

# Self-concept, product involvement and consumption occasions

## Exploring fine wine consumer behaviour

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### Abstract

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which consumer self-concept (self-esteem) and product involvement influences the wine purchase decision at the retail level given the anticipated consumption occasion. The predictive effects of self-concept on this interaction were also explored.

**Design/methodology/approach** – Data collection was in the independent specialist fine wine store environment in Sydney, Australia. Central to the study was the development of a 33-item multi-dimensional fine wine involvement scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.846$  for 26 final items) for measuring consumers' involvement.

**Findings** – Wine product involvement deepens with age but low involvement consumers perceiving risk in making the wrong product choice may well purchase fine wines for situations where self-concept is a moderating factor. In the case of low involvement wine consumers a positive association exists between situational wine choice and self-concept but no significant differences exist for self-concept across any of the consumption occasions. Age and self-concept were both confirmed as linked to levels of consumption. The findings support the notion that wine consumers aged 45 years and older are significantly more disposed to purchase fine wine products.

**Practical implications** – For self-concept to be relevant to purchase it follows that the wine consumption occasion must be conspicuous.

**Originality/value** – This study is the first to examine the extent to which consumer self-concept and product involvement influences the wine purchase decision at the retail level given the anticipated consumption occasion.

**Keywords** Self-concept, Self-congruence, Consumption occasion, Product involvement, Situational product choice

**Paper type** Research paper

### 1. Introduction

Consumer purchasing behaviour has long preoccupied marketers as they strive to best position their product by anticipating consumer wants and needs. The consumer decision-making process on the other hand, is frequently complicated and involves a number of theoretical constructs. Within the food category, wine presents a good example of these phenomena. When faced with a plethora of wine products in the retail store, how then does a consumer make a decision on what to purchase? There is however, no single perspective offering the definitive approach or theory of wine consumer decision-making that incorporates the elements of utilisation, individual consumer characteristics (i.e. self-concept), product involvement, and situational context.

In the case of the product usage situation, there is a relationship between the product benefits sought when the consumer makes the purchase decision, and the degree of perceived value dependent upon the anticipated consumption context (Fountain and Lamb, 2011). Nonetheless, surprisingly little situational research has been conducted to explain the interaction of product, situational and personal factors, more specifically, wine product involvement and consumption occasion (Hirche and Bruwer, 2014). The literature is



also at a nascent stage concerning the extent to which self-concept plays a role in consumer wine purchase decisions (Olsen *et al.*, 2003; Wolf *et al.*, 2016). Little research has also been devoted to product involvement focussed on low-volume fine wine categories. The importance of increased fine wine sales towards the sustainability of the Australian wine industry has been highlighted in the “Directions 2025” national strategy document by the Australian Winemakers’ Federation of Australia (2007) peak body. Johnson and Bastian (2015) and Cheong and Bruwer (2012) are also supportive of this aspect in their findings and hence our study’s focus is in the area of fine wine sales. The fine wine category as such includes wines at retail prices of \$20 and higher per bottle (Johnson and Bastian, 2015).

Self-concept (or self-esteem) is the way in which people perceive themselves and hence consumers often purchase products corresponding to their self-concepts as a means of self-expression (Nam *et al.*, 2016). This self-schema which is the extent of its connection with their self-concept, is known as self-congruity (Pratt and Sparks, 2014). In the wine context Olsen *et al.* (2003, p. 221) asserted that “consumers’ self-confidence expresses their self-concept, plays a key role in wine buying behaviour because they are extremely intimidated and often doubt their ability to choose the appropriate wine for a particular occasion for fear of social rejection if the wrong type of wine is selected”. Moreover, if a consumer’s low self-concept is specific to the wine product category and not a general personality trait, the consumer will employ risk-reduction strategies such as seeking more information to reduce the high level of perceived risk (Lacey *et al.*, 2009). It is therefore appropriate to examine the relationship between consumers’ self-concept and involvement level with wine as a product. Our study’s main contribution is that it is the first to examine the extent to which consumer self-concept and product involvement influences the fine wine purchase decision at the retail level given the anticipated consumption occasion. Additionally, it also explores the predictive effects of self-concept on this interaction.

## 2. Literature framework

### 2.1 Self-concept and self-congruence

Since the 1960s self-concept theory has been the focus of much psychological and sociological scrutiny and empirical research (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967; Sirgy, 1982). At first self-concept was operationalised as unidimensional (Onkvist and Shaw, 1987) but eventually its conceptualisation evolved to a multi-dimensional construct (Sirgy *et al.*, 2000). Self-concept can be seen as the totality of an individual’s ideas (Sirgy, 1982), with their thoughts and feelings about themselves in relation to other objects viewed in a socially determined context (Onkvist and Shaw, 1987). The priming literature supports the premise that a consumer’s sense of who s/he is relates to his/her choice and consumption (Mittal, 2006; Nam *et al.*, 2016; Sirgy, 1982; Sirgy *et al.*, 2000). This aspect has been investigated using the food product context (Kaupinnen-Räsänen *et al.*, 2013; Pieniak *et al.*, 2013; Sidali and Hemmerling, 2014), but wine has so far not been the product focus of much research from this perspective.

Over time, a body of research developed containing strong support for the notion that consumers are more likely to purchase products they believe match their self-concept/self-image (Grzeskowiak *et al.*, 2016; Hosany and Martin, 2012; Sirgy *et al.*, 2016), eventually giving rise to the conceptualisation of self-congruency theory. These purchases of products/brands act as vehicles for their self-expression (Roy and Rabbane, 2015). Self-concept congruence therefore refers to the cognitive match between a consumer’s self-concept and product/brand image, store image, or user image (Hosany and Martin, 2012, p. 686). It is also referred to as self-congruity in the marketing literature (Pratt and Sparks, 2014; Roy and Rabbane, 2015; Sirgy *et al.*, 2000). Therefore, if self-concept is not activated in a purchase situation (i.e. the consumer is not thinking about his/her own image and how other people view him/her) purchase decisions may be more influenced by product functionality. On the

other hand, if a consumer's self-concept is activated then the degree of congruence (or incongruence) between brand image and self-image can have an effect on evaluation and purchase decisions (Sirgy *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, high involvement wine consumers were more influenced by self-congruity than those with low wine involvement (Pratt and Sparks, 2014).

### 2.2 *Self-concept and consumption occasion*

The conditions that cause consumers to want specific product benefits are found in aspects of their personality and living circumstances. The needs and wants consumers bring to the marketplace are to be found in their perception of the product-use situation (Bruwer and Buller, 2013), and what they ultimately purchase represents a reconciliation of their wants and perception of available product benefits. The dimensions of self-concept are therefore frequently used by marketers to develop brand personalities and positioning strategies (Xue, 2008). Hirche and Bruwer (2014) found that choice was highly situation-dependent, while Oyserman (2009) utilised the concept of situational self-image (a person's self-concept at a particular point in time) and the impact this has on consumer behaviour. Situational cues dynamically shape which of the "self" images are salient and which are pivotal and these are in turn shaped by situational affordances and constraints in the shopping process.

Early research postulated that ideal congruence plays a more significant role in product preference when the product is conspicuous and for high social class consumers than when the product is inconspicuous and for low social class consumers (Grubb and Grathwohl, 1967). However Sirgy (1982) found that the pattern of findings was equivocal, adding that "[t]he challenge is to integrate the body of quasi-theoretical formulations and empirical findings into a coherent self-concept theory capable of explaining and predicting consumer behaviour" (p. 196). As a result, self-concept theory was formulated that treats the constructs of self-congruity and ideal congruity jointly, not independent from one another (Sirgy, 1982); a principle also adopted in this study of wine.

While few studies examined interactions between product involvement and consumption occasions, Xue (2008) found that for consumers who were highly involved with the product, both self-concept and consumption occasion were determinant factors in a situational brand choice. For consumers not highly involved with the product, situational brand choice was based solely on situational factor(s), rather than self-concept. Because consumer characteristics and product benefits were increasingly utilised to divide markets into segments for target marketing and positioning, Hirche and Bruwer (2014) suggested that consumption occasion was the "missing link" in wine segmentation research. Our study sought to determine the degree to which these interactions are applicable to wine consumers. It also explored self-concept relative to consumers' age group and level of consumption. Although situational aspects were not considered *per se* in the current study it is recommended that this aspect be explored in future research.

### 2.3 *Involvement theory*

The original concept of product involvement derives from the psychology literature of the 1980s as psychologists found and measured the degree to which some people were more concerned and thought more deeply about some things than others (Lesschaeve and Bruwer, 2010). Product involvement alone tends to be more enduring with experiential and symbolic significance (Ogbeide and Bruwer, 2013). According to Mittal (1989), when viewed in this light, product involvement can be a precursor to product-decision involvement and that this distinction is useful in understanding involvement theory and the application of measures of involvement. Mittal (1989) also concluded that a consumer's purchase involvement and motivation to buy the right product is dependent on both the purchase situation itself (i.e. weekly shopping expedition to the wine store) and the consumption occasion (i.e. wine for own consumption). Furthermore, it

is generally agreed that involvement is a product category-specific phenomenon with different products arousing different levels of involvement, such as wine (Bruwer and Buller, 2013; Bruwer and Huang, 2012).

There is general consensus that involvement can be classified into three broad areas: enduring, situational and, response involvement. Most of the research focus has been on enduring and situational research (Lesschaeve and Bruwer, 2010). Enduring involvement refers to the general personal relevance of a product category such as wine (Ogbeide and Bruwer, 2013), while situational involvement is transitory and largely a function of short-term changes in the consumer's immediate environment, such as an in-store promotion of wine.

#### *2.4 Levels of product involvement and measurement*

Involvement is frequently employed as an explanatory medium with consumers segmented into high or low involvement categories (Barber *et al.*, 2008). Ogbeide and Bruwer (2013) argued that involvement is best viewed as a continuous variable which ensures it becomes even more revealing. Some researchers (Bruwer and Buller, 2013; Bruwer and Huang, 2012; Lockshin *et al.*, 1997) posited that highly involved people relate to the wine product category as part of their lifestyle, and it holds an important place in their daily existence. By contrast, it is generally assumed in the literature (i.e. Michaelidou and Dibb, 2006) that a low involvement cognitive attitude is much less complex than a high involvement one.

The dimensionality of product involvement and the consequent influence on consumer behaviour has long been the subject of debate. Zaichkowsky (1985) and Traylor and Joseph (1984) developed unidimensional measures, while Bloch (1981) identified six dimensions. As part of their research into and advocacy of utilising the consumer involvement profile, Laurent and Kapferer (1985) posited involvement to be multi-dimensional (perceived sign value, perceived hedonic value, perceived risk, and perceived importance) with many common dimensions reported by other researchers as well (i.e. Higie and Feick, 1989). With their research into couture, Michaelidou and Dibb (2006) examined dimensionality of involvement and extrapolated five factors previously identified – hedonism, importance, self-expression, interest and sign value (symbolism). In developing the involvement scale for the purposes of the current study, we also adopted the multi-dimensional approach.

#### *2.5 Involvement with wine products: attributes and dimensions*

When it comes to wine products, a number of studies have considered consumer involvement and consequent behaviour (Barber *et al.*, 2008; Bruwer and Buller, 2013; Bruwer and Huang, 2012; Lockshin *et al.*, 1997). Hedonic and complex products are likely to generate high levels of involvement among consumers (Lesschaeve and Bruwer, 2010), though little research has been conducted with fine wine categories, meaning those wine products for which an aesthetic dimension is a core component (Charters, 2006). Charters and Pettigrew (2006) observed that comparatively little work has been done within the discipline of marketing on the analysis of the aesthetic dimension as a core component of a product. Furthermore, no measure has been devised to date for measuring consumer involvement with fine wine products such as those perceived to have an aesthetic dimension. Our study addresses this shortcoming through the involvement scale developed.

High involvement consumers read specialty magazines, talk to sales people, linger in the retail outlet and discuss their hobby with friends (Lockshin *et al.*, 1997). By contrast, Barber *et al.* (2008) describe low involvement consumers as novices who do not relate to wine as part of their lifestyle and, as such, seldom spend time advancing their wine knowledge. Consumers with high involvement and consumers with high levels of objective knowledge have been found to often use intrinsic rather than extrinsic cues such

as country-of-origin (COO) to make their wine purchase decision (Bruwer and Buller, 2013). Based on the priming literature discussed, two hypotheses are derived:

- H1.* Consumers with a high level of product involvement are more likely to select a fine wine for purchase than consumers with low involvement level, and this is mediated by the level of self-concept.
- H2.* Consumers with a low level of self-concept are more concerned about the probability of a wrong consumption occasion brand decision than consumers with high self-concept level and this is mediated by high product involvement level.

It would appear that product involvement significantly influences consumer decision-making when it comes to wine products, though variations may be attributable to consumer socio-demographics which have also been found to influence wine involvement levels (Bruwer and Huang, 2012). With regard to age, for instance, Fountain and Lamb (2011) explored the wine consumption behaviour of Millennials relative to older wine consumers in New Zealand, with a focus on the influence of situational involvement on wine behaviour. Older wine consumers tended to have higher wine involvement while younger wine consumers were found to be less likely than older consumers to drink wine in either low or high involvement situations. The evidence that age affects wine consumption behaviour and involvement level with significant differences found between 18-34-year-old Millennial and 35-44-year-old Generation-X vs older consumers, is quite compelling. This has been confirmed in studies conducted in Australia (Bruwer and Huang, 2012; Bruwer *et al.*, 2011) and USA (Barber *et al.*, 2008; Olsen *et al.*, 2015). Based on this evidence, we therefore derive the third and fourth hypotheses:

- H3.* Wine consumers aged 45 and over will be significantly more likely to purchase fine wines than those aged 44 and younger and this relationship is mediated by self-concept.
- H4.* The proportion of variance in monthly personal wine consumption and monthly household consumption can be accounted for by age (under or over 45 years of age) and self-concept.

### *2.6 Linking wine product involvement with consumption occasion*

It has long been recognised that the situational aspects and occasion of consumption of a product are aspects that influence product involvement, and vice versa (Zaichkowsky, 1985). Because of the social, food pairing and hedonic (aesthetic) aspects of wine, the focus has been on the effects of the consumption occasion rather than situational which is also the approach adopted in our study. For example, Hirche and Bruwer (2014) found a positive relationship between wine product involvement and the anticipated consumption occasion for which wines were bought in the Australian wine retail store environment. They concluded that from a consumption occasion perspective, both high and low involvement consumers primarily anticipated consuming their wine together with other persons, mainly with food. High involvement wine consumers tended to consume their wine alone compared to low involvement consumers who were more likely to buy wine for other persons than for themselves.

In a UK wine market study, Bruwer *et al.* (2014) identified six consumption occasions in the off-premise and five in the on-premise sectors. They found that in the off-premise sector, expenditure was highest when the occasion was gift-giving and lowest when the occasion was a relaxing drink at home. In the on-premise sector a formal dinner in a restaurant was the occasion on which consumers spent most. In another UK study, Ritchie (2007, p. 538) concluded that buying wine in a restaurant was much more stressful than buying in the off-trade "because of the public nature of the environment and their lack of control over it". The research also concluded that very specific occasion-specific behaviour is exhibited by

both genders and that the occasion, perception and venue for consumption drive the purchase (Ritchie, 2007). Clearly then, wine purchase is largely occasion-driven and this is likely to be influenced by involvement level which resulted in formulating the final hypothesis:

*H5.* Low involvement consumers place more importance on price than high involvement consumers in different consumption occasions.

### 3. Research parameters and methodology

The aim of this study was to discern the influence that anticipated consumption situations of fine wine products has on level of product involvement as well as their respective interplay. Also, to develop a fine wine involvement measurement scale to operationalise this research. The sample comprised customers of a well-known wine and spirits retail store specialising in fine wines, situated in an inner city suburb of Sydney, Australia. Similar to the Australian study of Johnson and Bastian (2015) retail prices of \$20 and higher per bottle was considered as representative of the fine wine category. It should be noted that fine wine/quality wine (Johnson and Bastian, 2015) is not necessarily a luxury wine product (Wolf *et al.*, 2016); in fact, luxury wine (brands) are arguably a category on its own and described by a number of typologies (Berthon *et al.*, 2009), with price as a single factor therein. Prospective respondents were initially given time to browse in the store before being intercepted just before check-out and asked to participate in the research. To be included in the survey, they had to have purchased fine wine(s) at the \$20 and higher per bottle price levels.

Data were collected by having the respondents complete questionnaires in close proximity to the researchers. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: 13 demographic and consumption, 33 involvement questions, and 11 consumption occasion questions. Completion of the questionnaire took 8-12 minutes on average. Any risks perceived by respondents associated with its completion were lessened by the anonymity of the self-administered nature of the questionnaire. This permitted several questionnaires to be completed simultaneously while minimising intrusion into store operations. Some questionnaires were not fully completed, while overall there were consumers who declined to participate, giving a 91 per cent response rate. Ultimately there were 213 respondents, a sample size considered sufficient given the exploratory nature of the research. Data were entered and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 22 for Mac OS X.

#### 3.1 Measurement and dimensions of wine product involvement

Due to the fact that prior wine involvement research did not examine the extent to which consumer self-concept and product involvement influences the wine purchase decision at retail level given the anticipated consumption occasion, an involvement scale had to be purpose-developed for the execution of this study. To account for this, the involvement scale consisted of eight dimensions (interest, self-concept, ritual, fine wine purchaser, hedonic/aesthetic, loyalty, situational brand choice and, purchasing involvement) including 33 items in total. Involvement scale items were integrated into the scale in randomised fashion. The scale items were mainly sourced from the literature while also adding a few new items to strengthen the construct (Table I). The relatively high number of items assured the coverage of all of the relevant involvement aspects to be tested and allowed the subsequent deletion of items after pre-testing according to unusual irregularities or variations, and reliability requirements. Respondents were asked to indicate preference on a seven-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" (1) to "strongly agree" (7).

#### 3.2 Wine product involvement scale reliability

When measurements are taken it is imperative that they be meaningful, and have reliability. The involvement measurement construct was tested for reliability using Cronbach's  $\alpha$

Dimension(s)	Scale item and number	Source	Mean	SD	VAR	$\alpha$ if deleted
Interest; Fine wine purchaser	I have a strong interest in wine (1)	Hollebeek <i>et al.</i> (2007)	5.85	1.377	1.897	0.845
Brand risk; Hedonic Interest	It is difficult to make a good choice in wine (2)	Laurent and Kapferer (1985)	3.48	0.1675	2.805	–
Interest	I (do not) like to spend time browsing in stores (3) (R)	Slama and Tashchian (1985)	5.56	1.7825	3.177	–
Interest	Some individuals are completely involved in wine, attached to it, absorbed by it. For others wine is simply not that involving. I am very involved in wine (4)	O'Casey (2004)	5.09	1.685	2.839	0.845
Interest; Fine wine purchaser	I would classify myself as something of a wine expert (5)	NEW	3.58	1.568	2.459	0.849
Self-concept	I am very concerned about the wines I purchase (6)	Mittal and Lee (1989)	4.85	1.672	2.797	0.846
Self-concept; Interest	I can think of circumstances where a personal experience was affected by the wine I chose (7)	Lastovicka and Gardner (1978)	4.78	1.811	3.281	0.855
Self-concept	Buying wine is expressive of my personality (8)	Bagozzi and Foxall (1996)	4.27	1.804	3.254	0.846
Self-concept	I consider my knowledge of wine to be important to me (9)	Lastovicka and Gardner (1978)	4.65	1.626	2.643	0.843
Self-concept	I like to impress friends at dinner with lesser-known grape varieties and/or wine styles (10)	Lacey <i>et al.</i> (2009)	3.38	1.676	2.809	0.850
Self-concept	I can tell something about a person by the wine they buy (11)	Bagozzi and Foxall (1996)	4.15	1.761	3.103	0.857
Hedonic	I like having wine with my food (12)	Kapferer and Laurent (1993)	6.13	1.292	1.670	–
Hedonic	I like the taste of wine (13)	Laurent and Kapferer (1985)	6.42	1.092	1.192	0.852
Ritual	I tend to drink wine only on special occasions (14)	Bruwer and Li (2007)	2.10	1.778	3.160	0.877
Ritual	At home I use good quality glassware for drinking wine (15)	Bruwer and Li (2007)	5.50	1.565	2.450	0.855
Loyalty	I enjoy shopping in this store (16)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	5.97	1.224	1.499	–
Loyalty	I may purchase wine solely on recommendation from the sales staff in this store (17)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	4.73	1.737	3.018	–
Situational brand choice	I have a few favourite brands from which I usually buy my wine (18)	Mittal and Lee (1989)	3.63	1.548	2.396	0.866
Situational brand choice; Interest	I seek information about a wine before buying it (19)	Slama and Tashchian (1985)	4.96	1.356	1.838	0.851
Situational brand choice	There are situations when it is annoying to buy a wine that isn't right (20)	Mittal and Lee (1989)	4.84	1.634	2.671	0.855
Situational brand choice	There are times when buying the wrong brand by mistake is a big deal (21)	Mittal and Lee (1989)	3.61	1.618	2.619	0.855

**Table I.**  
Wine involvement scale

(continued)

Dimension(s)	Scale item and number	Source	Mean	SD	VAR	$\alpha$ if deleted
Situational brand choice	There are situations for which buying the wrong wine causes real grief (22)	Mittal and Lee (1989)	3.25	1.763	3.108	0.859
Loyalty	When I come out of this store I am usually satisfied with the service (23)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	5.86	1.119	1.252	0.857
Loyalty	This store is normally my first choice (24)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	4.53	1.930	3.724	0.857
Loyalty	There are times when I find the sales staff to be a little too pushy (25) (R)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	5.8378	1.36542	1.864	0.866
Loyalty	The sales staff in this store can be relied on for their integrity (26)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	5.72	1.382	1.911	0.853
Fine wine purchaser	I am curious about wines I am not familiar with (27)	NEW	5.88	1.178	1.388	0.849
Fine wine purchaser	I like to try wines from different countries and regions (28)	NEW	5.98	1.147	1.315	0.852
Purchasing involvement	I like coming to sales at this store (29)	Slama and Tashchian (1985)	5.57	1.535	2.357	0.846
Purchasing involvement	Being a smart shopper is worth the additional time it takes (30)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	5.63	1.382	1.910	0.850
Purchasing involvement	For expensive items it is worth taking extra time because it is important to get the best deal (31)	Lockshin <i>et al.</i> (1997)	6.18	4.885	23.861	-
Purchasing involvement; Interest	I like being involved in making wine purchases (32)	Slama and Tashchian (1985)	5.717	1.3461	1.812	0.845
Purchasing involvement	I am willing to spend extra time shopping in order to get the cheapest price on goods of the same quality (33)	Slama and Tashchian (1985)	4.80	1.542	2.379	0.859

**Notes:** R, Reverse coded.  The grey colour-blocked questions were not used in the final calculations

Table I.

correlation test. Coefficient  $\alpha$  is not calculated on a single split of a measure, rather it is the mathematical equivalent to the mean of all possible splits that could have been utilised as the measure. The overall  $\alpha$  was 0.846 after the deletion of seven items following sensitivity analysis (see Table I) leaving a reliable scale consisting of 26 items. Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability analysis was also conducted on computed scores of self-concept ( $\alpha = 0.786$ ), wrong purchase probability ( $\alpha = 0.751$ ), and consumption occasion brand choice ( $\alpha = 0.759$ ), revealing adequate inter-item reliability. The final model (26 items) was further used for the segmentation of respondents. In the wine product category the level of involvement is either split in low and high levels (Hirche and Bruwer, 2014), or in low, moderate and high levels (Lesschaeve and Bruwer, 2010).

Resulting from the final wine product involvement measurement construct, the sample was next segmented into distinct consumer groups (low and high involvement). After re-specification, the possible involvement total score range was 26 to 182. Each respondent was then recoded into "high involvement" (above the median total score) and low involvement" (below the median total score). For a stronger delineation of the two categories, the threshold was set three score points below and above the median resulting in a split of low involvement (45 per cent) and high involvement (55 per cent) consumers. Similarly, 46 per cent of the respondents were in the low self-concept and 54 per cent in the high self-concept categories.



#### 4. Results

##### 4.1 Socio-demographics and wine consumption characteristics

The socio-demographic makeup of the consumers (Table II) provides the basis for testing and confirmation of some of the hypotheses. Table II shows gender group distribution of the sample to be predominately males (71 per cent). Millennials (34 per cent) and Generation X (28 per cent) dominate the sample (62 per cent are under 45 years old) and a mere 18 per cent of the total have no tertiary qualification, compared with 66 per cent of the total population (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015). In fact, half of the respondents (50 per cent) had a postgraduate tertiary qualification indicating a high educational status. Household income levels are weighted heavily towards upper levels with 79 per cent earning AU\$100,000 or more and 41 per cent earning over AU\$200,000, in contrast with an average annual household income for Australians of AU\$77,194 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2015).

As can be expected in a fine wine retail environment, the consumer profile is male-dominant, highly educated and has a high socio-economic status (Cheong and Bruwer, 2012; Johnson and Bastian, 2015). Wine consumption reflects moderate to heavy levels on average (Bruwer and Li, 2007) for both households (11.6 bottles per month) and individuals (5.3 bottles per month). Males (8.1 bottles) consume significantly more wine than females (4.9 bottles) confirmed by  $F(1, 213) = 4.997; p = 0.027^*$ .

Characteristic	Male (%)	Female (%)	Total (%)
<i>Gender</i>	70.8	29.2	100.0
<i>Age group</i>			
18-24 years	6.2	3.3	5.3
25-28 years	8.6	23.3	12.4
29-34 years	14.8	16.7	15.9
35-40 years	16.0	30.0	19.5
41-44 years	12.3	0.0	8.8
45-54 years	9.9	6.7	8.8
55-65 years	18.5	10.0	15.9
65+ years	13.7	10.0	13.4
<i>Education level</i>			
No tertiary qualification	16.3	21.2	17.7
Undergraduate tertiary qualification	32.4	33.3	32.7
Postgraduate tertiary qualification	51.3	45.5	49.6
<i>Annual household income level (AU\$)</i>			
< \$50,000	8.0	7.4	7.8
\$50,000-100,000	12.0	14.8	12.8
\$100,001-200,000	40.0	33.4	38.2
\$200,000+	40.0	44.4	41.2
<i>Number of persons in the household<sup>a</sup></i>			
Persons under 18 years old	0.22	0.30	0.24
Persons 18 years and older	2.01	2.20	2.06
Persons ≥18 years old who drink wine	2.00	2.23	2.06
Persons living in household (total)	2.23	2.50	2.30
<i>Wine consumption</i>		Mean	
Monthly household wine consumption (bottles)	11.76	11.11	11.57
Monthly personal wine consumption (bottles)	8.10	4.89	5.25

**Table II.** Socio-demographic and wine consumption characteristics of respondents

Note: <sup>a</sup>Denotes values as means

#### 4.2 Self-concept and involvement

To test *H1* a two-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate the interaction between wine involvement and self-concept on the purchase of fine wine products by consumers. The self-concept dimension was excluded from the involvement determination to examine this interaction. The results in Table III support *H1* that consumers with a high level of wine product involvement are more likely to select a fine wine for purchase than consumers with low involvement,  $F(1, 130) = 17.46; p < 0.001$ . The data also supports the notion that consumers with high sense of self-concept were also more likely to purchase a fine wine product,  $F(1, 130) = 4.11; p < 0.050$ . The interaction effect of self-concept and wine product involvement was significant as well,  $F(1, 130) = 4.33; p = 0.049$ .

Consumers with a high sense of self-concept are more likely to select a fine wine product than consumers with low self-concept (Table III). This suggests these consumers allow for the possibility their wine purchases might reveal something about themselves to others, hence the need to purchase a product that potentially reflects quality and distinctiveness. This may relate to how the consumers feel they are perceived by others. The interaction indicates that the effect of involvement on consumers' likelihood of purchasing a fine wine is larger when they have low self-concept. Individuals with high self-concept were likely to purchase a fine wine, whether or not they had high or low involvement. However, individuals with low self-concept were only likely to purchase a fine wine when they also had high involvement. When both involvement and self-concept were low, a consumer was not likely to purchase fine wine.

#### 4.3 Involvement, self-concept and consumption occasion brand choice

*H2* was tested by means of a two-way ANOVA conducted to investigate the interaction between involvement and self-concept on the influence on consumers' consumption occasion brand choice. To examine this interaction, the self-concept dimension was excluded from the involvement determination. There were no significant main effects and/or significant interaction effect (Table IV).

Involvement	Self-concept	Mean	SD	%
Low	Low	7.46	2.43	52.8
	High	10.20	1.61	47.2
	Total	8.75	2.48	100.0
High	Low	11.67	1.53	18.8
	High	11.69	1.38	81.2
	Total	11.69	1.35	100.0

**Table III.**  
Interaction between self-concept and involvement on fine wine purchase activity

**Notes:** Main effect involvement:  $F(1, 130) = 17.46; p < 0.001$ ; Main effect self-concept:  $F(1, 130) = 4.11; p < 0.050$ ; Interaction effect:  $F(1, 130) = 4.33; p = 0.049$

Involvement	Self-concept	Mean	SD	SE	%
Low	Low	19.68	5.31	0.880	52.8
	High	19.80	4.09	0.935	47.2
	Total	19.74	4.73		100.0
High	Low	19.67	2.52	2.700	18.8
	High	22.46	4.50	1.300	81.2
	Total	21.94	4.28		100.0

**Table IV.**  
Interaction between involvement and self-concept on consumption occasion brand choice

**Note:** No main effects or significant interaction effects observed

An examination of the profile for the interaction indicated that situational brand choice scores were relatively equal for low involvement/low self-concept ( $M = 19.68$ ;  $SE = 0.88$ ), low involvement/high self-concept ( $M = 19.80$ ;  $SE = 0.935$ ), and high involvement/low self-concept ( $M = 19.68$ ;  $SE = 2.70$ ). However, an increase in situational brand choice was seen for consumers with both high involvement and high self-concept ( $M = 22.46$ ;  $SE = 1.30$ ).  $H2$  is therefore rejected.

4.4 *Fine wine, age and self-concept*

A two-way ANOVA was conducted to investigate the interaction between the age of consumers (specifically consumers aged 45 and over and those aged 44 and under) and their self-concept on the likelihood of purchasing a fine wine product ( $H3$ ). There was a significant main effect of age,  $F(1, 174) = 12.74$ ;  $p < 0.01$  lending support to the hypothesis that wine consumers aged 45 years and over are significantly more disposed to purchase fine wine products. The ANOVA also indicates an interaction effect for age and self-concept of  $F(1, 174) = 8.76$ ;  $p < 0.01$ .

The analysis (Table V) reveals that consumers aged 45 years and over are significantly more likely to purchase fine wine products, possibly the result of greater exposure to and experience with the product than younger consumers. It might also reflect an inclination to purchase more expensive wine products given that such consumers are more likely to have higher disposable income. Whereas the data supports the hypothesis that wine consumers over the age of 45 are more likely to make a fine wine purchase than consumers 44 and younger, it is also revealed that for this latter age group self-concept nonetheless has a very strong influence. In other words, where those consumers 44 years and under have a high level of self-concept, their disposition to making a fine wine purchase increases significantly, whereas for consumers 45 years and older the level of self-concept has little bearing. The interaction between age and self-concept indicates that individuals aged 45 and over are likely to buy a fine wine product, irrespective of self-concept. However, for individuals aged 44 and under, consumers were only likely to buy a fine wine if they had a high self-concept.

4.5 *Wine consumption levels, self-concept and age*

To estimate the proportion of variance in monthly personal wine consumption and monthly household consumption that can be accounted for by age and self-concept, a standard multiple regression analysis (MRA) was performed. Prior to interpreting the results of the MRA, some assumptions were evaluated. First, stem-and-leaf plots and boxplots indicated that each variable in the regression equation was normally distributed, and free from univariate outliers. Second, inspection of the normal probability plot of standardized residuals as well as the scatterplot of standardized residuals against standardized predicted values indicated that the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity of residuals were met. Third, Mahalanobis distance did not exceed the critical  $\chi^2$  for  $df = 2$  (at  $\alpha = 0.001$ ) of 13.82 for any cases in the data, indicating that multivariate outliers were not of concern. Fourth, relatively

**Table V.**  
Interaction between age and self-concept on fine wine purchase activity

Self-concept	Age group	Mean	SD	%
Low	Up to 44 yrs	7.11	2.67	67.5
	45 yrs and above	10.15	2.12	32.5
	Total	8.10	2.86	100.0
High	Up to 44 yrs	10.52	1.88	60.8
	45 yrs and above	10.80	1.47	39.2
	Total	10.63	1.72	100.0

**Notes:** Main effect Age:  $F(1, 174) = 12.74$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ; Interaction effect:  $F(1, 174) = 8.76$ ;  $p < 0.01$

high tolerance for both predictors in the regression model indicated that multicollinearity would not interfere with ability to interpret the outcome of the MRA.

Table VI shows that, in combination, the independent variables of self-concept and age accounted for 11.8 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable monthly personal wine consumption,  $R^2 = 0.118$ ,  $F(2, 204) = 6.81$ ;  $p = 0.002^{**}$ . In combination, self-concept and age accounted for 14.9 per cent of the variance in the dependent variable monthly household consumption,  $R^2 = 0.149$ ,  $F(2, 206) = 9.04$ ;  $p < 0.001^{**}$ . Unstandardised ( $B$ ) and standardised ( $\beta$ ) regression coefficients and squared semi-partial (or "part") correlations ( $sr^2$ ) for each predictor in the regression model are reported in Table VI. The results show that  $H4$  is supported.

#### 4.6 Purchase behaviour as dimension of product involvement and consumption occasion

To test  $H5$  a Pearson correlation was conducted to test the association between purchasing involvement (for price relevance) and product involvement in different consumption occasions (Table VII). There was a strong positive correlation between the two variables,  $r(213) = 0.567$ ;  $p < 0.001^{**}$ . To further investigate the hypothesis an independent samples  $t$ -test was conducted comparing purchasing involvement among low involvement and high involvement consumers. The  $t$ -test was significant,  $t(213) = -6.957$ ;  $p = 0.006^{**}$ , indicating that high involvement consumers ( $MD = 35.39$ ;  $SD = 3.49$ ) had higher purchasing involvement scores than low involvement consumers ( $MD = 28.00$ ;  $SD = 7.04$ ).

It was hypothesised that low involvement consumers would display greater purchasing involvement in the retail environment (for price relevance), but this was not reflected in the results of the survey. Instead it was revealed that high involvement consumers had higher scores for purchasing involvement, meaning that they were even more concerned about price than low involvement consumers.  $H5$  is therefore rejected.

**Table VI.**  
Unstandardised ( $B$ ) and standardised ( $\beta$ ) regression coefficients and squared semi-partial correlations ( $sr^2$ ) for each predictor in regression model predicting monthly personal and household wine consumption

Variable	Unstandardised ( $B$ )	Standardised ( $\beta$ )	$sr^2$
<i>Personal consumption</i>			
Age (+/-45 years)	3.492*	0.244	0.244
Self-concept	0.256*	0.246	0.246
<i>Household consumption</i>			
Age (+/-45 years)	5.752**	0.308	0.308
Self-concept	0.322*	0.235	0.235

**Notes:** Goodness-of-fit statistics: personal wine consumption:  $R^2 = 0.118$ ,  $F(2, 204) = 6.81$ ;  $p = 0.002^{**}$ ; monthly household consumption:  $R^2 = 0.149$ ,  $F(2, 206) = 9.04$ ;  $**p < 0.001$ .  $*p < 0.01$

**Table VII.**  
Consumption occasion and purchasing involvement

Occasion	%	Mean	SD	$\chi^2$	Sig.
Dinner with friends	34.0	34.77	9.69	30.425	0.295
Dinner with family	20.1	9.69	1.74		
A casual drink with friends	13.3	7.72	2.14		
Cellaring to age the wine	12.1	30.66	9.48		
An intimate dinner	4.9	30.00	7.94		
To drink by myself	4.9	35.20	4.15		
Outdoors (BBQ or picnic)	3.8	36.00	1.83		
A party or celebration	2.9	27.33	3.06		
Gift giving	2.9	29.33	1.53		
Business-related occasion	1.1	31.00	1.13		
Total	100.0	32.95	7.71		

## 5. Discussion

This study contributes in that it is the first to examine the extent to which consumer self-concept and product involvement influences the fine wine purchase decision at the retail level given the anticipated consumption occasion. More specifically, first the results confirmed that older consumers (45 years and older) are more involved in the wine product. Second, the findings support the notion that low involvement consumers are more inclined to purchase a fine wine product when reflecting a higher sense of self-concept, such as perceived need to feel unique for a given context or the desire for affiliation with a group. A low involvement consumer may sense a lack of expertise in or knowledge of wine as a product and be concerned with the probability of purchasing the wrong product for a given occasion, such as for an important gift or celebratory occasion. Third, where a consumption occasion is perceived to be important, a low involvement consumer may regard a poor choice as having the potential to reflect negatively on them. Fourth, the more intense the sense of self-concept in a consumer the more predictive becomes the purchase of a product that can reduce that risk. The research also confirmed that low involvement consumers who purchase fine wine products also experienced self-concept of greater intensity. Where low involvement consumers do not purchase fine wine products their sense of self-concept was of negligible influence in such situations.

Although it was hypothesised that low involvement consumers would display greater purchase involvement in the retail environment (for price relevance), this was not confirmed by the study's results. Instead, high involvement consumers had higher scores for purchasing involvement, meaning that they were even more concerned about price than low involvement consumers. The extent to which low involvement consumers rely on situational brand choice for given consumption occasions, rather than self-concept, was not clear. Moreover, the low involvement consumer presumably has less at stake (self-concept) when purchasing a wine product. However, the findings suggest that low involvement consumers are concerned with self-concept irrespective of consumption occasion, and that this is also applicable to consumers with higher involvement. In other words, many if not most consumers are generally concerned about the wine products they purchase irrespective of where they intend its consumption.

## 6. Limitations, implications and future research

The conclusions drawn from the results of this research need to be considered in light of constraints and limitations imposed on the study. The exploratory nature of the research is a constraint in itself. The sample size was relatively small and may have skewed the results. Given that the survey was conducted in a retail environment it could not take into account purchasing habits consumers may demonstrate in bars, pubs and restaurants, particularly by Millennials who purchase more wine on-premise than older consumers (Bruwer and Huang, 2012). The specialist fine wine store where the research was conducted, was perhaps not the ideal location for seeking responses from low involvement wine consumers.

In terms of its implications, this research supports the notion that low involvement consumers are more inclined to purchase a fine wine product when reflecting a higher self-concept, such as perceived need to feel unique for a given context or the desire for affiliation with a group. A low involvement consumer may sense a lack of knowledge of wine as a product and be concerned with the probability of purchasing the "wrong" product for a given consumption situation, such as for an important gift or celebratory occasion. The more intense the level of self-congruity in a consumer the more predictive becomes the purchase of a product that can reduce that risk. Where involvement is low it would seem likely that the level of self-congruity drives the purchase of fine wine. Hence, fine wine retailers need to be cognizant of this issue, while at the same time it presents them with an opportunity to sell more fine wine by reducing risk perception through training of store staff

and responding to body language signs and comments/questions of consumers. High and low involvement wine consumers alike are concerned with self-concept irrespective of consumption situation. Therefore, for self-concept to be relevant to purchase it follows that consumption must be conspicuous, but since not all situations are comparable and serve different purposes, some will inevitably be more conspicuous than others.

Further research that reveals more insight into purchasing behaviour, price cues and situational brand choice is likely to be valuable for producers seeking to develop new products and devise effective marketing strategies. Xue's (2008) finding that situational brand choice is based on situational factors rather than self-concept for the low involvement consumer needs further study for applicability to wine products, while the link between situational involvement and product involvement remains somewhat vexed. This might be aided by more research into socio-demographics and consumption occasion. Research that focus on cultural differences viewed from these perspectives, could also provide good further insights.

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