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## **The Relevance of Shopper Marketing Touchpoints: An Empirical Study on Wine Choice in Restaurants**

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**Abstract:**

*Shopper marketing is a relatively new approach that calls for an examination of potential influences that can be triggered in several touchpoints along the entire path-to-purchase customers' journey.*

*The present study is carried out on that context, aiming to understand if the attributes considered by wine customers in restaurants are influenced by a touchpoint. For that purpose, an empirical quantitative study was conducted, with face-to-face interviews in restaurants to a target population of 663 wine customers.*

*Results show that most attributes with highest importance-levels ("wine color"; "wine region"; "certified wine region") were positively influenced by only one touchpoint related to previous consumption experience.*

*The attribute "brand" was influenced by several touchpoints, evidencing that managers should not aim to simplify the shopper marketing management by acting only on few touchpoints.*

**Keywords:** *Shopper marketing; Path to purchase; Wine marketing, Restaurants*

**JEL Classification:** *M31, L81, M37.*

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## **1. Introduction**

Over the past twenty years there have been significant macro-changes (knowledge changes, lifestyle changes, technological changes and economical changes) that altered shopping patterns and buying decisions, presenting new challenges for retailers and manufacturers (Lee *et al.*, 2017). The shopper marketing approach is a relatively new approach, but already proven and effective that is has been attracting retailers and suppliers attention and resources (Bogetić & Stojković, 2015), fitting in those new challenges for retailers and manufacturers (Pinto *et al.*, 2017), rooted in marketing theory as a manifestation of the place policy in the traditional marketing mix (Pinto *et al.*, 2017).

Previous research on shopper marketing has been clearly focused on supermarkets, but the shopper marketing principles can also be useful to other types of retailers and producers (Gavilan *et al.*, 2014; Ailawadi *et al.*, 2009), such as the players in the wine industry (Pomarici *et al.*, 2012). The present study aims to contribute to this research stream, by examining the influence of in-store and out-of-store shopper touchpoints on wine choice decision-making in restaurants. The research option to conduct an empirical study on restaurants (included in the Ho.Re.Ca system) is because wine sales in Ho.Re.Ca have been decreasing in most countries and, therefore, wine producers need to rethink the actions that can be undertaken to improve the sales and quality of wine supply in HoRe.Ca system (Hildebrandt, 2012; Pomarici *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, retail wine purchasing is an important subject in wine academic research (Barber, 2012; Mueller *et al.*, 2010a; Mueller *et al.*, 2010b; Ritchie *et al.*, 2010; Lockshin & Knott, 2009; Casini *et al.*, 2009; Quinton and Harridge-March, 2008; Hollebeek *et al.*, 2007, Lockshin *et al.*, 2006; Orth & Bourrain, 2005), since the purchasing behaviour is affected by a range of different factors, which lead to differences in the way customers approach wines (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). Previous research on wine purchasing has been focused on wine stores (Stening & Lockshin, 2001; Lockshin & Kahrmanis, 1998) and supermarkets (Handley & Lockshin, 1997), but restaurants are also an important outlet, yet less studied (Jaeger *et al.*, 2010; 2009; Cohen *et al.*, 2009; Preszler & Schmit, 2009).

## **2. Conceptual Background**

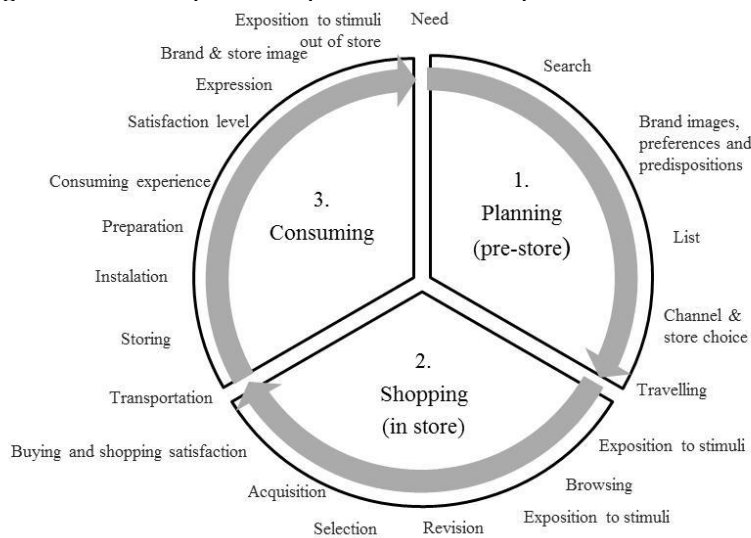
### **2.1 Shopper marketing approach and shopper touchpoints**

Shopper marketing is "the planning and execution of all marketing activities that influence a shopper along, and beyond, the entire path-to-purchase, from the point at which the motivation to shop first emerges through purchase, consumption, repurchase, and recommendation" (Shankar *et al.*, 2011, p. 29). Shopper marketing is not opposed to traditional marketing, on the contrary, is compatible with traditional marketing tools (Ziliani & Ieva, 2015), but it implies a more holistic approach along the several touchpoints on the entire path to purchase.

From the shopper marketing definition it is noticeable that this kind of marketing approach implies recognizing that there are several other “moments of truth” besides the end consumption (Lamey *et al.*, 2018). As Jones and Runyan (2016) state, when an individual is in shopping mode, such shopper purchase decision is often markedly different from decisions made whilst engaged in other stages of the traditional consumption process. So, the management of the several possible customer touchpoints must include the planning and shopping general moments, besides the mere end consumption.

There are several ways to categorize customer experience touchpoints along the path to purchase. For example, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) identify four types of touchpoints: brand-owned, partner-owned, customer-owned, and social/external/independent. All of them might be present in the prepurchase stage, purchase stage or postpurchase stage. Regardless of the discussion on designations and typologies, a representation of common general touchpoints along the path-to-purchase is shown on Figure 1.

**Figure 1.** Path-to-purchase process and touchpoints



**Source:** Adapted from Retail Commission on Shopper Marketing (2010).

Discussing the theme of customer experience, Lemon and Verhoef (2016) mention that customers now interact with firms through a myriad touch points in multiple channels and media, making the understanding of customer experience and customer journey even more critical. Those authors mention as well that there is a solid foundation in academic and business literature that customer experience is created through the purchase journey, emphasize the importance of managing the different touch points in the customer journey. Turning this panorama even more complex, managers should keep in mind that the mind of the shopper is not neat, neither orderly nor totally conscious and logical (Soars, 2003). This means that the

management of the customer touchpoints aims to provide a pathway to the purchase that can be triggered with in-store conscious and unconscious touchpoints actions. Furthermore, shopper marketing emphasizes that (Lamey *et al.*, 2018, p. 433) “product success varies in function of the retail-shopper environment and allows for the distinct possibility that the effectiveness of marketing efforts can – and will – vary based on the shopper retail context”.

## **2.2 Wine marketing touchpoints**

Following the already mentioned rationale of the path-to-purchase customer journey, the understanding of what drives wine choice is critical to successful wine marketing (McCutcheon *et al.*, 2009). In fact, the analysis and understanding of consumers and shoppers in the wine industry is particularly important for marketing planning (Mora, 2016), due to the wine market specificities, namely the fragmented industry and myriad of brands (Vrontis *et al.*, 2011).

Several of the studies found about retail wine purchasing have measured the intended purchasing as being influenced by personal characteristics or purchasing contexts (Lockshin & Corsi, 2012). Another research stream addressed the influence of atmospherics in wine stores (North *et al.*, 1999; Areni & Kim, 1994; 1993). However, besides personal characteristics and store atmospherics, risk reducing strategies are particularly important in wine purchasing (Atkin & Thach, 2012; Atkin *et al.*, 2007; Mitchell & Greatorex, 1989 and 1988). In fact, information search (i.e., learning about wine prior to buying choice, according to Olsen and Thach (2001)) might be expected to play an important role, because is a possible way of wine consumers to reduce the purchasing risk (Mitchell & Greatorex, 1989). The importance of information search as a risk reducing strategy is explained by the several products, brands and alternatives available, as well as by the difficulty to assess knowledge of the product's attributes by visual inspection of the product (Chaney, 2000). In fact, wine is commonly perceived by consumers as a complicated product (Johnson & Bruwer, 2007) and, when ordering wine in a restaurant, consumers perceive a high degree of risk or uncertainty (Bruwer *et al.*, 2017; Lacey *et al.*, 2009).

In a shopper marketing context, the customer touchpoints might act as important information sources, either acting consciously or subconsciously. These type of information sources can consist on experience, subjective knowledge, and objective knowledge on sources of information (Dodd *et al.*, 2005). Specifically on wine purchasing information sources, several previous studies were found identifying the possible information sources, namely on the following sources: price (Gil & Sánchez, 1997; Lockshin *et al.*, 1993); cues on the wine package and label (Mueller *et al.*, 2010; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999); awards (Orth & Krška, 2001); place/region and/or country of origin (Bruwer & Buller, 2013; Johnson & Bruwer, 2007; Orth *et al.*, 2005; Felzensztein *et al.*, 2004; Duhan *et al.*, 1999; Gil & Sánchez, 1997); online sources (Edwards, 1989); expert opinion by reading wine reviews and

books (Chaney, 2000); grape vintage year (Mtimet & Albisu, 2006; Ling & Lockshin, 2003; Gil & Sánchez, 1997); wine lists (Corsi *et al.*, 2012); promotion and positioning of products inside the point of sale (Brodie & Hollebeek, 2009); advice from salespersons/waiters and other persons (e.g. Parsons & Thompson, 2009); samples and in-house display (Hall *et al.*, 2004).

### 2.3 Research objectives

Connecting the conceptual relevance of customer touchpoints along the path to purchase and the specificities of wine purchasing, it is expected that customer touchpoints might have a positive influence on the attributes considered by shoppers on the purchasing moment.

Thereby, the present study aims to understand if that positive relation is verified in the context of on-trade wine customers – the simultaneous purchase and consumption in restaurants – in order to understand if the shopper marketing actions should be managed focusing efforts in a certain type of touchpoint or in several touchpoints. So, in this study, the hypothesis established is that a positive correlation exists between each wine choice attribute and each customer touchpoint.

## 3. Research Methods

### 3.1 Procedures

A quantitative empirical study was conducted with primary data collected among restaurant visitors. Recruiting and face-to-face interviewing were the data gathering techniques used, since face-to-face in interviews still deliver the most representative results in wine consumer research (Szolnokin & Hoffmann, 2013). This research option is sustained by the fact that individuals can be asked directly about their purchasing behaviour (Lockshin *et al.*, 2001; Bruwer *et al.*, 2002).

Besides demographics, wine consuming frequency and wine knowledge level the variables measured with the questionnaire were grouped on (i) attributes on the wine choice (dependent variables) and (ii) consumer touchpoints along the path to purchase (independent variables). The items analysed on the attributes considered on wine choice were adapted from Cohen *et al.* (2009) and Hall *et al.* (2001), using a five-point importance-level options. The items considered on the costumer touchpoints group were adapted from Lacey *et al.* (2009), including instore and out of store touchpoints, and were measured with a five-point Likert response options. The items measured in each group were:

- Attributes on the wine choice: Wine colour, Type of grape, Wine region certification, Wine region, Price promotion, Price being low, Price being medium, Price being high, Wine formats available, Brand, Alcoholic grade, Wine age/year, Combination with the meal, wanted to try something different.

- Customer touchpoints along the path to purchase: Waiter recommendation, Previous positive experienced with the wine, Loyalty to the wine, Recommendation on the cart/menu, Influence of other people on the table, Suggestion of someone else not present, Previous information about the wine but had not tasted it yet, Something seen inside the restaurant awakened the interest, Previously seen ads, Read positive information on the internet, newspapers or magazines.

### **3.2 Sample**

Primary data were collected in 15 restaurants, interviewing a sample of wine drinkers now of consumption in those restaurants. The sample consisted of 663 individuals, 51% of them male and 49% female.

Using Jonson and Bruwer (2007) options for the consumer self-reported wine consuming frequency, the wine consuming rates of this sample were: 13% once a day, 20% few times a week, 18% once a week, 16% once every two weeks, 15% once a month, 8% once every two months, and 10% consumes less frequently. Also using Jonson and Bruwer (2007) variables, the wine consumers' self-reported level knowledge about wines were: 12% said to be new to wine, 34% know a little about wine, 44% somewhat knowledgeable about wine, 9% Very knowledgeable about wine 9%, and 1% expert or professional.

## **4. Findings**

As a previous step to compute the correlations of wine choice attributes with wine customer touchpoints, the perceived importance of each wine attribute on the purchase choice was computed, calculating the mean importance and standard deviation for each wine attribute, presented in Table 1. The wine attributes evidencing a mean importance higher than 3,5 (ie threshold higher than neutral) were: wine colour, combination of the wine with the specific meal, terroir/region of origin, brand, and the having a formally certified wine. Among these, the wine colour and the combination of the wine with the food were clearly the most important ones.

Another preliminary step made was the analysis of the customer touchpoints' general influence, calculating the mean and standard deviation for each touchpoint (Table 2). Touchpoint "OT1 Already experienced the wine before and liked it" was clearly the most relevant one.

Table 3 shows the correlations of wine choice attributes with each touchpoint (the same Table 3 is simplified in appendix A showing only the positive significant correlations found). Based on the results of Table 3, the hierarchy of statistically significant positive correlations of wine attributes and touchpoints are shown in Table 4.

**Table 1.** Wine choice attributes importance

Attributes	mean	st.dev.
A1 Wine color (red, white, etc)	4,21	0,84
A2 Type of grape	3,19	1,10
A3 The region is certified	3,61	1,04
A4 Wine region	3,86	0,99
A5 Price promotion	3,22	1,21
A6 Price is low	3,01	1,21
A7 Price is medium	2,91	1,05
A8 Price is high	2,78	1,18
A9 The wine is available in various formats	3,01	1,19
A10 Brand	3,82	1,00
A11 Alcoholic grade	3,11	1,19
A12 Wine age/year	3,38	1,20
A13 Combination with the meal/food	4,10	1,02
A14 Wanted to try something different	2,93	1,30

**Table 2.** Customer touchpoints' relevance

Type	Touchpoint	mean	st.dev.
Instore	IT1 Waiter recommendation	3,10	1,29
Out of store	OT1 Already experienced the wine before and liked it	3,81	1,14
Out of store	OT2 The wine is one of the three wines the shopper is more loyal to	3,00	1,37
Instore	IT2 Recommendation of the restaurant menu/cart	2,98	1,36
Instore	IT3 Suggestion of someone else on the table	2,67	1,31
Out of store	OT3 Suggestion of someone else not present	2,19	1,06
Out of store	OT4 Had information about the wine but had not tasted it yet	2,84	1,3
Instore	IT4 Saw something in the restaurant that awaken the interest	2,70	1,20
Out of store	OT5 Had already seen ads about the wine and was curious	2,69	1,28
Out of store	OT6 Had read positive information about the wine on the internet, newspapers or magazines	2,66	1,28

It is noticeable that OT1 (Already experienced the wine before and liked it) is the most important customer touchpoint out of thirteen wine attributes with positive correlations.

Touchpoints IT1 (Waiter recommendation) and OT4 (Had information about the wine but had not tasted it yet) are also important, since OT4 is significant in 8 wine attributes, and IT1 is significant in 7 attributes. Just like OT1, touchpoints OT4 and IT1 seem to be reliable information sources to reduce the risk decision of choosing the appropriate wine.

Restricting the analysis only to the most important wine choice attributes (ie, the wine choice attributes with mean importance higher than 3,5), the results in Table 4 show that “Wine colour”, “Wine region” and “Certified wine region” were positively influenced by just one touchpoint – OT1, reinforcing the previously mentioned deduction of OT1’s relevance.

However, the attribute “Brand” was influenced by more touchpoints besides OT1, namely OT2 (The wine is one of the three wines the shopper is more loyal to) and OT5 (Had already seen ads about the wine and was curious). This result highlights the relevance of an integrated management of several touchpoints along the entire path-to-purchase, instead of acting on only one. Furthermore, in Table 4 is noticeable that every touchpoint has at least two positive correlations with wine attributes - the minimum is two positive correlations in OT3, and the maximum is eight positive correlations in IT2.

## **5. Conclusions**

In the context of shopper marketing, our study aimed to understand if the attributes considered by wine customers in restaurants are influenced by a touchpoint. This is particularly important to understand if shopper marketing actions should focus efforts in a certain type of touchpoint.

The results pointed to the high relevance of the touchpoint related to previous wine consumption experience by the customer. This customer touchpoint was the one with the highest mean importance and had six positive significant correlations with wine choice attributes. As a managerial implication, is important that wine producers must be capable to design and produce wines that satisfy the consumer, in order to repeat consumption decisions. This seems to be particularly important in highly fragmented markets, like the wine industry, characterized by a myriad of product of brands available for customers to choose from.

Some wine choice attributes were influenced by more than one touchpoint. The attribute “wine brand” is particularly relevant in this context, because it was one of the most important attributes and was positively influenced by three touchpoints: previous consumption experience; shopper loyalty to the product; and having already seen ads about the wine and was curious. This fact of attributes being influenced by several touchpoints suggests that managers should not aim to simplify the shopper marketing management by acting only on few touchpoints. By the contrary, brands should design shopping marketing activities along the entire path-



to-purchase, covering all the touchpoints. So, wine companies could allocate more resources and focus in certain touchpoints but should not neglect the other ones.

**Table 3.** Correlations of wine choice attributes attributes vs customer touchpoints

Attribute	IT1	OT1	OT2	IT2	IT3	OT3	OT4	IT4	OT5
A1	-,118*** ,002	,063* ,057	-,075** ,043	-,172*** ,000	-,180*** ,000	-,334*** ,000	-,116*** ,002	-,182*** ,000	-,094** ,010
A2	-,050 ,123	,038 ,190	,035 ,227	,081** ,045	-,058 ,130	-,134*** ,005	,110*** ,005	,094** ,015	,054 ,107
A3	-,159*** ,000	,099** ,018	-,025 ,321	-,029 ,291	-,261*** ,000	-,262*** ,000	,034 ,238	-,026 ,289	,036 ,226
A4	-,156*** ,001	,101** ,017	-,080** ,049	-,072 ,066	-,118*** ,007	-,232*** ,000	-,079** ,048	-,118*** ,007	-,104** ,016
A5	,197*** ,000	,045 ,136	,009 ,419	,171*** ,000	,135*** ,002	,056 ,116	,107*** ,004	,102*** ,006	,041 ,158
A6	,139*** ,001	,011 ,404	-,015 ,369	,162*** ,000	,108** ,011	,014 ,384	,006 ,445	,051 ,124	-,083** ,029
A7	,071* ,051	,061* ,081	,026 ,280	,052 ,117	,047 ,161	-,023 ,310	,002 ,481	,013 ,387	-,028 ,260
A8	,107*** ,007	,007 ,434	,043 ,167	,117*** ,004	,159*** ,000	,049 ,149	,136*** ,001	,079** ,036	,087** ,025
A9	,139*** ,000	,021 ,300	-,075** ,044	,126*** ,002	-,044 ,178	-,054 ,127	,071** ,040	,111*** ,003	,022 ,292
A10	,027 ,250	,152*** ,000	,141*** ,001	,049 ,129	,059 ,102	-,053 ,129	-,042 ,149	-,026 ,261	,073** ,035
A11	,145*** ,000	,075** ,031	,153*** ,000	,122*** ,002	,150*** ,001	,075* ,054	,166*** ,000	,164*** ,000	,120*** ,001
A12	,017 ,332	,021 ,303	,080** ,034	,095** ,015	,043 ,180	-,039 ,205	,070** ,041	,073** ,035	,127*** ,001
A13	-,230*** ,000	-,017 ,348	-,142*** ,001	-,157*** ,000	-,159*** ,000	-,245*** ,000	-,165*** ,000	-,263*** ,000	-,138*** ,001
A14	,429*** ,000	-,154*** ,000	-,022 ,332	,400*** ,000	,373*** ,000	,335*** ,000	,616*** ,000	,497*** ,000	,362*** ,000

**Notes:** Spearman correlation 1-tailed, \* Significant at .10 level, \*\* Significant at .05 level, \*\*\* Significant at .01 level.

This research has limitations that can point to further research directions. The sample poses research limitations due to having studied the individuals' opinions and perceptions in a certain moment and specific place/restaurant. Therefore, is recommended to enlarge the study to different samples, in order to examine the possibility of results' generalization. The number of wine choice attributes was not

exhaustive, so that the questionnaire and interviews were not too long. The same research option was made regarding the customer touchpoints presented. Both facts could be minimized in future researches by using more detailed questionnaires.

**Table 4.** *Hierarchy of positive significant correlations of choice attributes vs touchpoints*

Attributes*	Touchpoint
A1 Wine color	OT1
A13 Combination with the meal/food	None
A4 Wine region	OT1
A10 Brand	OT1> OT2 > OT5
A3 The region is certified	OT1
A12 Wine age/year	OT5> OT6> IT2 > OT2 > IT4 > OT4
A5 Price promotion	IT1> IT2> IT3> OT4> IT4
A2 Type of grape	OT4> IT4> IT2> OT6
A11 Alcoholic grade	OT4> IT4 > IT2 >IT1 > IT2 > OT5 > OT6>
A9 The wine is available in various	IT1> IT2 > IT4 >OT4
A6 Price is low	IT2> IT1> IT3
A14 Wanted to try something different	OT4> IT4> IT1 > IT2 > IT3 > OT5 > OT6 > OT3
A7 Price is medium	IT1> OT1
A8 Price is high	IT3> OT4> IT2 > IT1 > OT5 > IT4

**Note:** \*Wine choice attributes ordered by their mean importance, from highest to lowest.

In a global manner, we conclude that, for restaurants wine costumers, touchpoints should be managed along the entire path-to-purchase, but efforts and resources might be focused on a small number of more effective touchpoints. Albeit, the effectiveness of marketing efforts will probably vary in other sectors or retail contexts, opening research avenues to future studies.

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**Appendix A. Positive correlations of attributes vs touchpoints**

Attribute	Touchpoint									
	IT1	OT1	OT2	IT2	IT3	OT3	OT4	IT4	OT5	OT6
A1		,063*								
A2				,081**			,110***	,094**		,075**
A3		,099**								
A4		,101**								
A5	,197**			,171***	,135***		,107***	,102***		
A6	,139**			,162***	,108**					
A7	,071*	,061*								
A8	,107**			,117***	,159***		,136***	,079**	,087**	
A9	,139**			,126***			,071**	,111***		
A10		,152***	,141***						,073**	
A11	,145**	,075**	,153***	,122***	,150***	,075*	,166***	,164***	,120***	,119***
A12			,080**	,095**			,070**	,073**	,127***	,115***
A13										
A14	,429**			,400***	,373***	,335***	,616***	,497***	,362***	,337***

**Note:** Spearman correlation 1-tailed, \*Significant at .10; \*\*Significant at .05; \*\*\*Significant at .01