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Perspetivas interculturais sobre a perceção do Vinho do Porto e seu impacto na promoção

Cross-cultural perspectives on the consumer perception of Port wine and its impact on promotion

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Port wine, the most well-known and appreciated Portuguese wine, was established as a formal Controlled Designation of Origin in 1756. Despite the large potential of the Chinese wine market, Port wine still finds resistance there.

Over the last decade or so, before the Covid-19 pandemic, Port wine sales in value has view a very low increase in general with even a drop in foreign markets. The small total growth is due partly to high growth in the domestic market of Portugal, perhaps an indicator of the high growth in tourism in Portugal. However, total sales in terms of volume have decreased significantly, during this same period. This growth in value, yet decline in volume, is attributed to rising interest and consumption of Special categories in Port wine, such as Late Bottled Vintage Ports, Vintage Ports and Aged Tawnies, which fetch much higher prices per bottle than the standard categories, such as Rubies, Tawnies, Whites and Pinks.

Ports classified in the standard category are intended to serve as entry level Ports in the market, intended for the “new” Port consumer as a gateway to appreciation and consumption of the higher-end Special categories. It is assumed that the current consumer of the Special categories has already lived this intended evolution, anting up their consumption category by category as their purchasing power increased with age as well as their eagerness to buy more highly-acclaimed Ports, based on their accumulated appreciation and knowledge over their years of consuming Port wine.

For the Port wine industry to effectively promote Port with a sustainable framework for attracting new consumers at the same rate as old consumers inevitably exit the market, growth should be at least even among all categories of Port, if not higher in Standard categories.

So the ultimate question is: who is drinking these Special categories of Port? And, of even more interest is: who is not drinking enough of the Standard categories?

According to a 2017 study by Rebelo et al. centrally featured in the Strategic Course for the Port and Douro Wine Sector report released by the IVDP in December 2017, the domestic consumer group most inclined to drink

Special categories can be summarized as predominantly males over 45 years of age and those most inclined to drink Standard categories are younger, aged 18-34.

In light of this conclusion, it can be considered highly important for the industry to start better orienting their marketing and branding strategies to capture the interest of a younger consumer group, within the ages of 18-35 years (i.e. Millennial generation). Many of the top Port wine producers/brands are already turned on to this significant need and have previously proposed strategies to attract Millennials, but the data seems to show that their individual efforts have clearly not had enough impact on the industry as a whole.

Following the international forecasts for the next decade, they point out the stabilization of the world wine production and consumption by volume, increasing in value. Consumption will decrease in production countries, namely in South Europe, however offset by the increase in consumption of other countries, highlighting the USA and China.

China, which is becoming one of the biggest wine consumers in the World, being well known for the success of many international categories, has yet to warm up to Port.

This study reports on different experiments. One on the perspective of international consumers, developed by a group of students from the European Master on Wine Tourism Innovation (WINTOUR), supervised by the corresponding author, and a second cross-cultural study aimed to understand consumer's perceptions, liking and emotional response at two contrasting cultures: Portuguese and Chinese.

For the latest, a panel of approximately 200 young adult consumers (100 from each country) tasted four samples of Port Wine (Dry White, LBV, 10 years old Tawny and Vintage 1985), during 2019. For each sample, presented in a fixed order, consumers performed a word association (WA) task by writing the first three words or ideas that came into their minds while tasting the samples, classifying terms as positive, neutral or negative.

After tasting, consumers rated their overall liking using a 9-point hedonic scale. To evaluate the emotional response, a Check-All-That-Apply (CATA) ballot using 33 emoji was used [1].

The results from the WA reveal that Port wine samples were generally associated with a positive *sweet taste*, *conviviality*, *festive moments*, *thermal feeling* and *production concepts* (the later for Portuguese).

For Chinese participants, both the 10 years old Tawny and the Vintage presented approximately 20 % of negative associations, related with taste (*Chinese medicine*, *bitter*, *spicy*, *aggressive*). For Portuguese consumers, liking level was high for all the samples, emotional response was mainly positive (positive emojis, see figure 1).

For Chinese consumers, there is a negative emotional response to Tawny and Vintage Port wines and a positive emotional response to Dry White and LBV. Participants indicate "festive moments" and "drink with a company" as moments to consume Port wine.

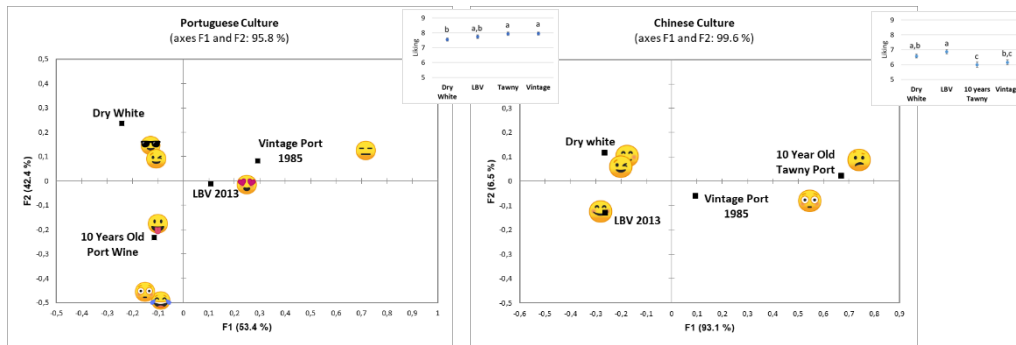


Figure 1: Emotional perceptual map and overall liking (small graphs) for different Port wine categories, within young Portuguese (left side) and young Chinese (right side) consumers.

This study reveals contrasting expectations and liking of Port wine for both consumers’ groups. Portuguese have a more positive response to premium Port wines, while the Chinese respond better to the more regular categories.

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