Can information about Australia affect Chinese consumers’ wine choice?

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Introduction

Previous studies have shown that country of origin (COO) is one of the most important choice cues for wine, and is especially important in China, where France has a strong dominance in the premium wine market. In this study, the same Chinese red wine consumers completed a repeated discrete choice experiment, with simulated wine bottles on a shelf, to test the effectiveness of different messages about Australia in influencing their choice of Australian wine compared to that of other countries.

Australian messages

Five short advertorial-type articles were created, based on COO associations in the literature and from input by wine marketing experts. The messages were used to influence consumers at the point of purchase. A control article unrelated to wine was also created. Chinese consumers (n=278 per message, in three cities) read one article just before the first choice experiment. After approximately ten days, consumers repeated the task, this time without seeing any messages, to assess the longer term effect of the messages.

The messages about Australia increased the importance of country of origin for the wines selected, which practically doubled for most of the articles. The articles were still effective after 10 days. The messages about clean environment and the preferred taste of Australian wine were the most successful in increasing choice of Australian wine over French, Chinese and Italian wines in both the short and medium term. Consumers became more price sensitive in the second choice test, likely due to greater familiarity with the task.

Conclusions

- Reading an article about Australia considerably increased Australian market share, even 10 days after reading.
- This study confirms the importance of a clean environment to Chinese consumers, above that of strong regulation.
- Showing Chinese consumers that they prefer the taste of Australian wine is an effective way to increase Australian market share.
- Buyer review and expert ratings are very important for the wine choice of Chinese consumers.
- As expected, price was a very important attribute when choosing a wine: the optimum price range was RMB 130 to 190.

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