

WINE SNOB AND WINE SNOBBERY AS SCIENTIFIC CONCEPTS

The terms 'wine snob' or 'wine snobbery' have been used in tourism and hospitality literature despite not being measured or well-defined concepts. In response, Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and Dr. Robin M. Back of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have developed a concise wine snobbery scale. The six-item scale has been designed to help researchers measure wine snobbery uniformly in various contexts and across a broad range of study populations.

The word 'snob' and phrases such as 'wine snob' and 'wine snobbery' have featured in tourism and hospitality literature and have also been used in some empirical research as a measured concept. However, so far there has been no clear definition and scale of what wine snobbery or a wine snob is. This has prompted the suggestion that using the term 'snobs' is 'unnecessarily derogatory' in the context of academic journals. Considering this perspective, a clear scientific definition and the operationalization of wine snob and wine snobbery are needed for researchers to be able to reflect the meaning and significance of these terms fully. For this reason, Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and Dr. Robin M. Back of UCF Rosen College of Hospitality Management have proposed a succinct definition of wine snobbery as well as a scale to measure the concept.

THE DEFINITIONS OF SNOBBERY

Dictionary definitions of snob indicate attitudes towards other people and/or objects based on personal perception. Merriam-Webster, for example, defines a snob as 'one who has an offensive air of superiority in matters of knowledge or taste'.

This definition indicates that a person labeled a snob may have a positive attitude towards themselves and consider themselves to be superior in comparison to others. It also suggests that a 'snob' might have a negative

attitude towards objects and people in specific contexts. These indications mean that snob and snobbery often have negative connotations in day-to-day life.

SNOBBERY IN WINE

Although snob and snobbery have mostly negative connotations in daily language use, the terms can be viewed in both a positive and negative light when looked at in the context of wine, winery, and wine tourism literature. Researchers have described wine snobs as 'attentive in wine quality and fine taste' but have also identified consumer snobbery as a significant challenge faced by some producers and varietals. Notably, even when the meaning of snob or snobbery is discussed, no empirical definition or measurable observation of the concept is provided.

EXISTING MEASUREMENTS OF WINE SNOBBERY

Some studies have featured empirical measurements of wine snobbery, but no clear definition has been given. One study developed a wine consumer typology that was based on an objective and subjective wine knowledge matrix. Snobs made up the second largest group in the study and were identified as having 'high subjective knowledge but low objective knowledge' and 'overestimated what they really know about wine'.

This method of measuring wine snobbery suggests negative connotations, yet the

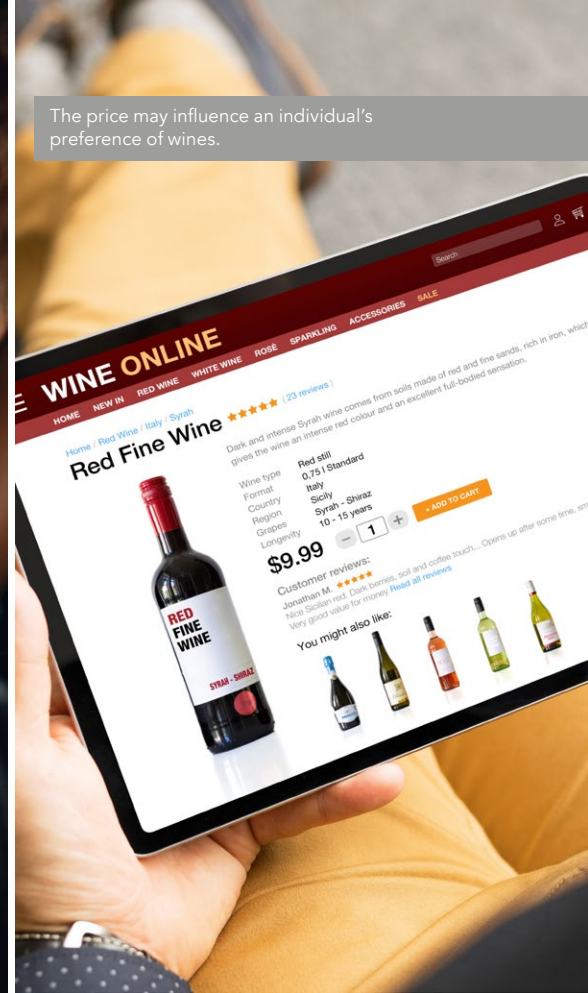


research also identified this group as having potentially positive attributes such as being open to exploring new products. Benchmarking this study, further research surveyed Italian wine consumers to explore whether social media usage influences online wine purchasing decisions. This validated the theory that 'snobs' have 'high subjective but low objective knowledge'.

A CONCISE WINE SNOB SCALE

These existing operationalizations of wine snob and wine snobbery are lacking. This is because they don't provide a detailed definition or consider individual attributes in the context of the level of self-comparison to others, education and taste in wine, and criteria in preferences.

Conversely, Dr. Tasci and Dr. Back suggest that 'wine snobbery is the character of perceiving oneself as superior to others in the level of experience, knowledge, and taste of wine'. This stance may influence an individual's preference of wines based on several factors including price, awards, and vintage. Using this definition, the researchers conducted a study to test a succinct wine snobbery scale.



The price may influence an individual's preference of wines.

SCALE DEVELOPMENT

The study was based on a cross-sectional survey that was designed to gain access to and gather responses from a large dataset from the general population in the United States. The wine snobbery scale was designed using keywords from the dictionary definition of general snob and snobbery, and keywords from online content related to snob/snobbery and wine snob/wine snobbery. The researchers also considered references to wine snob and wine snobbery in wine, winery, and wine tourism literature.

The scale consists of six items, each with a 7-point rating ranging from 'strongly disagree' (1) to 'strongly agree' (7). The six items are as follows:

- I pick wines according to vintage
- I have superior knowledge of wines compared to most people
- I select wines by the reputation of the growing region
- I select wines by the reputation of the producer
- I drink only expensive wines
- I select wines according to expert reviewers

This scale was designed to reflect a superior perception of oneself when compared to others in the matter of knowledge, experience, and taste, as well as wine preferences based

on criteria that reflect social status. The survey also featured wine consumption and sociodemographic questions to illustrate the sample characteristics.

SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN NO CLEAR DEFINITION AND SCALE OF WHAT WINE SNOBBERY OR A WINE SNOB IS.

One study identified that 'snobs' have 'high subjective but low objective knowledge' of wine.



The wine snobbery scale can be used by wine-related businesses to better understand their customers.



SAMPLE SIZE AND MEASUREMENT

229 usable surveys were collected for the study. Data were checked and analyzed with methods including frequencies, descriptives, Principal Component Analysis (PCA), and Pearson regression analysis. The study used PCA to check the grouping tendencies of scale items and Cronbach's alpha metric for the internal reliability of scale items. Cronbach's alpha score of 0.70 is considered

In terms of wine-drinking behavior, 49% of respondents drink 1–3 bottles per week and 36% drink 4–6 bottles. 7% drink less than one bottle, 7% drink 6–9 bottles, and 1.7% drink 10 or more bottles per week.

MODERATE WINE SNOBS

All six scale items from the survey were collated into a factor in order to analyze their internal reliability—in other words, whether the scale

THE 6-ITEM WINE SNOBBERY SCALE MAY HELP RESEARCHERS GAIN A CONSISTENT UNDERSTANDING OF WINE SNOBBERY.

substantially stable or that a factor (a group of variables, or in this case, the six scale items) has substantially high internal consistency. Items with loadings lower than 0.5 were insignificant and were removed as a result.

RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS AND BEHAVIOR

Respondents were 61% male, 39% female, and 36 years old on average. 61% had a Bachelor's degree and 28% had a Master's or PhD degree. The majority of respondents were married or cohabiting, Caucasian/White, with an annual income over \$50,000, and from California, Indiana, Texas, Florida, New York, and Illinois.

items were all being measured in a similar way to one another. The reliability analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86, which reflects a high internal reliability.

The Factor Grand Mean for the sample was 5.39, which is a little above the middle point (4) on the 7-point scale. This indicates the sample's propensity to be a 'moderate wine snob'.

APPLICATIONS FOR THE WINE SNOBBERY SCALE

Researchers need to be able to use precise definitions and consistent measures of concepts, including terms that may be seen by some as derogatory. In response to this need, Dr. Tasci and Dr. Back's study aimed

to avoid misinterpretation by providing a measure and an empirical conceptualization of wine snobbery.

The 6-item wine snobbery scale may help researchers gain a consistent understanding of wine snobbery. The goal is to be able to measure it in various study populations and different contexts to create a common capture of wine snobbery.

The scale also has commercial applications. It can be used by wineries, wine producers, and other wine-related businesses such as bars and restaurants to better understand the wine snobbery tendencies that their customers may have.

IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

This research revealed the restrained nature and narrow focus of the existing wine snobbery concept. Dr. Tasci and Dr. Back demonstrated that wine snobbery can be explored as a multi-dimensional concept with each angle revealing a different characteristic relating to wine preference criteria, experience, knowledge, and self-comparison to others.

Future studies may develop a more comprehensive version of the wine snobbery scale using qualitative and quantitative data. These studies may also delve into discriminatory approaches to wine snobbery compared to other wine-related concepts such as geekiness and knowledge.

POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF WINE SNOBBERY

Empirical research may also seek to include the positive and negative aspects of wine snobbery and further explore psychographic and sociodemographic wine snobbery characteristics. Studies might also consider the perceptions of both wine industry stakeholders such as producers and the wine consumers themselves.

Future research and additional scale development will build on the existing academic literature about wine snobbery as a scientific concept. This will provide theoretical and managerial implications that could help wineries and other related businesses to better identify and market their products to consumers who might be considered wine snobs by themselves or others.

RESEARCHERS IN FOCUS

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Dr. Asli D.A. Tasci and Dr. Robin M. Back define and measure wine snobbery as an empirical concept for use in academic literature and commercial settings.

REFERENCES

Tasci, A.D.A., & Back, R.M., (2023). Definition and measurement of wine snobbery as an empirical concept. *Journal of Wine Research*, 34, 291–297. doi.org/10.1080/09571264.2023.2276267

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Could a snobbery scale of this kind be applied to other aspects of the tourism and hospitality industry?

// Wine is a potentially luxury product but it is accessible to all walks of life at different price points, thus introducing snobbery as a self-assessment for social differentiation. The scale can be applied to other similar consumption contexts with different price points, such as cruises, spas, airlines, hotels, and even restaurants. A food snob may miss out on the unique tastes of corner shacks while seeking the social status that comes from dining at upscale restaurants, even if the taste is lacking—as experienced by the authors. //

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