Cheers with Port wine by young consumers
Exploring perceptions and attitudes
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The actual increasing of the wine market competitiveness leads to need to promote the consumption of the wine amongst younger consumers. This is mainly important when we take into account of fortified wine, such as for example Port wine. The Port wine is a landmark of the Portuguese wine. It is a fortified wine produced in the Douro Demarcated Region (one of the first demarcated and regulated wine region in the world) under very specific physical and human conditions. Part of this region was included by UNESCO in the list of the World Heritage site, as a cultural and evolving landscape, illustrating an example of a traditional wine region which reflects the evolution of the human activity over the time. Previous studies had shown that Port wine is mainly consumed by older consumers (more than 45 years old). Once there is a risk that habits and tradition of Port wine consumption will be lost in the coming years, the aim of this study is to investigate the engagement of younger consumers with Port wine in order to draw marketing strategies for industry.

In the first stage of the research a qualitative approach was applied using focus group for data collection which included Port wine tasting as a projective stimulus. A guide was developed in order to study attitudes and perceptions of Port wine consumption and was focused in the following themes, particularly: Port wine conceptualization; tasting session and evaluation of the attractiveness; new forms of consumption; place of purchase and emotional connotation. To the Young consumers were asked where, when and with whom they drink Port wine. The second stage stems from (1) the identification of the extrinsic attributes more important in the choice and (2) the new forms of Port wine consumption perceived by the young consumers. The best-worst (BW) method was applied to measure the degree of importance given by Generation Y to the main statements found in the first stage.

The participants of the focus group were all volunteers and recruited through an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was organized in three main groups: (1) sociodemographic; (2) consumption habits; (3) purchasing habits. Two focus group were administered in University of Trás-os-Montes and Alto Douro with students of the several regions of Portugal. Data was video recorded, transcript verbatim and content analyzed (NVivo). Participants were 53% male, aged between 19 – 31 years old, and all are moderate consumers of alcoholic beverages (e.g. 86.5% beer consumers, 54% Port wine consumers).

Results showed that Port wine conceptualization is mainly related to region of origin (Douro), unique sensory profile and alcohol content. The Port wine is for sharing at home, in special moments but just to taste. For young consumers, Port wine is a wine full of history targeted for older consumers. Their consumption is associated with comfort, elegance and nostalgia. The design and information on label, color (rosé, white and red) and design of the bottle are the attributes more attractive in moment of choice.

These findings show that it is necessary to boost and to demonstrate that Port wine can be consumed by different age groups and in different contexts. The fact many young believe that they will “grow into” in Port wine suggest that there is a marketing opportunity on the images that should be portrayed in advertisements of Port wine consumption. Implement tasting sessions of Port wine in different moments of consumption can be a good strategy to call attention of the youngest. A quantitative study is now on-going so that results can be representative of the Portuguese population for this segment. Understanding how Generation Y interact with Port wine rather than their parents, is important to increase the interest and consumption by fortified wine.

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