

The Research Questionnaire Technique: reports of its 'death' have been grossly exaggerated

J. B. Thomas^{1,3,4}, A. J. Saliba^{1,3}, and J. Bruwer^{2,5}

¹ National Wine and Grape Industry Centre, Charles Sturt University, Australia.

² The University of Adelaide, Australia.

³ School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Australia.

⁴ School of Social Work, Charles Sturt University, Australia.

⁵ School of Agriculture, Food and Wine



INTRODUCTION

The validity of questionnaire methodologies has recently been scrutinised more than ever before, partly due to the rise of sophisticated alternatives such as Discrete Choice Analysis (DCA). It has been noted that there is some limitation in assessing the importance of wine choice characteristics as separate entities as generally used in questionnaires. The reason for this is that a decision is inevitably the result of an amalgamation of choice characteristics (Lockshin, Mueller, Louviere, Francis, & Osidacz, 2009). Initial concerns over the validity of traditional questionnaire results may however be premature.

The present study aimed to assess:

1. The relative importance of wine choice factors.
2. How the results of the present study varied from the wine choice literature with consideration given to experimental design issues such as methodology and sample size.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

A geographically balanced Australian sample was obtained (n = 1,229) and the data collection was executed by means of a telephone survey. A sub-sample of only NSW participants who consumed red wine (n = 141) was also created for the purpose of methodological comparison between the results of the present questionnaire based study and that of the Lockshin et al (2009) DCA study. Participants were required to respond to various attitudinal statements in the format of a five-point likert scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree' according to the individuals' extent of agreement.

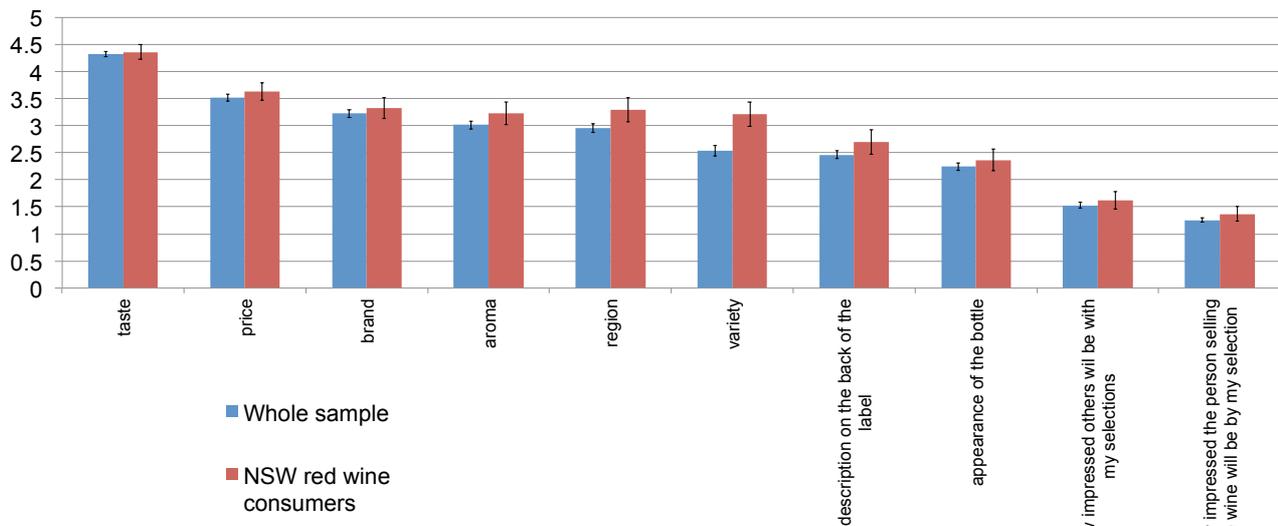


Figure 1: Wine choice factors – Mean and 2*SE

RESULTS

Mean scores were calculated for the wine choice items for the sample as a whole and also for the section of the NSW sub-sample. As Figure 1 shows, taste was the single agreeable item for both samples. Other items scoring a mean above 3 for whole sample were price, brand, and aroma. The NSW sub-sample scored the following choice items above 3; price, brand, region, aroma, and variety.

SUMMARY

Proponents of DCA have argued that it is a method which is cognitively and fundamentally different from other traditional methodologies such as the questionnaire technique. However, the findings of the present study are consistent with Lockshin et al's (2009) findings, with the exception of taste, as it was not incorporated as a factor in the DCA. This has important implications, as a good deal of research has been based on questionnaire-style collection techniques. Such congruence in findings suggests that the 'rumours' of the survey questionnaire's death have been greatly exaggerated.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This work was supported by the Winegrowing Futures Program, a joint initiative of the Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC) and the National Wine and Grape Industry Centre (NWGIC).