

# Qualitative study of alcohol consumers who choose to avoid wine

E. MCINTYRE, L.A. OVINGTON, A.J. SALIBA and C.C. MORAN

National Wine and Grape Industry Centre, and School of Psychology, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, NSW 2650, Australia

Corresponding author: Professor Anthony Saliba, email [asaliba@csu.edu.au](mailto:asaliba@csu.edu.au)

## Abstract

**Background and Aims:** This study aimed to investigate the similarities and differences in the reasons why alcohol consumers choose to avoid purchasing or consuming wine across five countries, and to investigate similarities and differences across three generations.

**Methods and Results:** Adults who consumed alcohol regularly, in healthy quantities, but rarely or never consumed wine were recruited from five countries and stratified into age groups. Online chat-based focus groups were conducted for each country and age group. Semantic themes were identified by applied thematic analysis. Three main categories were identified: complications with wine, cultural/social influences and wine characteristics. The reasons for avoiding wine were complex. Exceptions to this consensus were: people who disliked the taste of wine, and would not drink it under any circumstances; and the Indian participants who had a unique cultural experience with wine.

**Conclusions:** Taste was the primary reason for avoiding wine; however, social norms, personal experience and situations are also involved. The reported differences and similarities across countries and generations could assist the wine industry in targeting their marketing strategies.

**Significance of the Study:** This is the first qualitative study to explore the reasons for avoiding wine in adults who consume alcohol across countries and generations.

*Keywords:* avoidance, consumer, focus group, low consumption, wine

## Introduction

The marketing panacea is to create new customers without cannibalising existing sales. An estimated 36% of the adult population in Australia consume wine (Foundation for Alcohol Research 2012), consequently a theoretical 64% of the Australian adult population is a potential source of new wine consumers. The figures are similar in the USA where an estimated 35% drink wine (Jones 2013). There are precedents for a much higher wine consumption level, in the UK for instance, where it is estimated that 60.8% of the adult population consume wine (Ritchie 2007). With such a large potential new market, the current study focuses on why adult consumers of alcoholic beverages avoid wine.

Some consumers avoid consuming alcohol for reasons of religion, medication interactions or other reasons that render them outside the bounds of a potential market for wine. It is estimated that around 19% of the adult population in Australia do not consume any alcohol (Foundation for Alcohol Research 2012), which contrasts with the USA where 40% of adults are reported as non-wine consumers (Jones 2013). Based on the figures presented above, it can be estimated that approximately 45% of the Australian adult population is a potential new market for wine. Stated another way, these are consumers who drink alcoholic beverages but choose not to consume wine.

There is a generally accepted viewpoint that the global wine industry needs to increase the population of wine consumers (Diaz 2002). In the search for new wine consumers, some researchers have focused on how to segment the wine consumption markets in the USA (Thach and Olsen 2004) and Australia [e.g. Lockshin et al. (1997), Bruwer et al. (2002)],

even using novel methodologies such as identifying personality type (Saliba et al. 2009). These are important undertakings and vital to understand why people consume wine in all relevant contexts, and can assist in driving sales through existing consumers. The discoveries cannot be used, however, to ‘reverse engineer’ an understanding of why consumers of alcoholic beverages avoid drinking wine altogether.

A good deal of research has been conducted on key drivers of wine choice, with the influence of some factors such as taste (Keown and Casey 1995, Marin and Durham 2007), taste by segment (Pickering et al. 2014) and price (Schamel and Anderson 2003) well established, while others require more detailed consideration [e.g. region of origin; Johnson and Bruwer (2007)]. In fact, large advances have been made in understanding liking of the taste of wine in recent years. The most recent research suggests that those sensitive to features of wine (e.g. ‘heat’ from alcohol or bitterness) may face a barrier that others do not [for a review see Hanni (2013)]. Understanding the drivers of wine choice assists in marketing to consumers who already drink wine, but cannot necessarily be used to decipher why consumers choose to avoid wine. Indeed, examining the factors that drive consumption of other alcoholic beverages such as beer or spirits equally cannot be used to decipher why people avoid wine – the data would be informative but not definitive.

How consumers perceive wine quality can be related to taste, and is potentially an important factor contributing to low wine consumption. Charters and Pettigrew (2007) attempted to define wine quality as conceived by the consumer, and concluded that the complex multidimensional construct of wine quality is affected by the consumer’s varying levels of

involvement in wine. They also concluded that those who were less involved in wine were more affected by the sensory aspect of wine, which related to the amount of pleasure gained from drinking wine. Pleasure was considered a critical factor in the perception of wine quality. Therefore, if consumers have an unpleasurable experience related to the taste of wine they may relate that to the wine's quality. Repeated unpleasurable experiences in those who are less involved in wine may lead to concerns about wine quality and to them avoiding wine, especially those with less knowledge about wine. Those less involved with wine may rely on others for advice about wine, which is a factor that distinguishes between those who choose not to consume wine at a particular moment (as they are concerned about quality), compared with the decision to *never* drink wine, regardless of the situation.

Qualitative research has established the importance of context and beverage choice, especially where food is involved (Demossier 2004, Charters 2006). Cultural determinants and stereotypes abound [e.g. Barr (1995)] as to wine consumption choices, while generation (and therefore age) and gender are important variables in the choice of beverage (Ritchie et al. 2009). Health perception has also been shown to influence consumption (Saliba and Moran 2010), including psychological health such as drinking to relax, that is, to control a low level of anxiety (Moran and Saliba 2011). The complex relationship between demographic variables, context and culture, and their role in influencing day-to-day beverage choice is well studied; while related, these studies do not provide an understanding of the reasons why some consumers abstain (that is, completely avoid) the consumption of wine.

Klatsky et al. (1990), studied alcoholic beverage preference among white men and women enrolled in a Northern California health plan. Participants who preferred wine tended to be women, temperate, young or middle aged, non-smokers, better educated and free of symptoms or risk of illness. Thach and Olsen (2006) have examined wine consumption choices for a segment born between 1977 and 2000 (specifically they examined those of legal drinking age, between 21 and 28); some debate remains on the precise year range, but this cohort is known by multiple titles, perhaps the most common being Generation Y (Lazarevic 2012)—in the current study they will be referred to as *Millennials*. Although not a primary focus of their study, Thach and Olsen report the reasons participants gave for not drinking wine. The most prevalent at 57% was 'I don't like the taste', followed by 'it's not cool' at 11%, 'I don't know about wine', 'it gives me bad hangovers' and 'red wine stains my teeth' each at 7%. One potential limitation to the generalisability of the study was that participants were opportunity sampled from attendees at a Northern Californian college in the USA. It is unclear how accurate extrapolations to the wider population in the USA or other countries would be.

In the absence of any empirical research in the adult population, we conducted a qualitative study to explore the potential determinants of wine avoidance. Given that results are likely to differ across countries, we chose a range of established markets (Australia, Canada, USA and the UK) along with one emerging market (India). Because the work is exploratory and there is little previous work from which to draw hypotheses, no specific predictions are made. The broad research question we sought to answer was: why do alcohol consumers choose to avoid drinking or purchasing wine?, with the specific aim of investigating the similarities and differences in the reasons why alcohol consumers choose to avoid purchasing or consuming wine across countries and generations.

## Materials and methods

The practical purpose of this study was to explore reasons why people who drink alcohol choose to avoid wine and to explore differences in these reasons between each country.

### Ethics

Ethics approval was granted by the School of Psychology Ethics Committee, Charles Sturt University and complied with the Declaration of Helsinki.

### Recruitment and sample characteristics

Stratified purposive sampling was used to recruit adults of legal drinking age who consumed alcohol regularly, within healthy limits, but rarely or never consumed wine. An Australian market research company was used to recruit participants from an existing database of people who were interested in participating in consumer research. The participants were paid a small fee for their contribution to the focus groups. Participants were from five countries: Australia, India, Canada, the UK and the USA. Three focus groups were conducted for each country (15 in total) and were stratified into three age groups: Millennials, Generation X and Baby Boomers (BB). The Millennials age group differed for each country as each had a different legal drinking age. Table 1 summarises the segmentation of the focus groups. A total of 83 adults participated in this study with ages ranging from 21 to 64 years old [Mean = 40.60 years, SD = 12.24 years, standard error (SE) = 1.34]. There were 19 participants from both India (mean age = 39.11, SD = 12.82) and Australia (mean age = 41.84, SD = 13.53), 16 from Canada (mean age = 38.63, SD = 11.47), 15 from the UK (mean age = 41.40, SD = 11.51), and 14 from the USA (mean age = 41.00, SD = 12.40).

The sample demographic characteristics varied little between countries, with the exception of India. All the Indian participants ( $n = 19$ ) were male, and were more highly educated with over half (52.6%) having completed a masters degree, compared to the other four countries where the highest level of education was a bachelor degree. The lack of Indian female participants may be related to difficulties recruiting participants in India. Table 2 summarises the demographic characteristics of the sample.

### Data collection

Data for all focus groups were collected using a real-time, text-based online forum that was facilitated by the recruitment company. The second author observed the focus groups and took field notes. Semi-structured, open-ended questions were asked in the same order for each group (Table S1), with different probing questions used by the facilitator as needed to encourage

**Table 1.** Focus group segmentation according to age group and country showing the total number of participants per group and per gender.

Age group	Australia	Canada	UK	USA	India
18–34 years (Millennials)‡	6 (4, 2)†	6 (3, 3)	5 (3, 2)	4 (1, 3)	8 (8, 0)
35–46 years (Generation X)	6 (1, 5)	7 (4, 3)	4 (3, 1)	5 (3, 2)	5 (5, 0)
47+ (Baby Boomers)	7 (5, 2)	3 (1, 2)	6 (5, 1)	5 (2, 3)	6 (6, 0)

†Total  $n$  (males, females). ‡The legal drinking age differs in each country so the age range in each country reflected that difference. The legal drinking age in the USA and India is 21 years, in Canada 19 years, and in Australia and the UK 18 years.

**Table 2.** Participant demographic characteristics: gender, marital status, occupation and education.

	n (%)				
	Australia	Canada	UK	USA	India
<b>Marital status</b>					
Single	4 (21.1)	4 (25.0)	5 (33.3)	2 (14.3)	3 (15.8)
In a relationship	4 (21.1)	2 (12.5)	2 (13.3)	1 (7.1)	–
De facto	2 (10.5)	–	–	–	–
Married	9 (47.4)	7 (43.8)	8 (53.3)	5 (35.7)	15 (78.9)
Separated	–	1 (6.3)	–	3 (21.4)	–
Divorced	–	–	–	3 (21.4)	–
Widowed	–	2 (12.5)	–	–	1 (5.3)
<b>Occupation</b>					
Production/transport worker	1 (4.2)	–	–	–	1 (5.3)
Tradesperson/labourer	2 (8.3)	1 (6.3)	–	–	–
Clerical/service worker	4 (21.1)	4 (25.0)	3 (20.0)	2 (14.3)	3 (15.8)
Stay at home parent	1 (5.3)	1 (6.3)	1 (6.7)	3 (21.4)	–
Manager/administrator	1 (5.3)	4 (25.0)	6 (40.0)	–	9 (47.4)
Professional	3 (15.8)	2 (12.5)	2 (13.3)	3 (21.4)	4 (21.1)
Student	–	1 (6.3)	2 (6.7)	1 (7.1)	–
Between work	2 (10.5)	1 (6.3)	2 (13.3)	1 (7.1)	–
Retiree	3 (12.5)	2 (12.5)	–	1 (7.1)	1 (5.3)
Other	2 (10.5)	–	–	3 (21.4)	–
<b>Education</b>					
High school	7 (36.8)	4 (25.0)	7 (46.7)	6 (42.9)	1 (5.3)
Certificate/diploma	7 (36.8)	1 (6.3)	1 (6.7)	1 (7.1)	1 (5.3)
Bachelor's degree	5 (26.3)	11 (68.8)	7 (46.7)	7 (50.0)	6 (31.6)
Master's degree	–	–	–	–	10 (52.6)

n = 83.

richer responses. Participants were asked to type their responses to each question in a chat window. Responses were recorded in real time and provided for analysis as verbatim transcripts. As the transcripts were typed by participants in the online forum, the quotes presented in the results may have grammatical and spelling errors as they are reported verbatim. The chat room data are presented as per traditional focus group data, with comments relating to each individual participant in order of discussion. Data collection occurred during November and December 2013.

### Data analysis

The analytic purpose of the study was to identify explicit semantic themes involved in avoiding wine, therefore applied thematic analysis was used as described by Guest et al. (2012). Applied thematic analysis incorporates a range of methodological approaches and aims to ensure analytical transparency and credibility. This is achieved through a systematic inductive approach to data analysis. This technique was chosen, as it is suited to large data sets, and can be applied to real world problems. The data analysis began with importing all data collected into NVivo 10 (QSR International, Melbourne, Vic., Australia)—a software package used to code and organise the data. The transcripts were read repeatedly and coded into themes and categories. During this process, a codebook was developed based on the emerging themes that included definitions of the themes identified. A second researcher checked the

**Table 3.** Summary of categories and themes involved in choosing to avoid wine.

Main category	Primary themes	Secondary themes
Complications	Consuming	Context Effects
	Purchasing	Confusion Price
Cultural and social influences	Identity	Gender stereotypes Cultural stereotypes Contextual stereotypes
	Purpose	Advertising Pleasure Social
Wine characteristics	Food	Consumed with food Cooking with wine
	Recommendations	Significant others Liquor store staff
	Health benefits	
	Sensory experience	Taste Smell
Fake wine‡	Alcohol content	
	Other characteristics	Not refreshing Speed of drinking†

†Themes that occurred only in the Australian and UK groups. ‡Themes that occurred only in the Indian focus groups.

themes and definitions reflected the transcripts accurately, and disagreements in coding were resolved through discussion and mutual agreement.

## Results

Wine avoidance themes fell into three main categories. The first category reflects the complications people faced when consuming and purchasing wine. The second category encompasses the cultural stereotypes these people hold about wine, and the social influences that lead them to consume wine. The final category reflects wine characteristics that people reported being associated with the reasons why they avoid wine. Each of these categories contained several primary and secondary themes (see Table 3). For most participants, across all countries and age groups, the reasons for avoiding wine were complex, and there was not one reason but several. There were two exceptions to this general consensus: people who disliked the taste of wine, and stated they would not drink it under any circumstances; and the Indian participants who had a unique cultural experience. Unlike other countries, the Indian participants describe problems related to fake wines that are widely available in India. Their reasons for avoiding wine most frequently involved concerns about fake wine—discussed separately in these results.

### Complications with wine

The complications with the wine category included complications with both consuming and purchasing wine, which most participants discussed. In terms of consuming wine, many participants across all groups described that the context was an important factor in choosing whether or not to drink wine. The context was either a barrier or an incentive to consume wine, and was most frequently dependent on the situation (formal or informal), or influenced by time of year (hot or cold temperature). Many participants said they would drink wine if at a special event such as a wedding, or a formal dinner or date, as

they did not think it was appropriate to drink other types of drinks such as beer, and if they were offered a wine it would not be polite to refuse it. Although, some did state that the situation was irrelevant as they 'don't like the taste'. Situation was not as important to the majority of Indian participants, with most Indian people prepared to drink wine at any occasion. These beliefs may reflect the learned associations people have about where wine is consumed.

The physical effects were also a complication of wine consumption. The majority of participants described unwanted side effects that were often the reason they chose not to drink wine. The negative effects included feeling sick, headache the next day, a worse than usual hangover and getting drunk too quickly. These negative effects, however, were experienced in different ways (i.e. more or less extreme reactions), which may be related to individual differences (e.g. genetics). A purported positive effect was relaxation; however, this was contingent on the right context. The feeling of relaxation from drinking wine was welcomed if at home having a quiet evening. But in the context of certain social events where relaxation is not the aim, wine was often avoided. Side effects were less of an issue for Indian and American participants compared to the other countries.

The complications involved in purchasing wine included the secondary themes, confusion and price. Most participants described purchasing wine as being confusing, which was a result of having too much choice, or having a lack of knowledge about wine. There are many varieties, types and brands of wine available at a wide range of prices, and with little knowledge about wine most participants found it difficult to make a choice. Price was another complication that proved to be an issue across countries and generations. Most participants believed that a good wine was an expensive wine and unaffordable. A few Indian participants, however, believed it was a cheaper option as alcohol is taxed by alcohol content in India. For example, two participants stated: 'Wines cost less than whiskey' (IN, 47+, #24384), and '... wines are cheap' (IN, 47+, #24378). Examples of characteristic responses related to complications with consuming and with purchasing wine are presented in Table 4.

### Cultural and social influences

The second category was the cultural and social influences on drinking wine. This category included five primary themes: identity, purpose, food, recommendations and health benefits. The theme identity reflected stereotypes people held about wine and significant factors influencing their occasional wine consumption. Secondary themes related to identity were of stereotypes people held regarding wine (gender, cultural and contextual) and the lack of exposure to wine advertising.

Gender stereotype was a strong theme across all countries, being more commonly discussed in the Millennial generation, where people viewed wine as a feminine drink and beer as a masculine drink. Not all held this schema, however, for example: 'I think it's genderless. It's associated with fancy, rich events' (CAN, 19–34, #24293). This statement also illustrates a cultural stereotype related to class; wine is for sophisticated, classy people and was considered by some to be pretentious. This class stereotype was discussed much less by the Baby Boomers across countries compared to other generations. In contrast, there were a few comments about wines at the lower end of the price range being cheap and nasty, for example: 'if it was a cheap and nasty variety that turns a mug a stain of red. Imagine what it does to your stomach' (AUS, 35–46, #24333). There were also cultural stereotypes identified related to ethnicity, in which people associated wine as part of the European culture, where Europeans of all ages are raised to drink wine

**Table 4.** Characteristic responses reflecting the complications involved in consuming and purchasing wine.

Complications	
Primary and secondary themes	Characteristic responses
<b>Consuming</b>	
Context	Celebrations, toasts, special occasion brew (AU, 47+, #2435) I don't drink wine at a pub or bar (CA, 35–44, #24313) ... I go with wine very rarely unless there is a celebration (IN, 47+, #24375)
Effects	Literally the worst hangover of my life, I was sick in public (first time ever), sick in my sleep and still so poorly the next afternoon I couldn't drive myself home and had to be collected. I've never drunk it since (UK, 18–34, #24261) Yes the worst headache I have ever had (USA, 35–44, #24403) You feel sleepy right away (CA, 35–46, #24310)
<b>Purchasing</b>	
Confusion	And yes, once or twice I've bought it at a store ... too many choices and I have NO knowledge so I found it overwhelming as I was trying to buy it to take to a dinner (CA, 35–44, #24315) As far as wine is concerned- I believe, in India more knowledge and marketing is required + availability (IN, 21–34, #24361) Reply: that would makes us all a wine connoisseur [sic] (#24352)
Price	Cost too much for a good one (AU, 47+, #24342) [Wine is] overrated and expensive (USA, 35–46, #24400)

AU, Australia; CA, Canada; IN, India.

from an early age. This was most strongly expressed by the Millennials across countries. While not a strong theme, another cultural stereotype was age, where wine is believed to be a drink for older people, and that the taste for wine is acquired as a person gets older. This was mostly expressed in the younger age groups, for example, 'One day I'm going to grow up and have to learn to like it, cause that's what my parents/their friends drink at their age' (CAN, 19–34, #24291).

Contextual stereotypes associated with identity reflected the belief that wine should only be consumed on special occasions, and not as an everyday drink. This belief was expressed strongly in the two younger Canadian groups and the youngest American group, with only a few people expressing this belief in the remaining groups. Advertising was a secondary theme related to identity in which people reflected on how little wine advertising they noticed. This theme was strongest in the Indian Millennials, with little mention of it in the remaining groups. In contrast, some people acknowledged that wine is actively promoted, for example: 'yeah it's advertised in every mass media' (IN, 21–34, #24362).

The purpose of wine was a primary theme related to the belief that wine has a specific purpose that is pleasurable or social. It was commonly reported that wine provides pleasure

for those who drink it, and is drunk in and assists in social situations. The belief that wine produces pleasure occurred across all groups with the exception of the Canadian Millennials. This contrasts to the Canadian Generation X and the Indian Millennials where it was a strong theme. The belief that wine is a social drink was a strong theme expressed across all groups.

Food was the third primary theme associated with cultural and social influences that was discussed across all groups. Food was most frequently connected to associations with wine being served with food and to a lesser degree being used for cooking. Many people believed wine enhanced a food experience, and said that the only time they would drink wine is at dinner with others. The fourth primary theme within social influences was recommendations from significant others, and how they influence a person's decision to consume or purchase wine. This was discussed across all countries and generations. People with little wine knowledge depended on people they trust to provide recommendations about wine. This would help them choose a wine on the few occasions they do purchase or consume wine. Some people found liquor store staff were helpful with choosing a wine, but not all had this experience, for example: 'usually the store staff do not offer good recommendations or suggestions' (AU, 18–34, #24325) and 'the store staff gave me the bottle and suggested . . . but it was little confusing' (AU, 18–34, #24325).

The final primary theme in this category is knowledge about the health benefits of wine. There was confusion about the health benefits with some people believing there are health benefits to drinking wine and others being more cautious of this health information. For example: 'There's supposed to be cardiovascular and anti-carcinogenesis benefits but some of that would be offset by the health concerns of drinking alcohol' (AU, 18–34, #24318). When asked by the moderator, 'where do you think the talk about the health advantage has come from?' One response was: 'probably the wine industry' (AU, 47+, #24345). Examples of characteristic responses related to cultural and social influences surrounding wine are provided in Table 5.

### *Wine characteristics*

The third category emerging from the focus groups is how certain wine characteristics influenced the avoidance of wine, which included primary themes: sensory experience (taste and smell), other characteristics (alcohol content, not refreshing and speed of drinking) and the existence of fake wine (India only). When discussing the sensory experience of wine, an unpleasant taste was by far the most commonly reported barrier to drinking wine. The most common reason for not liking the taste of wine was personal preference, with many people commenting they could not get rid of the taste. The Millennials spoke the most frequently about the unpleasant taste of wine. In India, the issue of unpleasant taste related to fake wines, with most Indians liking the taste of 'authentic wines': '[Wine] tastes good' (IN, 21–34 years, #24356). An unpleasant smell was not an important characteristic for most participants. Only people in the two older Australian groups reported not liking the smell of wine. In contrast, a few people in the youngest Indian group reported liking the smell. One Australian participant stated liking the smell but not the taste: 'I like the smell [of wine] but the taste I don't like' (AU, 35–46, #24330).

Within the secondary theme, other wine characteristics alcohol content was considered a barrier by some participants, as it made people feel inebriated too quickly. This was contrasted in the Indian Baby Boomers where wine was considered

a low alcohol beverage: 'since wine has low % of alcohol it is supposed mild drink' (IN, 47+, #24376). Other wine characteristics that were perceived as barriers to consuming wine were discussed by a few participants, such as wine is not a refreshing drink, and it cannot be consumed quickly.

Indian participants reported unique reasons for avoiding wine compared to other countries. Most Indian participants liked drinking wine, but avoided consuming or purchasing it, as it is difficult to determine what is 'real' wine. Participants spoke about the prevalence of 'fake' wines, and that it is difficult to know where to purchase authentic wine. When discussing taste most Indian participants described liking real wine but disliking 'fake' wines. Examples of characteristic responses relating to wine characteristics are provided in Table 6.

### **Discussion**

This was the first qualitative study conducted across several countries to explore why some alcohol consumers of legal drinking age choose to avoid wine, across three generations. The themes identified fell into three main categories: complications when consuming and purchasing wine, cultural and social influences and wine characteristics. Within these themes, the reasons given for avoiding wine were complex and varied. Complications related to consuming wine were similar across countries and generations, and related to the context in which wine is consumed and the effects of wine. The context of alcohol consumption also related to social influences. A common belief was that wine is reserved for special occasions, congruent with previous research finding that the motivation to drink wine is dependent on the situation (Charters and Pettigrew 2008, Ritchie 2011). In this study, however, the enjoyment of drinking wine on these occasions was sometimes outweighed by the negative physical and sensory experiences, such as disliking the taste, headaches, severe hangovers and feeling drunk too quickly. These negative experiences cause people to avoid drinking wine.

The current study found that an unpleasant taste was the most frequently reported barrier to drinking wine across countries. The importance of taste in avoiding wine has been suggested in adolescents (Thach and Olsen 2006) and Australian adults (Thach and Olsen 2006, Charters and Pettigrew 2008) highlighting its importance as a barrier to drinking wine, at least for some demographics. The current study extended these findings by establishing taste as a determinant of wine avoidance for adults across all countries tested. The Indian participants differed from other countries, as an unpleasant taste was associated with 'fake wines' that represented poor wine quality. While perceptions about wine quality have been suggested to be associated with low wine involvement (Charters and Pettigrew 2007), this does not appear to be the case in India, as Indian participants wanted to be more involved in wine and have better access to 'authentic wines'.

Wine drinking experience influences preferences between novices and experts, but also between experts and highly involved consumers such as those who work in the industry (Blackman et al. 2010) such that wine liking develops with exposure, as well as age (Bruwer et al. 2011); the effect for age is likely to be a combination of exposure and physiological changes that occur throughout the lifespan. Education and increased exposure to wine are two areas the wine industry could focus on to help people develop the palates of potential wine consumers. Learning to appreciate the different sensory experiences related to wine, and more frequent exposure to tasting wine may help people overcome taste as a barrier to drinking wine.

**Table 5.** Characteristic responses reflecting cultural and social influences involved in drinking alcohol.

Cultural and social influences	
Primary and secondary themes	Characteristic responses
<b>Identity</b>	
Gender stereotypes	It's a kind of feminine drink (AU, 18–34, #24325) The lads tend to drink beer and the girls wine (UK, 47+, #24287)
Cultural stereotypes	Sophistication, class, European (CA, 47+, 24303) No because if you go to France, Italy or Bordeaux everyone drinks wine including children with their meals (UK, 47+, #24284) Old people drink wine (no offense) (CA, 19–34, #24291)
Contextual stereotypes	It [wine] was intended for special occasions (CA, 19–34, #24291)
Advertising	[Wine is] not easily available, not promoted much in India (IN, 21–34, #24361) I rarely ever see wine advertised (USA, 35–46, #24400)
<b>Purpose</b>	
Pleasure	Pleasure and a good way to socialise (AU, 18–34, #24325) I understand the purpose of wine for cooking, pleasure and it is a nice atmospheric drink . . . (USA, 35–46, #24400) Wine exerts a deep influence on me filling me with full of joy and ecstasy (IN, 21–34, #24362)
Social	A sociable drink (UK, 47+, #24281) I think wine is best to help you socially (IN, 21–34, #24356)
<b>Food</b>	
Consumed with food	I tend to be a beer drinker but will always have a glass of wine with a meal in restaurant (UK, 47+, #24287) Wine goes along with food well (IN, 21–34, #24359)
Cooking with wine	I see wine as a cooking thing (AU, 47+, #24343)
<b>Recommendations</b>	
Significant others	There is a GREAT expensive restaurant near me that has a deal on wine and appetisers one night a week. My friend who loves wine talked me into going a month ago, and now it is a weekly night out . . . and I totally love the experience! (CA, 35–46, #24315) My dad loved red wine and he taught me everything I know (CA, 35–46, #24317)
Liquor store staff	I stick with what I know unless I want to try something new/different will ask for recommendations from the store assistant/friends/family (AU, 18–34, #24327) Also local liquor store owners have very limited knowledge of wines (IN, 21–34, #24356) The shopkeeper usually suggests the wine (IN, 21–34, #24359)
<b>Health benefits</b>	
	It [wine] can be very beneficial to heart health and relaxation (USA, 21–34, #24395) I've heard that drinking something like a glass of red wine a day is good for the heart . . . (UK, 18–34, #24260) Wine is good for your health and heart and help prevent heart disease and stroke (IN, 47+, #24382)

AU, Australia; CA, Canada; IN, India.

### Recommendations for the wine industry

Wine is a complicated beverage for consumers to navigate, both in terms of the product itself, and the factors that influence consumption of wine. If consuming wine can be simplified there is likely to be an increase in wine consumption in people who are currently avoiding it. Education about wine would also ameliorate complications related to purchasing and consuming wine (e.g. food matches, appropriate style for context).

Breaking down social stereotypes is an area the wine industry could focus on with their marketing. A possible marketing opportunity is to demonstrate that wine can be a more casual drink, debunking the belief that wine is for special occasions and needs to be drunk with a meal. Related to this is the importance of the need to establish identity and how this relates to wine avoidance. As demonstrated, people are influenced by their peers and perceived social norms, and need to be connected to their social groups. Advertising could use popular personalities relevant to particular demographics to demonstrate wine is a good choice of alcoholic beverage for specific occasions. Celeb-

rity endorsement has previously been discussed as an effective way to develop brand loyalty in Millennials (Lazarevic 2012). Millennials are an emerging potential market that has a higher level of engagement in social media compared to more traditional forms of media (e.g. print media and television). The wine industry needs to consider how it can use this media to engage with this market more effectively in order to make wine a more appealing choice of alcoholic beverage for young adults.

Recognising cultural differences is critical. As we have found in this study, there are significant cultural differences between countries in some facets of wine perception. For example, Indians appear to be more image oriented, as they consider wine to be associated with class, which is positive; compared to Australians who consider this to be a negative image as it can give the impression of being 'snobbish'. This demonstrates the importance of image and consuming wine, which has been identified in previous research as important to wine tourism (Bruwer et al. 2014b) and wine consumption in general (Olsen et al. 2006)—especially so for Chinese consumers (Liu and

**Table 6.** Thematic categories for wine characteristics.

Wine characteristics	
Primary and secondary themes	Characteristic responses
<b>Sensory experience</b>	
Taste	After just one glass it gets a bit heavy or sour (AU, 47 <sup>+</sup> , #24342) People in my age group don't drink it much. I don't like the taste. I don't want red teeth (CA, 19–34, #24291) Taste is not that great (IN, 21–34, #24354)
Smell	I can't stand the smell of it or the taste (AU, 35–46, #24366) I don't mind the smell, the vinegar ones are usually white (AU, 47 <sup>+</sup> , #24345)
<b>Other characteristics</b>	
Alcohol content	I find it gets you drunk too quick (AU, 35–46, #24330) Come up with better flavours, reduce the alcohol content (CA, 19–34, #24297)
Not refreshing	I don't find it [wine] terribly refreshing or sweet enough for my tastes. I wouldn't choose it unless a friend was serving it (CA, 35–46, #24315) [I would drink wine] if it had a more thirst quenching taste (AU, 35–46, #17296)
Speed of drinking	Taste and speed of drinking, wine should be sipped. I am more a guzzler even though I don't drink heavy (UK, 47 <sup>+</sup> , #24282) I can't drink it [as] fast as beer without getting sick from wine (AU, 47 <sup>+</sup> , #24343)
<b>Fake wine (India only)</b>	
	In many shops original is not available (21–35, #24357) Expensive as compared to other drinks, not easily available, authenticity is questionable at times (35–46, #24366) It is very hard to find pure wines (47 <sup>+</sup> , #24952)

AU, Australia; CA, Canada; IN, India.

Murphy 2007). The Indian experience also differed as overall they liked wine, but avoided it due to issues of availability of authentic wine. This is an issue unique to the Indian market that needs special attention. The marketing discipline is well placed to overcome this concern, as a great deal is known about brand trust [for an overview see Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001)].

### Strengths and limitations

By using qualitative methods, this study has been able to explore the reasons why some alcohol consumers choose to avoid wine, and has furthered our understanding of this phenomenon.

Using online chat forums is a relatively new method of data collection that has both positive and negative attributes. Anonymity is a primary strength of this method, as anonymity allowed all participants to contribute to the group discussion. It

has been established that some personality types do not volunteer for face-to-face focus groups (Saliba and Ostojic 2014). Having participants type their responses online increased the likelihood of a wide distribution of personality types and reduced the risk of the discussion being dominated by one or two people only, which is common in face-to-face focus groups. Conducting the study online also allowed the convenience for people to participate from home without having to travel. Remaining in a comfortable environment may increase disclosure, but this is speculative. In addition, we could recruit people from different regional areas, rather than just from a metropolitan center. This was a notable benefit for the Indian group when discussing fake wines. Authentic wines appear to be more accessible in the larger cities than in the less developed areas. A further strength was that the data could be collected by one moderator, across all countries. The effect of multiple moderators, although minimised through various strategies, inevitably introduces moderator to moderator differences.

There are also limitations with using chat forums. With less ability for participants to observe social cues, the type of data collected is affected. This could also be considered a strength, however, as there may be less influence from others making the responses more authentic. In addition, there is not the same opportunity to engage in a deeper level of discussion with other participants. Another limitation of the study was that some numbers in the focus groups were low, for example, there were only three in the Canadian Baby Boomer group. The themes from these groups, however, correspond to the other larger focus groups. In addition, there was some gender imbalance in the groups. Most notable was the Indian groups in which no females participated. This may be a cultural difference, although women, particularly younger women do consume alcohol regularly in India.

### Future research

Future research needs to determine why people experience negative effects from wine and what can be done. For example, wines containing less alcohol could ameliorate the issue of feeling inebriated too quickly and minimise hangovers the next day. Low alcohol wine has received increased attention recently and is reported to also appeal to some current wine consumers (Saliba et al. 2013, Bruwer et al. 2014a).

As our qualitative methodology does not allow for estimation of the number of potential new consumers, prevalence studies identifying alcohol consumers who avoid wine are needed. Large-scale quantitative studies could extend on this study and seek to determine the predictors of wine avoidance in order to assist the industry to determine how to target their marketing strategies.

Underdeveloped wine markets such as India and China should be the focus of future research. Culturally these countries are likely to be different to Western countries in terms of their wine drinking culture and taste preference. The pace at which they are developing requires longitudinal studies to track changes, at least until the markets transition from developing to established. China is already a major focus of research into wine consumption, whereas India receives relatively little attention. Our research has highlighted the likelihood that India would respond well to increased opportunities to purchase trusted wine brands.

### Conclusion

Clearly, wine avoidance is complicated. Although taste appeared to be a significant reason for avoiding wine, there are other interacting factors, such as social norms, personal experience

and situations that influence whether or not people avoid wine. These findings were similar across countries. There were some unique findings, however, in the Indian participants relating to the availability of fake wines, which needs special consideration. Overall, there were more commonalities between generations than differences. Notably, the Millennials felt that wine is a drink for older people, and were more concerned with gender and cultural stereotypes than older generations. In addition, Millennials were the most concerned about the 'unpleasant' taste of wine. Baby Boomers had fewer beliefs about the formality or pretentiousness of wine than the two younger generations. In contrast, the younger Canadians and Americans strongly expressed that wine should only be consumed at special occasions.

Our research has been able to uncover key areas that researchers and the wine industry could focus on in order to make wine a viable choice among other types of alcoholic beverages. The reported differences and similarities across countries and generations could assist the wine industry in targeting their marketing strategies specifically to each country and age group.

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**Table S1.** Open-ended questions used to facilitate focus groups.