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# Organic wine purchase behaviour in Germany: Exploring the attitude-behaviour-gap with data from a household panel

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ABSTRACT

Consumer surveys revealed positive attitudes towards organic wine in large consumer segments. Health, environmental and quality benefits were stated most often as drivers for purchase decisions. However, sales data show that the market share for organic wine is still far below 10% compared to the total wine market in all countries. Obviously, there is a gap between consumers' attitudes and real purchase behaviour in daily decisions. So far, it is not clear whether there is congruence between consumers' attitudes and their purchase behaviour and if the attitude-behaviour-gap differs among consumer segments. Consequently, the paper at hand explores the attitude-behaviour-gap with household panel data from the GfK Group by means of a cluster analysis. The results show that even though expenditure shares for organic wine were at a low level, attitudes were in line with purchase behaviour for five out of six clusters. For example, consumers who had the highest expenditure share for organic wine showed strong pro-environmental attitudes and a preference for sustainable products. Therefore, comprehensive communication about sustainability issues, which also includes social aspects, could help to further develop the organic wine market and lead to higher market shares. However, for the low-income consumer cluster, the price of organic wine seemed to be an effective barrier despite their positive attitudes towards environmentalism. Future studies need to consider that the extent of the attitude-behaviour-gap is segment specific.

## 1. Introduction

Although Germany is a rather small wine-producing country, it holds a leading position in international wine trade and is the fourth largest wine-consuming country in the world. The traditional European wine-producing countries France, Italy and Spain are the leading foreign suppliers for the German market followed by various overseas countries (USA, South Africa and Chile). However, domestic wines are still most important both in purchase volume and value. The German wine market is characterized by high market shares of discount outlets and supermarkets and a relatively low relevance of direct sales and wine speciality shops (German Wine Institute, 2017). German wine producers are therefore acting in a highly competitive market, especially regarding price.

Within this market, producers adopt various differentiation strategies such as regions of origin, varieties, wine styles and vintages. This makes wine one of the most differentiated products on the food market and consumers face many different cues on wine labels and a wide range of prices. Studies found that country of origin and the region of production were among the most important wine choice criteria (Defrancesco, Estrella Orrego, & Gennari, 2012; Jaeger, Mielby, Heymann, Jia, & Frøst, 2013; Yang & Paladino, 2015). Whether consumers prefer domestic wines for ethnocentrism or imported wines from reputable origins is a matter of discussion (Kolyesnikova, Dodd, & Duhan, 2008; Mann, Ferjani, & Reissig, 2012; Yang and Paladino, 2015). It seems that the reasons for the diverging results may be found in differences in countries' wine cultural backgrounds and consumers' preferences.

Moreover, variety (Gustafson, Lybbert, & Sumner, 2016), price (Panzone, 2014) brand (Drennan et al., 2015), packaging/labelling (Mueller Loose & Szolnoki, 2012) and quality awards (Orth & Krška, 2001) were found to be relevant wine attributes for consumers' purchase decisions. Consumers usually cannot taste the wine before the shopping act, therefore, the quality of wine is assessed based on the previously named extrinsic attributes (Orth & Krška, 2001; Sáenz-Navajas, Campo, Sutan, Ballester, & Valentin, 2013; Veale, 2008). Particularly, price-related quality assessment, i.e. that higher prices indicate higher quality, is an important heuristic for wine purchase decisions (Palma et al., 2016).

In accordance with the wine market's high product differentiation,

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consumers vary widely in their preferences towards wine attributes. Dividing the market into several segments, while considering consumers' varying desires, allows for the development of targeted marketing strategies. Not accounting for consumer heterogeneity could generate misleading conclusions, as differences between consumer characteristics can cancel each other out on an aggregated level (Mueller & Szolnoki, 2010). Several authors carried out segmentation studies and found homogeneous consumer segments in the heterogeneous wine market. Different characteristics were used to allocate consumers to segments such as demographics (Olsen, Thach And, & Nowak, 2007), wine consumption behaviour (Lesschaeve, Bowen, & Bruwer, 2012; Thomas & Pickering, 2003), lifestyle (Johnson & Bruwer, 2003; Thach & Olsen, 2004) and involvement (Hollebeek, Jaeger, Brodie, & Balemi, 2007; Johnson & Bastian, 2015; Lockshin, Quester, & Spawton, 2001). Moreover, consumers' purchase decisions varied according to whether wine was chosen for self-consumption, hosting friends, or as a gift. The benefits consumers gained in the respective choice situation were quality, value for money, social acceptance and a sense of well-being. Environmental and health benefits were relevant for consumers' wine choice, particularly in the "self" situation (Orth, 2005). People with high purchase frequencies and high wine involvement especially paid attention to environmental issues. Pomarici, Amato, and Vecchio (2016) found that the segment of wine consumers highly interested in environmentally-friendly wine made up 32% of consumers. In a cross-national study, a consumer segment of about 35–38% across all countries valued environmentally sustainable wine (Mueller Loose & Lockshin, 2013).

In line with this development, wine with sustainability characteristics has become more relevant to consumers (Schäufele & Hamm, 2017). Numerous studies in different countries revealed that consumers preferred organic over conventional wine (Bernabéu, Brugarolas, Martínez-Carrasco, & Díaz, 2008; Chiodo, Casolani, & Fantini, 2011; Mann et al., 2012) and elicited a higher willingness to pay for organic wine (Ay, Chakir, & Marette, 2014; Brugarolas, Martinez-Carrasco, Bernabéu, & Martinez-Poveda, 2010; Pagliarini, Laureati, & Gaeta, 2013; Wiedmann, Hennigs, Behrens, & Klarmann, 2014), sustainable wine (Forbes & DeSilva, 2012; Sellers, 2016; Vecchio, 2013) and local wine (Ay et al., 2014; Bernabéu et al., 2008; Grebitus, Lusk, & Nayga, 2013). Several authors gave evidence profiling consumers of wine with sustainability characteristics as females (Barber, Taylor, & Deale, 2010; Loureiro, 2003; Mann et al., 2012; Pomarici & Vecchio, 2014; Sellers, 2016; Vecchio, 2013), with higher incomes (Loureiro, 2003; Pomarici et al., 2016; Sellers, 2016; Woods, Nogueira, & Yang, 2013), living in urban areas (Mann et al., 2012; Pomarici and Vecchio, 2014; Sellers, 2016). However, for local wine, the opposite seems to hold true. The typical local wine consumer was characterized as male (D'Amico, Di Vita, Chinnici, Pappalardo, & Pecorino, 2014; Grebitus et al., 2013) with a low to medium income (D'Amico et al., 2014) living in a rural area (Woods et al., 2013).

The prominent motivation for the purchase of wines with sustainability cues was environmental benefits (Schäufele & Hamm, 2017). This was found for wine labelled as sustainable (Sogari, Corbo, Macconi, Menozzi, & Mora, 2015; Sogari, Mora, & Menozzi, 2016), environmentally-friendly (Barber et al., 2010) and local (Grebitus et al., 2013). As for organic wine, contrasting views were revealed. On one hand, consumers' perceptions of environmental benefits (Bonn, Cronin, & Cho, 2016; Mueller Loose & Remaud, 2013) and environmental consciousness and curiosity (D'Amico, Di Vita, & Monaco, 2016) were positively related to the purchase of organic wine. However, several authors revealed the opposite (Kim & Bonn, 2015; Mann et al., 2012; Rahman, Stumpf, & Reynolds, 2014). Moreover, it seems that sustainable practices of organic wine producers (Bonn et al., 2016) and social fairness (Mueller Loose and Remaud, 2013) were important aspects.

Setting aside those largely ethical motivations and looking at self-driven motivations for the purchase of organic wine, positive health effects (Bonn et al., 2016; Fotopoulos, Krystallis, & Ness, 2003; Mann et al., 2012) and taste (Kim and Bonn, 2015) were found to be determining factors. In addition, the organic cue had a positive effect on consumers' sensory evaluation (Pagliarini et al., 2013; Wiedmann et al., 2014), indicating that organic wine is believed to be of higher quality. Moreover, organic wine of local origin was found to be an additional purchase motivation (Ay et al., 2014; Brugarolas et al., 2010).

Even though consumers' perceptions and attitudes towards wine with sustainability characteristics were mainly positive and a higher willingness to pay for wine with sustainability cues was revealed, no study has examined consumers' real marketplace behaviour to provide answers as to whether or not an attitude-behaviour-gap exists (Schäufele & Hamm, 2017). The paper at hand aims to contribute to this understanding in the context of households' real purchase behaviour pertaining to organic wine in Germany. Special emphasis is put on consumers' motivation for the purchase of organic and domestic wine to shed light on the hitherto diverging literature. A segmentation approach was chosen to account for consumers' heterogeneity. Special focus is placed on the segments' wine choice concerning the country of origin, wine colour and shopping location. The objective of this study is twofold: firstly, to identify consumer segments according to attitudes and purchase intentions towards the consumption of food with sustainability characteristics and secondly, to find out whether these segments differ in their wine purchase behaviour. Thus, this paper herein explores the attitude-behaviour-gap. In addition, socio-demographic characteristics for each cluster are described.

The paper is structured as follows: in Section 2, reasons for the attitude-behaviour-gap are discussed in connection to survey limitations and consumer behaviour theory. In this context, a special focus is placed on purchase barriers and household panel studies pertaining to organic food. In Section 3, the data set is presented and factor and cluster analyses are outlined. In Section 4, the results of the cluster analysis are presented and differences in the segments' purchase behaviour are described. We conclude with a discussion on the existence of an attitude-behaviour-gap (Section 5) and recommendations for marketing organic wine.

## 2. Attitude-behaviour-gap

The discrepancy between consumers' positive attitudes or purchase intentions towards a product and the relatively low level of action when it comes to purchase decisions is referred to in the literature as the "attitude-behaviour-gap" (Bray, Johns, & Kilburn, 2011; Carrington, Neville, & Whitwell, 2010). In general, it is the difference between what people state and how they act. Several researchers in the field of ethical consumerism examined this gap and found that ethically minded consumers were not consistently affected by their values and beliefs regarding environmental and social issues when it comes to real purchase decisions (Auger & Devinney, 2007; Bray et al., 2011; Carrigan & Attalla, 2001; De Pelsmacker, Driesen, & Rayp, 2005). With regard to organic food, several authors explored the attitude-behaviour-gap in a broader view and considered attitudes surrounding organics in general such as positive health and taste issues, while focusing on more than just ethical aspects (Aschemann-Witzel & Niebuhr Aagaard, 2014; Padel & Foster, 2005). It was established that even if positive attitudes towards organic products built the intention to purchase, they did not necessarily translate into an actual purchase (Frostling-Henningsson, Hedbom, & Wilandh, 2014; Moser, 2016). This becomes evident when we look at the great majority of people who believed that the product's environmental impact is important to them when purchasing products (84%) and the high proportion of consumers who stated they often buy environmentally-friendly products (26%) (Eurobarometer., 2013) compared to the relatively small market shares of organic food in Europe (e.g. 4.8% in Germany) (Willer, Schaack, & Lernoud, 2017).

What are the reasons for these inconsistencies? Two research streams are exploring different, yet complementary causes (Carrington

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