group less interested in the technicalities, it is the experience of the product (bubbly, dynamic) that marks it out as distinctive.

4.2 *Divergent perspectives*

Whilst there were some common perspectives amongst focus group participants, there were also differences – some of which may be culturally explicable.

The first of these relates to knowledge levels. Each country had certain areas where its representatives tended to be more or less knowledgeable. Those in wine producing areas (Australia, New Zealand and the Sonoma region of the USA) tended to display more understanding of production issues. On the other hand, those in the UK were more aware of different styles and of types of wine. This variation was particularly relevant with regard to champagne brands (the one type of sparkling wine that because of its international profile should be widely recognised across all national groups). Figure 1 gives a summary of unaided recall of brand names. The figure shows unaided brand recall at three levels. The highest displays regular, unprompted and uncued references in focus groups (i.e. the participants had not previously been given the name of the brand). The second level shows occasional recall and the third level, in the UK only, shows a one-off reference.

TAKE IN FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE

The American participants only commented about two prestige cuvees, which are amongst the most expensive wines, and they seemed unaware of any others. Moët et Chandon was noted in the other countries (but only just known in South Africa), and Veuve Clicquot was also well recognised. Bollinger showed some product recall (perhaps because of product placement in James Bond films and Absolutely Fabulous), as did Dom Pérignon. The UK

showed the widest brand awareness (though hardly a wide range), but it was the only country to include a wine other than a *grande marque*. Mandois is a very small, lesser-known house, which had, however, received wide exposure in two major supermarket chains. Cristal often (though not invariably) cropped up in relationship to the fact that it has been drunk by rap artists.

A second, and related, issue was the relationship between champagne and sparkling wine. Participants were probed about whether or not they were essentially the same or different. Many said they are different, not only because of their price, but also based on their quality and the likely consumption situation, although a number also maintained they are the same, it is merely that champagne comes from its eponymous region in France. However, the reported consumption behaviour of the informants was significant in terms of their attitudes to the products. In Australia and perhaps New Zealand the impression was given that some young consumers drank (or would drink, if they could afford it) sparkling wine and champagne on a continuum, from the very cheapest fizz, via premium and ultra premium, and on to champagne. In the UK there was a much stronger focus on champagne (reflected in the brand recognition noted above) which probably relates to the country's longstanding role as the major export market for the wine. Although some participants there talked about drinking cava from Spain, sparkling wine generally was considered to be definitely low quality, and often to be avoided. The Americans all tended to drink fairly cheap sparkling wine, and most of the ones they mentioned were the high volume brands (such as André or Korbel). As previously observed, they were aware of very expensive champagnes, but there seemed to be a gap between the cheapest and the ultra-expensive with only a few mentions of (the intermediate) Domaine Chandon in the Sonoma focus groups.

Attitudes to price varied. Naturally good value is always sought, and a low price was desirable, particularly where the informants were students – but it was not an inevitable target. In Australia, particularly, the comment was made that a low price was not essential.

AUA8: A little bit is to do with the price – I do prefer the more pricey options, like for example, the Yarraburn Sparkling wine - I would choose [that] over having Yellow by Yellow Glen. It's definitely about taste. ... So yeah – I ... think that price definitely helps. And with Champagne itself - that is amazing. Like it's in a whole class of its own. Yeah things like Veuve, Dom Pérignon or the Moët. All of them have just been pretty exceptional - and it's been a really special occasion so that we have brought them out (female, 21).

This point of view was repeated by speakers in other focus groups, who were positive (or at least not negative) about higher priced wines. In New Zealand a slightly different approach was taken. One informant commented that she tended to drink less sparkling wine precisely because the best were more expensive, and she did not want to drink something that was poor quality, and there was a sense that quality was important, albeit only one of the concerns of participants. A further variant on this theme was adopted in other focus groups – and particularly in the UK; that as sparkling wine and champagne were social drinks, and often given as gifts, you did not want to be seen as mean because you purchased something less expensive. Thus,

UKB1: If I bought my girlfriend a bottle of sparkling wine, I'd always buy champagne, because you feel like a cheapskate if you turn up... and she'd call me a cheapskate as well (male, 23).

The term cheapskate was also used in other UK focus groups.

On the other hand, in South Africa and the USA, and amongst younger participants generally, there was a much greater focus on buying cheaper wine. In part that mirrors the fact that there seemed to be less awareness of the mid-priced wines between the large volume brands and champagne. This is a nuanced analysis; there were still consumers prepared to pay for more expensive wines, but less so than in other countries. Thus, when asked what determines purchase behaviour, one Sonoma group had the following discussion:

USSB6: Price – good old Andre’s at \$4.99- I didn’t say it was good; it’s cheap, if you’re buying multiple bottles. If it’s a really good occasion I stick with brand names I know, like Korbel is one I’ve seen people bring, it’s not expensive...

(male, 21)

USSB4: It’s strictly price for me. I don’t drink it enough to distinguish better ones and [I] like Andre – that’s fine with me (female, 25).

USSB2: I don’t think I’ve ever bought it; but I think if I brought Andre to an anniversary dinner party or something, I’d probably get beat up or something

(female, 22).

Laughter.

USSB2: My personal opinion, I would say price but not if it’s a special occasion

The Texan participants showed even more commitment to lower priced wines; only a very special occasion would call for something a bit more expensive.

The final area in which the different national groups showed different views was in their response to the images shown during the focus groups. This is a large topic, to be investigated in more detail in subsequent publications by the authors, but a few examples are

immediately informative. First, one picture displayed an advert for a Champagne Mumm; a bottle was lying on its side, mostly out of view except for the label. There was a flute of champagne alongside and a red ribbon to the right and above it. This image was very popular in New Zealand and Australia. The colours – red, gold and a dark background – were considered to be classy. The image overall was described as elegant and high-quality, with the red ribbon adding a touch of romance for a couple of New Zealand participants.

However, whilst UK participants perceived the same image to be classic, a number also felt it was boring and dowdy – with some explicitly saying they did not like the ribbons. The Americans tended to agree it was classic and displayed prestige, but perhaps without the same enthusiasm as the antipodeans.

On the other hand, an image advertising of a Tasmanian sparkling wine, with outdoor images, a river cascading through a ravine, and a headline ‘Pristine Tasmanian air, captured by Jansz in tiny bubbles and exported throughout the world’, received other varying responses. The Australian participants, who would have been most aware of the brand, were negative about the image; it was ‘boring’, too white, and too wordy. On the other hand, the New Zealanders were less negative, describing it as natural and healthy. The British were ambivalent – some liked its ‘freshness’ and sense of tranquillity although most, not knowing Jansz, thought it was either an advert for sparkling water or tourism in Tasmania. Whilst a few Americans liked it, most considered it boring, a bit bland and too wordy. It is thus clear that, the use of image, colour and positioning differs markedly from country to country amongst Generation Y consumers.

5.0 Discussion and conclusion

This exploratory research study highlights important linkages to the literature, as well as suggesting some clear wine marketing implications. Certain aspects of previously noted

behaviour by this cohort have been reinforced, such as their desire to obtain good value (Noble et al., 2009; Qenani-Petrela et al., 2007). In terms of theoretical connections, the differences highlighted between countries do give credence to the concept that Generation Y does not hold the same viewpoints and perspectives across cultures (Durvasula & Lysonski, 2008). At the (Noble et al., 2009) same time, their emphasis on champagne and sparkling wine as a drink of celebration and for social purposes does support research suggesting that Generation Y commonly enjoys fun and sensory experiences -- which sparkling wine provides (Sheahan, 2005). Furthermore the fact that sparkling wine is filled with bubbles and is 'dynamic' fits this theme.

Other theoretical significance has to do with Generation Y viewing sparkling wine as something they will 'grow into'. This suggests that lifecycle, rather than generation may be significant as a specific consumer demographic influence (Bruwer, Li, & Reid, 2001; Thach & Olsen, 2002). Likewise, perceiving champagne and sparkling wine as a 'women's drink,' also highlights the issue that other variables are at play – in this case, gender – and that additional segmentation beyond that provided by generation is warranted.

Additionally, it is interesting that participants often spoke of sparkling wine as dynamic whereas still wine was seen as static and perhaps reflective. This is one case where the attributes of the product (the movement of its bubbles) takes on a metaphorical position in the minds of consumers – it is a wine 'on the move'. At the same time, this movement seemed to have some negative connotations as well – 'I don't like being light-headed' was considered to be a result of the more dynamic influence of the alcohol on the body.

In terms of marketing implications, there are several important areas to consider. The first has to do with this cohort's emphasis on champagne and sparkling wine as a social drink and one that promotes celebration and sharing. Therefore, in advertising, it should not be portrayed as a solitary drink. This is also linked to the concept that Generation Y perceives

sparkling wine to be a different category from still wine. For example, there have been several successful advertisements in the US market where a woman comes home from a long day at work and pours herself a glass of still wine to relax. This study suggests that substituting a glass of bubbly in this situation would not work.

The fact that champagne and sparkling wine is considered to be a separate and special drink indicates that it should be marketed separately from still wine. Although there have been efforts by some sparkling wine producers to promote sparkling wine as an ‘everyday drink,’ this study suggests this would not be well received by this cohort. However, there is an opportunity to expand the number and type of ‘special occasions,’ such as opening a bottle of fizz with friends at a bar to celebrate the end of the working week, having champagne with Sunday breakfast as a new family tradition, or taking a bottle to a beach party and highlighting how lovely the bubbles look against the sand and ocean.

There is also ample opportunity to market this product as a woman’s drink. Promotions that feature it as the preferred drink on girl’s night out and as a great gift to buy for a female friend should be well-received by Generation Y. Likewise, sparkling wine marketers could expand promotions that target men to buy Champagne for their significant other on special occasions, such as birthdays, anniversaries and Valentine’s Day – something which a few of the champagne houses are already doing.

The fact that many young Generation Y respondents believe that they will ‘grow into’ champagne and sparkling wine suggests that there is a marketing opportunity to show images which portray more sophisticated, slightly older members of this cohort (late 20’s; early 30’s) drinking this kind of wine and being successful. Advertisements that encourage older cohort members to ‘treat themselves better by upgrading...’ to match their worldly success should be well received – a form of aspirational marketing (Hall & Winchester, 2000). Indeed,

according to the Australian focus groups, there is actually a good reason not to promote cheap

sweet sparkling wine, because those in Generation Y who started drinking this style were turned off by it and more apt to adopt other drinks as they grew older.

Finally, the fact that there were so many differences in response to the images across cultures, as well as the amount of money Generation Y were willing to pay by country reinforces the notion of how important it is to understand local markets before undertaking any marketing promotions. Champagne and sparkling wine marketers will want to do further intensive research on the images that should be portrayed in advertisements, as well as the pricing that will be most successful in each market.

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