# Seriously pink: a cross-cultural examination of the perceived image of rosé wine

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – This paper aims to examine consumer preferences and perceptions of rosé wine with an ultimate purpose of constructing a perceived image of rosé in the cross-cultural context.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study was conducted in four markets, comprising the USA, New Zealand, France and the UK. The data were collected via a structured questionnaire through a combination of survey administration modes (pen-and-paper and online). Descriptive statistics, chi-square, factor analysis and ANOVA were used for analysis.

**Findings** – One of the key findings revolves around the construction of the perceived image of rosé and how this image varies in different markets. Effectively, this study presents an overview of the perceived reputation of rosé in four different market structures, shaped by different cultural and image management issues.

**Practical implications** – The most crucial implication of this research is the cultural variation in consumer attitudes toward rosé wine and its impact on marketing strategies to effectively target rosé consumers in different markets.

**Originality/value** – The vast majority of studies on wine consumer behaviour focus on red or white wines, whereas research on consumption of rosé is virtually non-existent. However, recent market trends indicate a growing popularity of rosé wine around the world. The current study is the first to concentrate on rosé as the focal point of research investigation. The study not only offers insights on the perceived image of rosé based on empirical data, but also provides a broader cross-cultural perspective on how this image varies in different markets.

**Keywords** Cross-cultural comparison, Survey research, Consumer perceptions, Perceived image, Rosé wine

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

The vast majority of studies on wine consumer behaviour focus on red or white wines, whereas research on consumption of rosé is virtually non-existent. However, recent trends indicate a growing popularity of rosé in different markets and a noticeable increase in its production around the world. A report by FranceAgriMer (2013) reveals that the world production of rosé has reached 24.1 million hectolitres, which represents about 9 per cent of the world's wine production. Furthermore, 65 per cent of the world's rosé production is concentrated in Europe, with France being the leading rosé producer, accounting for 28 per cent, followed by Italy, the USA and Spain.

Europeans are also the main consumers of rosé. France ranks first and represents one-third of the world consumption of rosé, with 11.5 litres per capita per annum. The UK, Germany and Italy are among the top rosé consumers also with steady consumption rates over past years, ranging between 5 and 7 per cent. European markets play a vital role in importation of rosé. In 2011, 80 per cent of rosé's world imports were made by European countries, with France and the UK alone accounting for more than half of those (FranceAgriMer, 2013).

There is also a growing consumer interest in rosé in other countries, especially the USA, which accounts for 12.9 per cent of rosé's world consumption. Likewise, there has been greater recognition of rosé amongst New Zealand consumers over the past decade, where in 2009, sales through supermarkets were up by 20 per cent compared to the previous year (Burzynska, 2009). Research has shown that rosé drinkers may be especially important consumers for emerging wine consumption regions. FranceAgriMer (2013) reports increasing popularity of rosé in smaller countries such as Tunisia and Uruguay, where rosé represents around 60 per cent of all wine consumed. A study conducted in Texas on attitudes toward local wines revealed that the most loyal consumers are those with preferences for rosé and sweeter wines (Kolyesnikova *et al.*, 2008), suggesting rosé wine drinkers may prove a valuable market segment as local wine advocates.

Despite the global increase in consumer interest, the industry knows little about the determinants of consumer preferences for rosé. Similarly, with the exception of one recent academic paper, which focused on rosé choice drivers by Italian consumers (Corsinovi *et al.*, 2013), virtually nothing has been explored in the academic literature. Although a number of previous studies reported findings concerning rosé (Garcia *et al.*, 2013; Holter, 2009; Kolyesnikova *et al.*, 2008), rosé was not the main focus of these studies, thus adding only a supplementary perspective on the topic.

The current study aims to fill this gap by exploring consumer preferences and perceptions about rosé in different markets. The study will also offer managerial-oriented implications to help rosé producers develop effective strategies to target rosé consumers.

## 2. Theoretical context

In the overview of the recent increasing trends of rosé consumption, FranceAgriMer (2013) noted that rosé has a distinctive reputation in consumers' minds. We make this notion of the perceived image of rosé wine a focal point of our manuscript. The current paper aims to provide an initial exploration of attitudes towards and consumption of rosé to reflect on the perceived reputation of this type of wine among consumers in different markets.

Due to the exploratory nature of the work, no particular theoretical model was purposefully tested. However, some principles of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975) are specifi relevant to our investigation. The TRA posits that a person's behavioural intention is a function of two basic determinants: attitudes towards the behaviour and subjective norms. In our attempt to investigate consumer perceptions of rosé, we used a combination of these two factors – personal judgements (attitudes or a sum of beliefs) and the infl of consumer's social environment (subjective norms). Specifi some measures examined consumer personal beliefs about rosé (e.g. "easy to drink") or behavioural situations (e.g. occasions) where rosé consumption is considered to be most appropriate. Furthermore, in our opinion, rosé is a product that may have signifi social pressures tied to it. We suggest that a person's perception and consumption of rosé may potentially be infl by perceived expectations from relevant individuals or groups along with intentions to comply with these expectations (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975). For instance, if a close friend believes that rosé is a cheap wine for inexperienced wine novices only, this may have an effect on the consumer's own perceptions and consumption of rosé. Thus, some of our measures focused on the effect of subjective norms associated with this product – for example, by asking whether it is suitable to serve rosé when trying to impress someone or to give it as a gift. In sum, we believe that a combination of the two TRA components – personal attitudes and subjective norms – form the perceived image of rosé in consumers' minds.

## 3. Conceptual context

To create a domain for a perceived image of rosé, we examined the few existing academic studies and trade publications relevant to the topic of investigation. Broadly, the existing literature highlights the following characteristics that are considered representative of rosés: unsophisticated, seasonal and feminine. In this study, we will test consumer perceptions of the domain's elements to ultimately construct the perceived image of rosé based on empirical data. Furthermore, we examine how this image varies in different markets.

### *3.1 "Unsophisticated"*

Despite the increased consumption of rosé over the past 15 years, its image is still ambivalent. High-involvement consumers seem to have a generally lower regard for rosé due to its reputation as a simple, unsophisticated and even boring drink (Hazan, 1982). This reputation is not helped by a long-held belief that it is made by mixing white and red wines to obtain pinkish-coloured sweet wine (Corsinovi *et al.*, 2013). Exemplifying this paradox is Mateus Rosé – a lightly sparkling wine from Portugal, which was deliberately sweetened for the North American and Northern European markets and, whilst critically derided, was extremely popular in the UK between the 1950s and 1980s (Robinson, 2006). It began declining in the UK only when other alternatives, such as fruit-driven wine styles from New World countries, started to appear on supermarket shelves from the 1970s onwards.

Likewise, the unsophisticated nature of rosé has dominated the US consumers' minds for years. There is a historic reason behind this reputation of rosé in the USA. In the late 1970s, white Zinfandel – an inexpensive, sweet, low-alcohol, jug rosé wine – became extremely popular as an unpretentious and unthreatening drink. Today, there is probably no other drink that epitomizes the popularity of sweeter, cheap wines in the USA (Wilson, 2012).

While white Zinfandel and sweeter so-called "blush" wines certainly still have their loyal consumer base in the USA, recently, there has been a noticeable change in consumer preferences towards drier-style rosé. An increasing number of US winemakers nowadays are making their rosés in more traditional, classic, drier French rosé styles. This inclination is also supported by a visible decline in the market share of white Zinfandel, which dropped from 9 per cent in 2007 to only 2 per cent in 2013 (Beverage Information Group, 2014).

This trend is also apparent in other New World countries. While still of mixed quality, rosé wines in New Zealand are increasingly more sophisticated than in the past, with a great diversity of styles being produced. It seems that winemakers are also taking the style more seriously. Rather than rosés being produced from second-rate grapes, left over after the premier wines have been made, nowadays more grapes are specifically harvested with rosé production in mind (Barton, 2013).

Interestingly, while the trend in the New World markets is towards "classier" French-style rosé wines, in France, these wines also have the reputation of not being profound. However, in France, that notion does not necessarily translate as being unsophisticated; merely more casual in what may otherwise be seen as a rather formal, ritualistic, wine-consuming society. Rosé is associated with holidays, which are significant ritual events in France, but lack the formality of other rituals, such as weddings, Christmas or christenings – events at which it might be more typical to serve champagne.

### *3.2 "Seasonal"*

Generally, rosé is perceived as a seasonal beverage throughout hot summer months. In France, within the past 15 years, rosé has been marketed as the wine of summer in general and the holidays in particular. Rosé wines tend to come from the south of France, which is where many French people choose to take their holidays. The marketing of rosé has, therefore, built on this association. It is worth noting that the image of rosé links not just with sun and heat – but with cuisine as well. Rosé has been considered a prime match for the garlic-based dishes of southern France.

The seasonal image of rosé is also apparent in a number of New World markets. The US media have been contributing to the public perception of rosé as a refreshing summer drink appropriate for casual consumption situations, such as dining at sidewalk cafes, sitting by the pool or picnicking on rooftops (Bloomgarden-Smoke, 2013). Similarly, there is a tendency in New Zealand and the UK for rosé to be advertised as a fun, "summer drink".

*3.3 "Feminine"*

Many products are traditionally associated with a particular gender and are referred to in the academic literature as gender-dominant (Allison *et al.*, 1980; Alreck *et al.*, 1982). Consumers perceive these products as having qualities associated with either masculinity or femininity. Previous research shows that such associations can influence consumer perception of which demographic (males or females) is most appropriate for a given product (Worth *et al.*, 1992). Many businesses base their advertising campaigns on the belief that products with ascribed masculine qualities appeal to males, while products with ascribed feminine qualities appeal to females (Alreck *et al.*, 1982). Evidence from the wine industry and academic research supports this tendency.

Wine is often referred to in the academic literature as a drink more appealing to women (Charters *et al.*, 2011; Pettigrew, 2003) and the industry supports the notion of wine in general being perceived as a "female drink" (Todd, 2005). Some companies nowadays switch from advertising in magazines for wine professionals (e.g. *Wine Enthusiast* or *Wine Spectator*) to outlets that are not focused on wine but have large female readerships.

Recently, one US-based study examined whether perceived images of a wine's gender may be different for different types of wine (Velikova *et al.*, 2013). The results clearly indicated that, along with champagne and sparkling wine, rosé has a strong feminine association attached to it. However, the extent to which these associations may be comparable to other markets is unknown and, thus, constitutes a research interest for the current study.

## 4. Purpose of the study

Rosé seems to be a product with a different "local character" in different countries. From this perspective, it is interesting to evaluate various regional aspects that may contribute to this varying image. This can lead to valuable managerial implications for effective marketing of rosé in different markets.

With this purpose in mind, the current study was designed as a multinational project and was conducted in four markets: the USA, New Zealand, France and the UK. The choice of the countries was determined to represent the Old World and the New World, as well as wine producing and non-producing regions. These markets were also chosen to be representative of various cultures and consumption contexts.

The study was designed to evaluate consumer preferences and perceptions of rosé. The broader purpose was to gain a wider geographic perspective by examining these preferences and perceptions across a range of countries in order to construct the perceived image of rosé wine based on cross-cultural comparison of empirical data.

## 5. Research questions

Due to the investigative nature of this study, workable research questions (rather than hypotheses) were advanced:

*RQ1*. What are the consumer preferences and consumption behaviour for rosé wine and how do these preferences and consumption patterns vary in different markets?

*RQ2*. What are the consumer perceptions of rosé wine in terms of price and are these perceptions different in different markets?

*RQ3*. What is the perceived image of rosé wine and how does this image vary in different markets?

## 6. Method

### *6.1 Sample and data collection*

The population of interest was wine consumers. For a balanced perspective on the topic under investigation, it was important to include highly involved consumers, as well as those with a more distant interest in wine. Therefore, the study used two separate forms of data collection: pen-and-paper and online surveys.

Pen-and-paper surveys were distributed to visitors at two wine festivals (one in the USA and one in New Zealand). It was expected that festival attendees would yield only a partial segment of the target population. The primary motivational factors of wine festival attendees have been found to be socialisation, relaxation, entertainment and family/friends interaction, with interest in wine not being the predominant factor (Isaykina, 2001). By contrast, online surveys using panel approaches usually attract more knowledgeable, viewpoint-orientated samples than face-to-face surveys (Duffy *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, an identical questionnaire was distributed as an online survey to consumers with a distinct interest in wine. Emails inviting participation were sent to panels from databases compiled by individual researchers at various wine-related events. In addition, to diversify the sample by including people with various levels of wine involvement, recruitment for the online survey was also garnered through posting the URL on social media.

A minimum quota of 150 surveys from each market was set to obtain an adequate number of responses for the comparison analysis. A total of 984 completed surveys were collected and used for analysis (Table I). Although the UK sample was smaller than the other three samples, the sample sizes were not so unbalanced as to cause a problem with the ability to detect meaningful differences between the means. The test of equality of variance revealed that the homogeneity of variances assumption has not been violated in the current study.

| Characteristic | Total sample Frequency (%) | USA Frequency (%) | New Zealand Frequency (%) | France Frequency (%) | IK Frequency (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Number of respondents | 984 (100) | 250 (25.4) | 355 (36.1) | 217 (22.0) | 162 (16.5) |
| *Gender* | | | | | |
| Male | 40.4 | 36.8 | 36.6 | 41.5 | 53.1 |
| Female | 59.6 | 63.2 | 63.4 | 58.5 | 46.9 |
| *Age* | | | | | |
| 18-24 | 10.4 | 8.8 | 8.5 | 17.1 | 8.0 |
| 25-34 | 23.4 | 22.9 | 25.6 | 22.6 | 20.4 |
| 35-44 | 19.5 | 16.9 | 21.6 | 23.5 | 13.6 |
| 45-54 | 23.3 | 24.1 | 23.6 | 22.1 | 22.8 |
| 55-65 | 17.8 | 18.1 | 16.5 | 11.5 | 28.4 |
| 65+ | 5.7 | 9.2 | 4.3 | 3.2 | 6.8 |

**Table I.**
Sample description

Although pen-and-paper surveys were collected only in two markets, the overall sample was relatively balanced in terms of the survey administration mode (45 per cent pen-and-paper and 55 per cent online survey).

### 6.2 Measures

The survey was divided into two parts. The first part included general wine preferences and consumption behaviour, along with the socio-demographic characteristics; the second one was geared specifically towards assessing consumption, preferences and perceptions of rosé wine.

Measures for rosé were developed to reflect on the three research questions. Items included frequency of rosé consumption and style preferences (*RQ1*); perception of rosé with regards to its perceived price – compared to reds and whites (*RQ2*); and consumer perceptions of the rosé image (*RQ3*), worded as a set of statements to which participants could express levels of their agreement on a Likert scale anchors between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree). The development of the perceived image measures was grounded in the theoretical framework (personal attitudes and subjective norms), as well as in the conceptual characteristics of the reputation of rosé (unsophisticated, seasonal and feminine). Although no specific validated scales that could directly be applied to the domain of the rosé image could be found in the literature, previous wine consumer attitudes studies guided the design of the perceived image measures (Thach, 2012; Velikova *et al.*, 2013). Operationalisation of variables can be found in Table V.

## 7. Findings

### 7.1 Sample description

The socio-demographic characteristics tested were gender, age, education and income. Overall, there were more females than males; only the UK sample contained relatively more males. The respondents ranged in age from 18 to 87 years old, with an overall sample mean of 42.7 years. The average respondents' age in the UK sample was 45.9 years old, 44.7 in the USA; 41.9 in New Zealand; and 39.5 in France. Table I provides a more detailed overview the sample.

No cross-national comparison in participants' educational levels was possible due to differences in the educational systems. However, individual market analyses revealed a noticeable trend of highly educated consumers, with more than half of the respondents in all samples reporting a college or post-graduate degree. Likewise, participants in all four samples had higher incomes than the general population in their respective country. Overall, the socio-demographic background of the sample (middle-aged, educated, with higher incomes) mirrored the profile of wine drinkers reported in other studies (Chaney, 2001; Dodd and Bigotte, 1997; Overby *et al.*, 2004).

### 7.2 General wine consumption behaviour and preferences

Given the nature of the sample, which included wine festival attendees, wine database panels and people with a general interest in wine, it is not surprising that the majority of respondents chose wine as the most often consumed alcoholic beverage. However, the New World participants favoured beer much more than the Old World participants. This is not surprising given that the USA and New Zealand have traditionally been beer-drinking nations (Lamb, 2010; Newport, 2010; Stanford, 2000; Wilson *et al.*, 2005). Frequency of wine consumption was also slightly lower in the New World markets, particularly in the USA, and was the highest in the French sample. This behaviour is also reflected by the average spending per bottle to be consumed at home, which, in the French sample, was considerably higher (€11.40) than the average bottle price in the other markets [€8.60 in the USA; €9.30 in New Zealand; and €8.20 in the UK; $F(3, 969) = 39.23$, $p < 0.00$].

The UK sample consumed noticeably more bottles per month (M = 7.10), while the US sample – considerably less (M = 3.29). The average number of bottles per month in New Zealand and France was similar (M = 4.71; M = 4.58, respectively). The overall ANOVA was significant $F(3, 977) = 24.68$, $p < 0.00$. The higher number of bottles in the UK sample compared to other markets may be accounted for by demographic differences. Wine consumption tends to increase with age and changes in lifestyle (Ritchie and Valentin, 2011). The mean age in the UK sample was higher than the other markets, so this might be one possible reason for higher wine consumption in this sample. In addition, the UK was the only group to have a higher male response. Being overtly involved with wine is often a more masculine than feminine activity in the UK (Ritchie, 2009; Ritchie and Valentin, 2011).

Participants' wine preferences were tested in terms of colour and sweetness. The cross-tab analysis suggested significant differences in colour preferences ($x^2(12, n = 972) = 92.39$, $p = 0.00$). There was a marked similarity between the US, the UK and French markets in showing a preference for red wines. The New Zealand sample was notably different, with 38.2 per cent expressing preference for red and 41.6 per cent indicating preference for white wine. There might be several reasons for this difference. First, Sauvignon blanc constitutes 69 per cent of the overall New Zealand wine production (New Zealand Wine, 2011). Second, data collection was conducted in December 2013 – summertime in New Zealand (the only market in the study with summer data collection), when people generally drink more chilled white wine than red. The majority of participants indicated preferences for dry wines. The split between dry and sweet was most distinct in the UK where 72.8 per cent preferred dry wine. This may reflect a specific cultural issue in the UK as the term "sweet wine" either means "dessert wine" (an unlikely favourite wine style of the given sample) or the cheap, sweet wines of the 1970s such as Mateus Rosé or more currently Spumante and Lambrini, which are associated with young female consumption (Ritchie, 2011). The demographic profile of the UK participants (older with a higher percentage of males) may explain the skewed preferences for dry wines.

The split was very different in the US market, where 53.3 per cent preferred dry, while 46.7 per cent preferred sweet wine. Unlike other markets, not a single respondent in the US sample indicated equal preference for both dry and sweet – thus reflecting very polarized preferences. New Zealand and France reported similar preferences for dry (around 60 per cent), but more New Zealand consumers favoured sweet wines (31.1 per cent) compared to French consumers (20.7 per cent). At the same time, the French sample had the largest percentage of participants who showed equal preferences for dry and sweet wines (Table II).

### *7.3 Rosé wine*

*7.3.1 Preferences and frequency of rosé consumption. RQ1* examined consumer preferences and consumption behaviour of rosé. As a general observation, preferences for rosé were similar across the markets, with less than 10 per cent in each sample reporting rosé as their favourite wine style. Nevertheless, preferences for rosé were the

| Market | Which alcoholic beverage do you consume most often?[a] Beer (%) | Wine (%) | Spirits (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 30.0 | 60.4 | 9.6 |
| New Zealand | 19.5 | 69.5 | 7.9 |
| France | 10.6 | 87.6 | 1.8 |
| UK | 14.8 | 78.4 | 6.8 |

**Notes**: [a] $x^2(9, n = 983) = 68.77, p = 0.00$

| Market | How often do you consume wine?[b] At least once a week (%) | About once a month (%) | Very seldom (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 69.2 | 20.0 | 10.8 |
| New Zealand | 80.7 | 15.0 | 4.2 |
| France | 86.2 | 10.1 | 3.7 |
| UK | 85.2 | 11.1 | 3.7 |

**Notes**: [b] $x^2(9, n = 982) = 32.94, p = 0.00$

| Market | What type of wine is your favourite?[c] Red (%) | White (%) | Rosé (%) | Champagne or sparkling (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 54.5 | 31.8 | 8.3 | 5.4 |
| New Zealand | 38.2 | 41.6 | 4.6 | 11.4 |
| France | 59.9 | 23.5 | 6.0 | 10.6 |
| UK | 54.3 | 23.5 | 8.0 | 14.2 |

**Notes**: [c] $x^2(12, n = 972) = 92.39, p = 0.00$

| Market | Do you prefer wine that is dry or sweet?[d] Sweet (%) | Dry (%) | Equal preferences (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| USA | 46.7 | 53.3 | 0.0 |
| New Zealand | 31.1 | 59.4 | 9.4 |
| France | 20.7 | 59.9 | 19.4 |
| UK | 13.0 | 72.8 | 14.2 |

**Notes**: [d] $x^2(6, n = 975) = 98.03, p = 0.00$

**Table II.** General wine preferences and consumption frequency

highest in the US and the UK samples (8.3 and 8.0 per cent, respectively), followed by France (6.0 per cent). The lowest preference for rosé was reported in New Zealand (4.6 per cent).

Oddly, while preferences for rosé were the highest in the US sample, analysis of consumption frequency revealed that 30 per cent of US respondents claim they never drink rosé. This divergent response – with one group giving a preference to rosé but another explicitly against it – is much less marked in the other markets. This could be a reaction to the reputation that "blush" wines have in the USA – cheap, sweet, simple and easily accessible to consumers who like a bit of sugar in their drink. On the other hand, a greater percentage of Americans choosing rosé as their preferred wine signifies that those who prefer "blush" wines do indeed like them. This is reinforced by the more obvious US preference for sweet wines.

Interestingly, while only 6 per cent of French respondents chose rosé as their favourite wine style, they seem much more likely to drink it regularly than the other markets, with 17.5 per cent drinking rosé once a week or more often, and an additional 28.1 per cent about once a month. This finding clearly suggests that rosé is more ubiquitous in the life of French consumers; it is more available and more visible in France than in the other markets. As previously discussed, rosé has been marketed in France for many years as the wine of the holidays, with unconscious associations to Provence, the Mediterranean, southern French cuisine. There is thus a very specific regional effect, which is not so obvious in the other three countries (Table III).

*7.3.2 Perceptions of rosé prices. RQ2* examined consumer perceptions of rosé with regards to its perceived price. Participants were asked if they felt rosés in general tend to be more expensive, less expensive or about the same price as red and white wine (see Table IV for cross-tabulation matrix).

**Table III.**
Rosé preferences and consumption frequency

| | How often do you consume rosé?[a] | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Market | At least once a week (%) | About once a month (%) | Very seldom (%) | Never (%) |
| USA | 8.0 | 14.4 | 48 | 29.6 |
| New Zealand | 5.1 | 17.2 | 58.6 | 19.2 |
| France | 17.5 | 28.1 | 52.1 | 2.3 |
| UK | 11.7 | 18.5 | 59.3 | 10.5 |
| Total | 9.7 | 19.1 | 54.6 | 16.7 |

**Notes**: [a] $x^2(9, n = 921) = 96.76, p = 0.00$

| | Do you prefer rosé that is dry or sweet?[b] | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| Market | Sweet (%) | Dry (%) | Equal preferences (%) |
| USA | 39.9 | 22.2 | 8.9 |
| New Zealand | 25.2 | 39.8 | 24.5 |
| France | 22.2 | 60.4 | 17.5 |
| UK | 19.7 | 66.0 | 14.3 |
| Total | 27.6 | 44.0 | 17.0 |

**Notes**: [b] $x^2(9, n = 921) = 206.57, p = 0.00$

**Table IV.**
Perceptions of rosé prices compared to red and white wines

| Market | Compared to: | Less expensive (%) | More expensive (%) | About the same price (%) |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| USA | Red | 50.2 | 5.8 | 44.0 |
| | White | 30.6 | 11.0 | 58.4 |
| New Zealand | Red | 36.4 | 9.7 | 52.4 |
| | White | 10.2 | 21.3 | 67.0 |
| France | Red | 82.9 | 2.8 | 14.3 |
| | White | 62.2 | 5.5 | 32.3 |
| UK | Red | 54.3 | 4.3 | 41.4 |
| | White | 25.3 | 7.4 | 67.3 |

**Notes:** $x^2 (9, n = 976) = 198.74; p = 0.00$

Results indicate that in all markets, rosés are not perceived as more expensive than reds, with France believing this most strongly (83 per cent). However, rosés are seen as more expensive than whites but only in the New World (11 per cent in the USA and 21.3 per cent in New Zealand). The diversity of rosé styles and a big disparity in the price of rosé in New Zealand (Campbell, 2013) might be the reason for this fi

Unlike the other countries, France marginally perceived rosé as less expensive than white wine. This is an interesting fi that supports the purported cheapness in the image of rosé. The French prefer rosés on holidays and hot summer days, yet they still see them as a cheaper option than white wines. This may be also because the maximum price per bottle of rosé in a French supermarket is around €12. Even though most French white wines are also relatively cheap, some of the best may be €20, even €40, and consumers are aware of this disparity. Rosés in France are perceived as convivial and easy drinking, but not profound or sophisticated as some white wines can be. By comparison, the majority of respondents in the other countries perceived rosé being about the same price as white wine.

*7.3.3 Perceived image of rosé. RQ3* examined the perceived image of rosé and whether this image differs in different markets. Participants evaluated a set of statements reflecting on various rosé characteristics.

7.3.3.1 Factor analysis. To confirm the measurement of the perceived image multi-item scale, the nine items were initially subjected to principal component analysis with varimax rotation. An examination of factor loadings, the Velicer test and the scree plot suggested a three-factor solution that logically supported the contextual characteristics associated with rosé.

Factor 1 showed high loadings on items that measured the casual, unpretentious, social nature of rosé, namely, "easy to drink", "good for almost any occasion", "makes a nice gift" and "wouldn't serve rosé if I was trying to impress someone". Factor 1 was thus labelled "unsophisticated". Items on the second factor included "for females only" and "more feminine than masculine" – thus, clearly reflecting on the perceived feminine association attached to rosé. Factor 2 was labelled "feminine". Factor 3 grouped items associated with the seasonal appeal of rosé, namely, "would have a glass of rosé on a hot summer day" and "good for any season" (reverse measure). Interestingly, "for special occasions" also loaded on this factor. It is possible that consumers associate rosé with holidays (thus "special occasions", opposite of "almost any occasion"). Holidays, in turn, are associated with hot summer seasons; thus, these consumer ratings grouped together. Factor 3 was labelled "seasonal".

The three factors accounted for 65.74 per cent of the total variance. The value of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy for this set of variables was 0.73, which is meritorious. High factor loadings and high levels of internal consistency ($a = 0.71$, $a = 0.74$, $a = 0.63$) warranted the construction of three composite measures. The rotated solution for the three factors can be found in Table V.

7.3.3.2 By-market analysis. Next, analysis of variance was used to further investigate whether the perceived image of rosé varies in different markets. The three factors mean scores were used as dependent variables. The four markets served as levels of the independent variable. The by-market ANOVA revealed a significant main effect on all three factors (Table VI).

**Table V.**
The perceived image of rosé factor analysis structure

| Factor | Unsophisticated | Feminine | Seasonal | Loading |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rosé wines are easy to drink | 0.824 | | | 0.701 |
| Rosé wine makes a nice gift (reverse) | 0.803 | | | 0.671 |
| Rosé is good for almost any occasion | 0.690 | | | 0.505 |
| I would not serve a rosé if I was trying to impress someone (reverse) | 0.621 | | | 0.500 |
| Rosé wines are for females only | | -0.830 | | 0.739 |
| Rosé is more "feminine" than "masculine" | | 0.813 | | 0.673 |
| Rosé wines are for special occasions only | | | -0.742 | 0.613 |
| Rosé wines are good for any season (reverse) | | | 0.631 | 0.632 |
| I would have a glass of a rosé wine on a hot summer day | | | 0.560 | 0.539 |
| Percent of total variance explained | | 65.736 | | |

**Table VI.**
By-market comparative analysis of the perceived image of rosé factors

| Factor | Market | Factor score mean | SD | *F* | Significance |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Unsophisticated | USA | -0.024 | 1.23 | 4.226 | 0.005 |
| | New Zealand | 0.124 | 0.888 | | |
| | France | -0.182 | 0.841 | | |
| | UK | 0.014 | 1.00 | | |
| Feminine | USA | -0.355 | 1.24 | 31.670 | 0.000 |
| | New Zealand | -0.126 | 0.935 | | |
| | France | 0.469 | 0.603 | | |
| | UK | -0.153 | 0.883 | | |
| Seasonal | USA | -0.258 | 1.147 | 13.608 | 0.000 |
| | New Zealand | -0.068 | 0.928 | | |
| | France | 0.303 | 0.906 | | |
| | UK | -0.078 | 0.921 | | |

### *7.4 "Unsophisticated"*

Although differences in perceptions of the unsophisticated nature of rosé were significant at a threshold of 5 per cent, there seems to be a general similarity across all markets in the agreement that rosé is a simpler style, easy to drink wine, suitable for casual occasions and gatherings with friends. Rosé is also perceived as not a good type of wine to serve when trying to impress someone or give as a gift. A comparison of means revealed the most pronounced difference between France and the other markets, especially New Zealand, which was the least likely to perceive rosé as a casual, simple drink and not as a drink for any occasion. The French, on the other hand, agreed most overtly that rosé is an easy drink but, at the same time, they most definitely would not serve it to impress someone or give it as a gift.

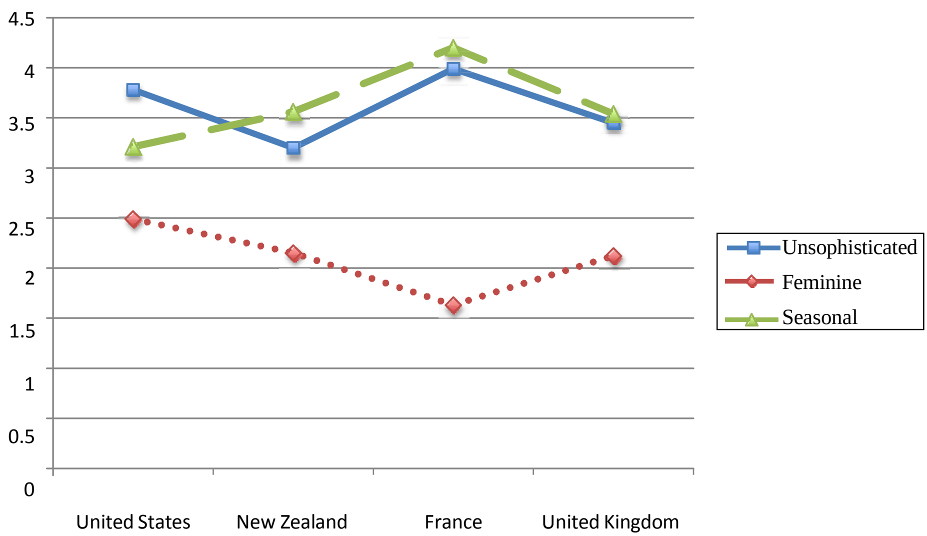
Americans also expressed higher agreement that they would not serve rosé if they were trying to impress someone or give as a gift. This could be a reflection on the undesirable image of rosé in the USA – associated with cheaper sweet rosés like white Zinfandel, especially among those consumers who never drink rosé (likely for that very reason). The other Anglophones also claim they would not give rosé as a gift or serve it to impress someone, but it does not seem to have the same negative image. The UK sample appeared most neutral on the unsophisticated nature of rosé measures.

### *7.5 "Feminine"*

Significant differences were also found on the perceived femininity of rosé, with the French sample especially strongly opposing the idea that rosé is a wine for females only. It is important to note though that, judging by the means values, the disagreement on this factor was not very strong across all markets, indicating that respondents in all markets feel neutral about this matter. Nevertheless, the dissent was most marked in France and least obvious in the USA. Both New Zealand and the UK appeared relatively neutral on the perceived feminine character of rosé. Because this contradicts some previous research, especially in relation to the USA (Velikova *et al.*, 2013) and the UK market (Ritchie and Valentin, 2011), perhaps further research on the perceived gender of rosé is needed to investigate the issue more thoroughly.

### *7.6 "Seasonal"*

Seasonality yet again played an important role in distinguishing the French sample from the other markets. The French strongly agreed with the idea that rosé is a drink for a hot summer's day and not a wine that is good for any season, which is indicative of the French preference for rosé primarily during the summer time. Americans expressed the least agreement on the seasonal nature of rosé, perceiving it more as a wine for any season. New Zealand and the UK showed relatively similar and moderate perceptions of rosé being a seasonal drink. Understandably in both markets, where summer months are not associated with consistently warm weather, rosé may have less of a seasonal appeal. Figure 1 provides an overview of the by-market means comparison on the three factors.




**Note:** The mean values represent scores on a five-point Likert scale anchored between 1 (strongly disagree) and 5 (strongly agree) on the three-factor solution

**Figure 1.** By-market comparison of the perceived image of rosé

## 8. Discussion

One of the key conclusions of this paper revolves around the construction of the perceived image of rosé and how this image varies in different markets. Effectively, we can see four different market structures, shaped by different personal attitudes, subjective norms and cultural issues. We can suggest that this is focused by a “story” that surrounds the drink. These stories appear most strongly in France and the USA. Both countries see rosé as a casual wine, are equally neutral about its potential as a gift and would not use it if wanted to impress someone. In these factors (none of which are especially positive), France and the USA show a closer fit with each other than with the other two samples.

However, France and the USA are the most polarized on a series of other attitudes. French consumers are very opposed to the idea that rosé is a feminine drink and especially prone to think that it is particularly appropriate for a summer’s day. Thus, the results of the current study confirm that in France rosé seems to have a reputation of being an inexpensive, light, summer drink, enjoyable and acceptable for all. This image is tied into a ritualistic form of drinking, specifically for holidays, with outside eating, which is much less formal than a typical French meal, but appropriate to particular foods. Yet this viewpoint, whilst it does not see rosés as great wines, nevertheless, considers that they are acceptable for all people in the right circumstances. In France, rosé is seen as a lifestyle accessory rather than a serious wine and a key symbolic marker of relaxation and family time.

The US story is a dichotomous one. While sweeter-style “blush” wines are popular, especially among new younger (often female) consumers who move from soft drinks and seek softer, fruitier, sweeter wine styles (yet are not willing to pay much for wine), more “connoisseur” US consumers disagree strongly. Unsophisticated rosé wine fulfils the need of new consumers for a simple (thus unthreatening) wine in contrast to an institutionalized “elite” of educated consumers who consider rosé unacceptable in any context, preferring dry-style wines.

In New Zealand, the story is less strong. Rosé is generally less popular, perhaps at least partly because New Zealand is largely a white wine producer with abundant availability of light, fresh white wines. White wines therefore fill the segments that rosé would otherwise cover, and rosé becomes less necessary. Yet, rosé is different, and therefore seems to be perceived less as a simple and unsophisticated drink and, perhaps, more as a special one. It may be, paradoxically, that this is where the future marketing of rosé in New Zealand must focus, in contrast to the approaches taken in other countries. If, as suggested in certain sources, some winemakers are beginning to focus on making quality rosé in New Zealand, this may lend itself to a marketing focus on special occasions.

The UK is not a wine-producing country; however, it is a mature market with a long and significant history of international importation and consumption including, recently, rosé wines (FranceAgriMer, 2013). It was also the sample with the highest average age and the only one with a higher number of male respondents; yet, the responses are broadly average on all three factors. It may be that two dichotomous stories about rosé are represented here. The more mature and involved participants do not have negative stereotypes of rosé. In addition, proximity to France plus its romance for the British (especially Provence and Mediterranean cuisine) lends it a certain cachet. Even if it is not a profound wine, it is seen as reasonably appropriate for a summer’s day, probably in France itself, drunk with relish and then forgotten. At the other end of the spectrum are rosés that are sweet, cheap, and available in supermarkets and pubs (Ritchie, 2009), such as white Zinfandel or pink Pinot grigio. These appeal to the less involved, predominantly female UK participants. In neither case is the engagement with rosé strong, a point highlighted by WDR (2014), which shows that rosé consumption is being challenged by flavoured ciders in the young female market.

## 9. Implications

There are several implications from this research relevant to managers of rosé-producing companies. Most obviously, yet worth reiterating, is the cultural variation in perceptions of rosé. Additionally, the relationship of rosé wine to sugar content and the management of the perception of that relationship is crucial. Finally, the success of French producers in shifting the perception of the context in which the wine can be consumed should be noted in other countries. While there was no initial concerted attempt by French wine producers to link rosé wine with holidays (there is no "professional association" of rosé wine producers) – nevertheless, the increasing demand for the style as a holiday drink prompted individual French companies to start making the link. That fact that a wine's image can be modified should be an example to producers in the New World who wish to adapt consumers' perceptions of their wine.

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