
COUPLE ROLES IN WINE PURCHASE DECISIONS - A STUDY OF BULGARIAN RESIDENTS

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Abstract

In our study, we explore the perceptions about couple roles in wine purchase decisions for Bulgaria, a traditionally wine producing and wine consuming country. We use a survey with questions on preferences in taste and purchasing habits, besides the core questions about couple roles in the three phases of the purchase process. Our main findings are that Bulgarian respondents consider the decisive power of both spouses as equal, with both partners having their say in all three phases of the process. Our results differ from previously obtained results about alcohol purchase decisions, where it was found that the husband has more power in alcohol purchases than the wife. We argue that wine could be regarded as differing from the rest of alcohol beverages, being a special product category.

Keywords

Roles distribution, traditional couples, Bulgarian couples, decision-making process, bottled wine purchases.

JEL Classification:

D12, D91, M31, Q13

Introduction

In their seminal paper, (Davis and Rigaux, 1974) formulate the two main questions related to marital roles in the decision making process: the difference by phase of the process, and to what extent perceptions about the roles of husbands and wives in the various phases coincide. Typically, the purchase decision process is divided in three phases: problem identification, information search, and final decision. Couple roles are perceived as different in the phases, with more specialization on the information search. Roles are regarded as less specialized for the final decision phase (Belch and Willis, 2002).

Alcohol is found to be within the decisive power of the husband, with few differences between the phases (Davis and Rigaux, 1974) whereas nonalcoholic beverages and food are within the "specialization" of the wife. However, consensus about the partners' roles is less expressed for alcohol, compared to other products. As (Webster, 1995) shows, alcoholic beverages share the same group as garden tools, cleaning products, children's toys, kitchenware etc. Groceries are dominated by wife (Green et al., 1983; Barlés-Arizón, Fraj-Anés and Martínez-Salinas, 2013). Couple roles are often found to vary throughout the decision process (Belch and Willis, 2002).

Alcoholic beverages decisions seem to be significantly less consensual than food and nonalcoholic beverages decisions, for example. The discrepancies are especially visible in the first phase (problem identification).

If more specific categories are explored, i.e. "wine", "beer", or "gin", rather than "alcoholic beverages", (Davis and Rigaux, 1974) argue that validity of level of role consensus could be raised.

In our study, we explore the roles of partners in traditional/heterosexual/ Bulgarian couples with respect to their decisions to buy bottled wine.

Methodology

To explore decision habits for wine purchases, we carried out a study in the period February-March 2020. We use a convenience sample, of "snowball" type. Our sample consists of 293 Bulgarian residents aged above 28, 164 women and 129 men, living in Northeastern Bulgaria, 201 in bigger places (cities), and 92 in towns and villages.

We asked our respondents to answer 22 questions related to their knowledge about wines and wine sorts, to their drinking preferences, and to their wine purchasing preferences.

As we try to explore the decision powers within the couple, we apply screening of respondents, all of our respondents are in a couple relationship, with average partnership duration of 15.4 years (median 12 years). Age of our respondents is between 29 and 80 years, the average and the median are 43 years, 1st and 3rd quartile 50 and 33 years. Given the relative few respondents aged above 65 (14 respondents, 65 is the common retirement age in Bulgaria), we cover mainly economically active people, which are the most active wine consumers in the country.

Previous studies on couple roles in buying decisions for Bulgaria show that alcoholic beverages are among the products for which the husband has more power, for all three phases in the purchase process. As (Kancheva and Marinov, 2014) show for Bulgaria, alcohol is among the strongly "husband dominated" product groups, with rather autonomous than joint decisions, in all three phases of the purchase process.

In our study, we use classical Likert-type items with responses from Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1). For the questions about the three phases of the decision process, "who identifies the need", "who searches for variants", "who makes the final deal", we use following responses: the husband (1), rather the husband (2), both equally (3), rather the wife (4), the wife (5).

Given the nature of Likert-type items, in our study we make use of non-parametric statistics, as the Mann-Whitney-Wilcoxon test (MWW), the Kruskal-Wallis test (KW) etc. and we believe this is without loss of power, compared to parametric statistics, while on the other hand we do not have to be worried about the distributions of our data. As (de Winter and Dodou, 2010) demonstrate, based on a simulation study, for five-point Likert-type items t-test and MWW test have similar power, with MWW being even more powerful than t for seven-point scales. MWW is shown by (Nanna and Sawilowsky, 1998) to improve in power as the sample size increases, therefore it is plausible to use it also for large samples.

Results and discussion

Our main interest being the nature of couple roles in the different phases of the decision process, we analyzed the dependence of perceptions in several aspects, making different cuts among respondents.

Table no. 1 Perceptions about couple roles by sex of respondent

Question	"Who identifies the need?"	"Who searches for variants?"	"Who makes the final deal?"
Median (total respondents)	3	3	3
Median (f-respondents)	4	3	3
Median (m-respondents)	3	3	3
MWW test (p-value), f-m	0	0	0
Vargha and Delaney A	0.65	0.59	0.61

Source: Authors' calculations

By grouping respondents by sex (using it as a factor), we found that couple roles in the wine purchase process are perceived as rather equal, with no dominance of either of the sexes, with the slight dominance of the wife in the identification phase. These results contradict to earlier studies on the more general alcohol group. Wine seems to be perceived apart from other alcoholic beverages.

Since the MWW tests strongly reject the null, we assume that differences between women's and men's perceptions do exist, however the Vargha and Delaney A test values (Varga and Delaney, 2000) suggest that effect sizes are small, though not negligible (table no. 1).

Table no. 2 Perceptions about couple roles by place of respondent

Question	"Who identifies the need?"	"Who searches for variants?"	"Who makes the final deal?"
Median (city)	3	3	3
Median (town/village)	3	3	3
MWW test (p-value), city-town/village	0.71	0.35	0.63
Vargha and Delaney A	0.51	0.54	0.52

Source: Authors' calculations

Unlike the results in the previous grouping, we found that there are no differences in perceptions of respondents residing in big and small places, since the MWW tests do not reject the null. Effect sizes are negligible - Vargha and Delaney A test values are very close to 0.50 (table no. 2). In the last decades living and working styles in bigger and smaller places in the explored region, and in Bulgaria in general, strongly converged, including the purchasing habits - same sets of stores are available practically everywhere in the country. Therefore the lack of differences is a plausible outcome.

Table no. 3 Perceptions about couple roles by "classical" drinkers

Question	"Who identifies the need?"	"Who searches for variants?"	"Who makes the final deal?"
Median (classical)	3	3	2
Median (nonclassical)	3	3	2
MWW test (p-value)	0.77	0.13	0.001

Source: Authors' calculations

Further we explored the perceptions of the "classical" drinkers (persons who drink wine only the "classical" way, i.e. they never drink red wine to fish, and never drink white wine with red meat, 84 of our respondents, we compared their results to the 120 "nonclassical" drinkers, which both drink red wine to fish and white wine to red meat), the results are in (table no. 3). We find that only for the final phase there are differences between the perceptions of respondents, despite the same median values. In Bulgaria, the traditional drinking style includes drinking of wine after an aperitif of stronger beverages, mainly rakia (the traditional spirit beverage). This drinking style is typical for most Bulgarians, in previous decades most drinks were home made. And even with the modern trends to drink more bottled, professionally produced wine, the habits and perceptions do not differ between types of drinkers.

Table no. 4 Perceptions about couple roles by "exclusive" wine drinkers

Question	"Who identifies the need?"	"Who searches for variants?"	"Who makes the final deal?"
Median (exclusive)	3	3	3
Median (nonexclusive)	3	3	2
MWW test (p-value)	0.17	0.40	0.09

Source: Authors' calculations

The next comparison is between "exclusive" wine drinkers (168 persons who declared that they do not mix wine with other alcohol) and the rest of "nonexclusive" drinkers. We find virtually no differences in their perceptions, with possible rejection of the null only for the third phase, and only by 10%. Again, the strong tradition of typical drinking habits wipes out the differences between the types of drinkers.

Table no. 5 Perceptions about couple roles by typical price preferences, preferred type of wine and intensity of purchases, Kruskal-Wallis tests (p-values)

Question	"Who identifies the need?"	"Who searches for variants?"	"Who makes the final deal?"
Price preferences	0.03	0.42	0.21
Preferred wine	0.18	0.42	0.48
Origin of last wine bought	0.12	0.39	0.39
Purchase intensity	0	0.02	0.31

Source: Authors' calculations

Preferred price, by amount of the typical purchase ("under 5 BGN" - 13 respondents, "5-8 BGN" - 69 respondents, "9-12 BGN" - 109 respondents, "13-25 BGN" - 76 respondents, "over 25 BGN" - 30 respondents) leads up to differences in perceptions only in the initial phase, with p-value of the KW test 0.03.

There appear to be no differences in perceptions by respondents preferring different types of wine ("white dry" - 110 respondents, "rose dry" - 56 respondents, "red dry" - 112 respondents, "Champagne" - 9 respondents, "fortified" - 6 respondents).

Origin of last purchased wine (a country - "BG" - 178 respondents, "FR" - 44 respondents, "IT" - 19 respondents, "ES" - 9 respondents, "NZ" - 6 respondents, "CL" - 5 respondents, "PT" - 4 respondents, "AT" - 2 respondents, "MD" - 2 respondents, "other" - 24 respondents) leads also to no differences in the answers (however, there is a difference in purchase habits, when origin of last purchased wine is tested to the intensity of wine purchases, KW test p-value is 0.001).

We screened our respondents also by intensity of wine purchases ("I don't buy", 41 persons, "2-3 times annually", 82 persons, "2-3 times per month", 127 persons, "several times per week", 43 persons. The group of "non-buyers" consists of 23 women and 19 men, with an average age of 48 years and with average partnership experience of 21.29 years.

Given that the total average for the sample is 33 years, and the average partnership experience - 14.86 years, we can broadly assume that the "non-buyers" are older people.) We reject the null of no difference in perceptions for the two first phases of the decision process. We can argue that these results comply with our findings in the other cuts.

Conclusions

We find that perceptions among Bulgarian residents reveal that there is no dominant partner in wine purchase decisions, with both husbands and wives having certain decisive power, and we consider this result as the most important outcome of our study. Various cuts we made to explore the perceptions in more detail, i.e. by gender, place, purchasing preferences, taste etc. showed that no differences exist in the perceptions about who is the decisive partner, in all three stages of the purchase decision process, with very few exceptions.

An interesting future area of research could be the study for the existence of possible linkages between buying preferences and knowledge (expressed as known prior informations) about wine types. This direction of future studies seems promising as a possible guideline for advertising and educational campaigns.

The degree of wine purchase role specialization between partners also provides directions for further empirical investigation, once again, as a possible guideline for advertising and educational campaigns.

Our analysis provides evidence that wine is a specific product, which is characterized by different decision-making power distribution within the couples, compared to the general alcoholic drinks product category. In this way, it highlights the need for special attention when designing future research, aimed at consumer behavior investigation in the context of the wine product category.

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