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Impact of Expertise on the Concept of “vin de garde”: perceptive and linguistic Approach

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Wine countries produce young wines that are ready to drink as well as wines elaborated to be kept several years or even decades in cellar and improve during aging. The so called “vins de garde” have a prestigious image and they represent an important economic stake for wine-producing areas. All wines have not the ability to age well and consumers who intent to buy wine want to know whether a wine is to be kept or not, because it is an investment. So, wine professionals have to evaluate aging potential i.e., whether a young wine will turn out to be a high quality wine after decades.

In this study, the objective is to compare wine professionals, oenophiles and consumers on behaviour and discourse towards wines with an aging potential. So, we combined perceptive and linguistic approaches to examine the impact of expertise on judgments of aging potential of wines.

Three groups of 22 to 26 subjects performed with 26 red wines a sorting task into two groups according to olfactory similarity of wines and a categorization task (wine with an aging potential, yes/no) by orthonasal evaluation. The proportion of wines judged significantly with or without aging potential was higher for professionals (13 wines) than oenophiles and consumers (7 and 6 wines, respectively). For the sorting task, the partitions were different according to the panels; they probably used their own criterion to match wines according to their experience and knowledge of wines. The same groups were also asked to explain what they associated to “vin de garde” and provide a definition. The corpus was more important for professionals, than oenophiles, and than consumers. Analysis of words occurrence revealed three main themes: wine description; time and keeping; positive subjective judgments. Professionals produced more words referring to wine description, whereas consumers produced more words related to their feelings (positive subjective judgments). A linguistic analysis of personal marks revealed that consumers produce a more experiential discourse, when professionals and oenophiles produce a more consensual descriptive discourse, indicating a collectively shared concept. Altogether, professionals outperformed other groups regarding perceptive judgments. Oenophiles did not outperformed consumers but produce a discourse similar in some aspects to professionals.