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**Wine Business Management  
Master of Commerce  
Dissertation**

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**Use of Synaesthesias and Informal  
Consumer Communities in  
Empowering Wine Consumers**

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## Papers Included in this Dissertation

Buxton, I (2009) *How do Wine Consumers Decide What to Buy?*

Buxton, I (2009) *How do Wine Consumers Select and Use Their Trusted Advisors?*

Buxton, I (2009) *Can wine consumers themselves function as valuable wine advisors and improve consumer awareness?*

## **2. Abstract**

A three phase investigation into the utility of wine consumer opinion as a viable source of information to wine consumers in South Africa. The research demonstrates that existing marketing and expert opinion is inappropriately constructed, using paradigms that are overly simplistic or language that is not valued by consumers.

The paper further investigates the use of visual representations of wine to communicate the "tasting notes" of consumers, providing a first access trigger which can be quickly and accurately interpreted into an assessable taste for the wine. Lastly it examines the benefits of using consumers to provide narrative reviews of the wine, in whatever terms they choose, to represent the consumption experience of the wine.

Keywords: wine; consumer; marketing; risk reduction; decisions strategies; community; synaesthesia, visual representations; pictures; tasting notes

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## 3. Research Programme Summary

### 3.1. Programme Perspective

This research programme originated from the position that existing wine marketing communication is ineffective and potentially counter-productive. The established methods of communicating with consumers suffer from the risk of alienating sections of society and disenfranchising large numbers of potential customers.

This situation exists because the mode of marketing adopted in South Africa is to present some aspect of the brand of the wine in order to represent the style and quality of that wine. In doing so marketing fails to represent the *taste*. Marketing methods vary. Some presenting iconic brands based on years of experience and tradition, others present values to which the customer may aspire or seek to identify. Another group is those that seek to present some unique quality, not necessarily about taste, which the consumer can enjoy. Some go to market purely on price and others present a challenge to the accepted order by adopting positioning designed to appeal to particular attitude groups.

None of these approaches tells the customer what the wine will taste like. To do this the industry utilises the skills of the wine expert. These experts use language and tone that can be formulaic and constrained; typically they produce analytical, unemotional and objective responses to wines. In the case of lower end wines the communication of information on the taste and the consumption experience becomes a role undertaken by the marketer rather than the expert. In these circumstances, marketers frequently adopt a mode of speech designed to reflect the values of the brand rather than the taste itself. Either way tasting note communication is potentially patronising or elitist.

From the consumers' perspective this leaves the risk associated with choosing of new wines still unmitigated. It is not surprising that many consumers simply stick with what they know, or feel uncomfortable or frustrated when they try new things.

From the marketers' perspective the problem of communication remains fraught with pitfalls. When coupled with the inertia resulting from practices that inhibit new wines entering the market, it is extremely difficult to break into the established patterns of consumption.

### 3.2. Key Issues

The wine industry relies on the continued support of its consumers. The above situation leads to frustration among consumers and this undermines the value of the marketing that is done. In the long run this leads to very little novelty in wine markets particularly away from the centres of wine production in the Cape.

In addition new wine consumers are not adequately encouraged and this represents a constraint on the growth and success of an industry which is always seemingly under pressure.

### 3.3. Research Outline

This research programme addresses these issues from the consumers' perspective. The approach rests on determining what is actually happening in the mind of the consumer when they make their decisions, and in doing this establishing if there is information that the consumer would like that is unsatisfactorily delivered. The main focus is to establish what information can be more effectively provided to mitigate the risk to the consumer.

The research is conducted in three phases that use the principles behind Grounded Theory to allow fresh and new approaches to emerge, avoiding preconceptions. The programme deals with individual consumers in depth. The approach was to find patterns at an individual level and see if

they generalised to a wider group. The analytical framework required to facilitate this investigation needed to be capable of understanding human patterns of subjective experience and external behaviours. It also needed to incorporate the influence of the five senses and the use of language in decision making, and address both rational and emotional responses. Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) offers such a framework.

### **3.4. Research Findings**

The first phase established that, far from being an informed intellectual process, the strategies adopted by consumers to choose wine focus on two elements. The first element is to assemble enough information to be able, unconsciously, to anticipate the taste of the wine. The second element is to assemble information that triggers emotional responses and give the wine chooser an emotional feeling on which to base their choice. The taste they have anticipated is a contributing factor in this response but a whole series of other non-taste related factors also contribute to whether they expect to enjoy the wine. If their feeling is positive enough they will buy. If they remain below their personal threshold of anticipated enjoyment, they do not.

The second phase examined the process by which consumers accept advice. In particular it examined the role of the wine note formulated by the wine expert. The finding was that these notes do not address the issue of whether the consumer will enjoy the wine. Instead most consumers prefer to take input from the impassioned opinion of a friend or acquaintance rather than take the objective input of a remote expert.

In addition this phase found that that the linguistic approach was formulaic and required a particular skill to synthesise the linguistic message into the required expected taste. In terms of communicating taste, a linguistic approach was found to perform poorly against methods of communication that provides information directly to the five senses, principally sight and, occasionally, touch. It was found that a picture that represents the taste is worth a thousand words when it comes to helping a consumer anticipate the taste.

The third phase confirmed that the visual to gustatory link that enables a consumer to interpret a taste from a picture was available to all the members of a larger research group. This third phase also established that because the consumers' desire is to create an emotional response, the views and honestly-felt subjective opinions expressed by people, known or unknown, was still preferable to the objective analysis of the dispassionate wine tasting note.

### **3.5. Research Outcome**

The research found that it is possible to improve the effectiveness of communication about wine by using pictures to speak directly to the taste of the wine and by using the opinions of fellow consumers to evoke an emotional response sufficient to make an informed, yet personal, decision.

## 4. Introduction

### 4.1. Wine Marketing in South Africa — Current Situation

The approaches used by wine marketers in South Africa are characterised by a central theme; they are all "pushing" their product to consumers. The strategies that they use vary and they are all shaped by industry held beliefs about consumer behaviour and market segment groups. The approach appears to be one of developing a brand message that will appeal to a particular type of consumer operating at a particular level of wine expertise.

The brand styles adopted include a number of distinct categories. There are those that present the winery as an iconic market leader, with a long history and tradition of excellence. Other marketers appeal to the aspirations of the consumer and place the product with a particular consumer image. Some focus on an aspect of uniqueness which sets the wine apart. Occasionally it may be possible to find approaches that seek to inspire the consumer by focusing entirely on the price of a wine without giving any brand information at all. There are even wine marketing approaches that seek to challenge the image and conventions of the wine industry and encourage their consumers to join them.

What is critical about all these approaches is that none of these brand positions and go to market strategies seek to represent the taste of the wine. At best, particularly when the brand message is extended by the presence or absence of award, regional and varietal information they infer the *quality and style* of a wine, but not the *taste*.

To communicate taste, marketers find a solution in relying on the skills of wine experts either within or external to their specific organisation. These expert analyses and characterisations of wine are linguistic in nature, whether written or perhaps heard on the radio. They rely on the abilities of the consumer to accurately interpret what is communicated and judge the value of the potential experience for themselves. The conventional wine note is typically analytical, technical and formulaic. They have a sub-culture and a language to go with it.

Occasionally, depending on the role of the critic, the review may also praise the wine. Seldom is a wine openly criticised and rarely is the message anything to do with a personal and emotional response to the wine. Wine writers and critics seem unwilling to say what they feel; choosing to believe that every wine has its market somewhere. It is noticeable that if they are dealing with a low-end wine this linguistic sub culture convention is dropped and, if there is a tasting note at all, a lighter tone and style is adopted.

Being a wine writer is not an easy role. They recognise that they do not serve their own purpose if they criticise the producers. When it comes to the consumers the tone and style they adopt may be considered by some people to be overly simplistic and potentially patronising, or alternatively they may be perceived as technically complex and potentially elitist. In the end the wine note and its tone can conceivably be considered as a simple extension of the brand image by a large proportion of wine consumers. As such it too is about quality and style as much as it is about taste.

Marketing therefore consists of a heavy reliance on a brand image and the abilities of the consumer to accurately interpret the visual cues, coupled with a linguistic approach to communicating the taste. Short of attending a tasting, this is the only way the consumer has of understanding the taste of a wine that is new to them, prior to agreeing to buy it.

From a consumers' perspective this means that there are risks associated with unfamiliar wines. Consumers adopt strategies to reduce these risks which vary from sticking to established brands that they know to adopting elaborate and personal criteria for anticipating whether they will like a wine.

From the marketers' perspective the issue is a complex one. Firstly it is difficult to get the message across because the tools they have at their disposal do not appear to do the job well. Secondly, the consumers' reliance on the brand message means that it is difficult for new products to break into the established stock patterns of retail outlets and end user buying patterns. The wine market across the country, and particularly away from the Cape, is characterised by the dominance of mainstream brands backed by proportionally high marketing budgets, and by practices that protect outlets and inhibit new products from being introduced. In an experiment I examined the South African Platter wine guide 2009 and listed seventy wines I would like to try. In October 2009 I visited three Johannesburg/Sandton retail outlets (Makro in Woodmead; Bootleggers in Fourways; Winesense in Melrose Arch) and could only find *one* of the seventy wines I sought.

## **4.2. Issues for the Wine Industry**

Reading wine publications can be an unproductive experience for consumers across the country. The chances are that it will be very difficult or expensive to get the wines that are marketed at you. The fact that they are in a magazine probably means they are already sold out or about to go up in price; often they are unavailable outside of the Western Cape. This is frustrating and it undermines the value and result of the marketing that is done.

For the consumer who enjoys novelty, the risk associated with a novel wine purchase is not mitigated. Ultimately the consumer can only guess at the taste and decide to take the plunge. Many do this but it requires both money and application to build up an appreciation of the variety of wines available. This situation means that new consumers are not being productively helped or encouraged.

The difficulties in recruiting new consumers are a constraint on industry success and growth. The disenfranchisement of many consumers supports a poor consumer perception of the industry and product.

## **4.3. The Focus of this Research Programme**

Research programmes completed in the past have investigated the utility and influence of the wine marketing brand-based information to the consumer. As such these programmes have addressed the question by looking at the product in its existing packaged form. This perspective assumes that the existing information is sufficient and adequate to make an informed decision. What was of interest was which aspects feature more fully in the minds of consumers.

Other research has examined the efficiency of the communication and in general these programmes find that the outcomes are often ineffective because the consumer does not necessarily have the linguistic skill to interpret it. Responsibility is attributed either to the marketers for not connecting or to the consumers for not engaging. Either way it is clear that there is a communication mismatch; a gap between what is communicated and what is needed.

This research programme approaches the issue from the perspective of the consumer and seeks to establish what is missing. What is required to bridge the gap? In order to answer this question this programme focuses on establishing what the actual process of consumer wine selection is and then asks what information that is not currently included can be provided to reduce consumer risk and address the frustration.

## **4.4. Research Findings**

The most surprising result came in the first phase of the investigation when the actual decision strategies of individual consumers were investigated in detail. The key finding was that consumers, when they process the available information, are trying to anticipate the taste of the wine. They literally are attempting what is termed a "gustatory construct" within their minds that enables them to actually anticipate what they taste.

The surprising element to this is that the consumers investigated did not rely on the tasting note to complete this experience; instead they chose to interpret aspects of the brand as indicators of taste. Bizarrely, factors such as the colour and style of the label, the type of closure, the linguistic tone adopted, the weight of the bottle and the price asked all featured (along with many other things) as ways of generating the gustatory experience they sought. Most of the participants were unaware that they were doing this, but when it was pointed out that they were salivating and tasting they recognised it for what it was.

The first phase also established that buying decision strategies run by consumers to make their decision, all end on some level of Kinaesthetic (feeling) reaction. This can be a positive or negative reaction to the product in question, and the consumer will not buy the wine unless a positive feeling (K) exceeds some threshold level specific to them. This "K+" is the result of many factors, only some of which are to do with the taste. Put simply, to buy a wine the consumer has to feel good about the prospect of owning it.

The second phase of investigation examined the process of trusting a wine advisor. This threw further light on the findings from the first phase. The consumers' agenda is to anticipate the whether they would *enjoy* the wine. The finding was that wine experts, with their analytic approach, did not address these questions and that most consumers would prefer to rely on the impassioned opinion of a friend or acquaintance than the input of a remote expert.

An additional finding from the second phase was that the descriptions constructed by the experts require a skill to translate the information from a linguistic form ("second access") to a direct sensory form such as taste and smell ("first access"). It simply is harder to anticipate the taste using second access information than it is to process first access information. Put simply a consumer will be far more able to anticipate the taste from a picture they can see, than from words they have to read (or hear) and interpret.

The third phase of research tested these findings and established that the visual-to-gustatory link is a natural process which is readily available to most people. The first access synaesthesia achieved by the brain translates a designed visual cue into a gustatory experience. The third phase also placed this finding into a context. The consumers' agenda is to establish sufficient gustatory construct (GC) that contributes to kinaesthetic reaction (K). In order to fill out the kinaesthetic response the consumer seeks information of an emotional nature. This is why the existing brand messages have some effect because they do speak directly to the kinaesthetic; but the effect is haphazard and incomplete. To complete the picture a consumer seeks an emotional response, positive or negative, from someone they can relate to, that they can use to inform their strategy. This is why the impassioned friend or acquaintance wins out over the analytical expert.

#### **4.5. Research Value**

This research has demonstrated that it is possible to communicate more effectively about wine to consumers. These pictures communicate taste in a way that is difficult to interpret as either elitist or patronising because with a picture, developed within the syntactic rules of this research, it is difficult to imply a tone. A picture combined with honest emotional responses to the wine increases the consumer's comfort level that they are learning enough about the wine to assess it from their own perspective.

This research was an in depth study with a small group of consumers of varying experience. The next steps are firstly to test this on a wider audience through a commercial approach, and secondly to investigate whether any of the existing expensive brand message is made redundant.

## 5. Literature Review

### 5.1. Phase One: Decision Strategies

#### 5.1.1. Phase Focus

The area of investigation for the first phase of this research programme concerned the use of risk reduction decision strategies by wine consumers when making consumption choices. The phase was specifically concerned with determining the structure of these strategies as well as identifying the factors that have an influence within it.

The phase was based on the premise that consumers adopt strategies when buying wine. This is a function of the growing complexity of the wine market with both a wider range of product styles and a major increase in the number of producers. Such complexity requires a strategy to navigate through it, as there are risks to getting it wrong.

In conducting the literature review for this phase I focused on three areas. Firstly, do consumers perceive risk and if so what are the underlying trends within the industry that have shaped this situation? Secondly what has been the response of marketers to mitigate the risk and complexity? Lastly what elements of modern wine marketing feature as the most useful to the wine consumer?

#### 5.1.2. Area 1: Industry Trends in Production and Diversity

The experience of the United Kingdom since the 1980's is probably the most acute indicator of the changing wine market. Consumption of wine in that market has grown dramatically, sponsored by the involvement of the major supermarkets and the growing acceptance of the rapidly evolving new world products. The average UK consumer is faced with wines from all over the world and it is of little doubt that the "consumer confusion" described by Casini, Cavicchi and Corsi (2008) is a major aspect in the UK.

There is no reason to suggest that the issues are any different anywhere else. Schiefer & Fischer (2008) represent the situation in Germany as "the new world now offering wines of all styles and quality levels, and also using ever more sophisticated marketing strategies, the old world responds with increased product differentiation (e.g. branded or single-variety wines), making it ever more difficult for consumers to decide on which wine to buy."

In South Africa the change is subtly different, but the effect is the same. The restructuring of the production base away from large co-operatives producing bulk wine towards many more single producers producing a range of qualities and styles has created a similar kind of revolution in both the range of brands and the types of wine available. (Platters South African Wines 2008).

#### 5.1.3. Area 2: Marketing Response

The response from the industry to this problem has been to try to demystify the product, and assist the consumer to choose (Johnson and Bruwer 2004). The emergence of highly evolved branding messages, the importance of region of origin, and the complexity of the information one reads on the back label are all symptomatic of an industry that is simultaneously trying to assist the consumer and compete on the basis of its unique qualities.

Marketing has become increasingly important to the producer who wishes to be noticed. The mass marketing approach referred to by Johnson and Bruwer (2003) is seen to be a phenomenon of the past. With the growth of mid range products targeted at new wine consumers, the marketing approaches have become more diverse and complex. Spawton (1990) reflects on the changes in the marketing process in response to "changing consumption patterns in the industrialised nations, new distribution patterns, and different social and environmental issues". The new marketing process deals with a diverse set of "factors" which includes the products "tangible and intangible benefits, the price, market skimming, market penetration, neutral pricing and the communication

mix". For Spawton, "marketing planning is essential for the winemaker, whether a one person boutique winery or a large multinational".

Lindgreen (2001) conducted a New Zealand study in which "vineyards increasingly employ a pluralistic approach to marketing combining transaction marketing with relational types of marketing". With the addition of technology based marketing explored by Quinton and Harridge-March (2003) it is evident that the evolution is widespread and reflects a greater willingness of producers to build loyalty in their customer base.

Such innovations, which are happening worldwide, have increased the volume and style of wine marketing material that the consumer is faced with. The information overload leads to publications such as Platters South African Wines and Wine Magazine, where the whole premise is to unbundle the issues by taking the advice of experts who reduce all this complexity to a short description and a star rating - whilst simultaneously stating that consumption is a personal preference, and noting that telling someone that a wine is a five star winner, does not make it so. (Platter 2008 Editor's note Pg 8)

#### **5.1.4. Area 3: Consumer Risk / Decision Strategies and Use of Marketing**

Mitchell and Grottel (1988,1989), when looking at the UK market, established the existence of both a "perceived risk" to consumers and associated risk reduction strategies adopted by wine consumers. They examined a range of risks, which included social, financial and physical risks, but were the list was headed by the risk of not liking the taste of the wine.

Spawton (1991) identified a number of ways that consumer reduce their risk. These were:

1. Brand: The selection of a brand name that they understood represented a "safe brand" where quality was reliable.
2. Peer Recommendations: Relying on the advice of fellow consumers
3. Retail advice: Relying on the advice of the retailer
4. Knowledge: Gain knowledge through wine appreciation courses
5. Pricing: Price as an indicator of quality
6. Packaging: Seen as an extension of the style and quality in the bottle

Rasmussen and Lockshin (1991) added to this list by pointing to the importance of regional branding as a quality indicator. This finding seems to concur with the work done by Dimara and Skuras (2005) which suggested that "information from labels" (in particular regional information) was in high demand from consumers "with higher expenditures for wine".

Johnson and Bruwer (2004) confirmed the importance of the "safe brand" and extended its definition to include repeated use of a product as a favourite. In their 2007 study Johnson and Brewer also confirmed the importance of the regional brand along with consumers' desire to taste before buying when the product price was in the ultra premium category.

Taking a slightly different angle, Romaniuk and Dawes (2005) examined the extent to which wine customers are loyal to brands across different price tiers. What they found was that customers were willing to buy from a particular brand at their different price offerings. This suggests they are using the brand as a reliable indicator of wine style to enable them to venture into other price categories. What Romaniuk and Dawes also found was that customers were loyal to the pricing point. They will repeat purchase at the same pricing point, but also venture into alternative product at that price. This can be interpreted as the use of the price level as a reliable indicator of a wine quality that they will appreciate.

Price as a factor was confirmed by Priilaid (2006). In an experiment on South African wines designed to assess the impact of a visible price on the assessment of wine quality, Priilaid found that with the sighted tastings, the "price cue" accounted for 84% of quality assessments and when

combined with the "region cue" the effect was to explain 95% of the assessments. Priilaid suggests that tasters fall back on heuristics like *if it costs a lot it must be good*. This hedonic price model is defended by Thrane (2004) and with less direct taste evidence available to them, it is reasonable to suggest that purchasers would adopt the same view. Aqueveque (2006) also examined the use of price and the influence of expert advice on consumption decisions and found that depending on the risks associated with the planned context for the consumption of wine, experts would be less or more involved. A high risk led to an expert and / or a high priced wine.

Lockshin, Mueller, Louviere, Francis and Osidacz (2009a) included the use of medals and awards as an indicator of quality. They also considered the effects of packaging in more detail looking at label colour and style along with closure type and they looked at the impact of discounts and alcohol level. They found all these factors to play a part in helping a consumer to settle for a particular choice. The extent of the influence varied, but the clear leader was brand.

All these studies (with the possible exception of Lockshin et al (2009a)) have in common a sense that the consumer is behaving in a rational manner using factors and data that they can articulate and defend. By contrast a study by Hausman (2000) examined the consumer motivations for impulse buying. The data "supports the theory that impulse buying is a common method of product selection, in part, because the shopping act and impulsive product selection provide hedonic rewards". Hausman found that "information processing overload confounds product selection, reinforcing the rewards to be obtained from alternative selection heuristics, like impulse buying".

There are two elements in this last study that can be related to wine. The first is that consumers seek new experiences. In the event that they do not fully understand a product, they are still willing and capable of taking the available information and making an impulsive decision. The second element is that the potential for "information overload" of such consumers is evident. If this occurs, how do consumers filter out the information they have no use for; how do they acquire the information on which to make their impulsive act of buying? That was the focus of the first phase.

#### **5.1.5. Phase One Findings and Contribution to Understanding**

Phase One confirmed the use of strategies by consumers and within those strategies the use of information as filters to either promote or exclude a wine from selection. Individual people relied on their preferred information because they had established a pattern of understanding its use. Expert sourced information was used more as an exclusion filter than as a positive recommendation.

Phase One also confirmed Hausman's contention in the context of wine, but more specifically expanded on the idea of hedonic rewards being sought by the consumer when making a purchase. The strategies adopted by the participants required them to reach a point where they expected to enjoy the wine, in some way or other, before they would buy it.

Where Phase One broke new ground was in the suggestion that consumers were trying to construct or anticipate the taste of the wine sealed in the bottle from whatever cues they trusted to give them an accurate read. What was surprising about this was that it was an unconscious action and relied on a broad range of marketing factors only some of which actually had any influence on taste.

## **5.2. Phase Two: Expert Opinion**

### **5.2.1. Phase Focus**

The second phase focuses on the utility of expertise for consumers. Phase One had indicated that such information was sparingly used by consumers and this phase sought to find out why this is the case. In order to do this I examined two particular areas. The first concerns the role of the wine expert and the function that they fulfil, or to put it another way, *what are they for?* This question took me into the need to analyse and develop a framework by which to understand their contribution. The second question asks *are they any use?*

## 5.2.2. Area 1: Roles and Functions

### 5.2.2.1. Rule Makers and "Proper Thinkers"

Gloria Origgi (2007) puts forward the contention that the establishment of expertise in wine is not unlike the establishment of expertise in any other domain. It occurs because "we need experts, tags, labels and rating systems to acquire a capacity for discrimination, to understand the style of thought that is proper to a particular body of knowledge." Origgi positions experts as the developers of "credible procedures for sorting information" who become the makers of rules and standard making.

As an example, in a most traditional form, the historic controls practiced in France under the Appellation d'origine contrôlée (AOC) system are a good example of the most forthright of these rules. They define estate and wine quality based on geography. Since geography does not change, neither apparently does the reputation of the estates, except at great cost.

In a more contemporary example in the new world where such controls do not exist, some experts are busy promoting a not dissimilar concept of wine *region* quality where the region is effectively a brand and guarantee of a certain level of finesse either in general or in particular varieties. (Johnson & Bruwer 2007).

At a day to day level the rule making and standard setting function manifests itself in the myriad of rating systems adopted by experts to assess and communicate quality.

### 5.2.2.2. Language Makers and Taste Describers

The other major function of the expert is to act as a proxy taster of wine for the consumer, experiencing the wine on his behalf and then communicating that experience so that the consumer can be assisted in making their choice. In fulfilling this role Origgi (2007) suggests that experts are inventors of a common language for communicating and arbitrating the standards of wine. In order to fulfil their role they train to be proficient in the product and in the language used to describe it.

## 5.2.3. Area 2: Use of Experts

### 5.2.3.1. Adoption of Rules and Standards

There is considerable research that pitches the abilities of the wine expert against the classification and identification abilities of consumers with various levels of experience. (Lawless 1984, Gawel 1997, Hughson and Boakes 2002). These studies unsurprisingly found that consumers can rarely match the abilities of the trained expert. What is surprising is that the studies themselves, along with the work of d'Hautville seem to carry an underlying assumption that the language and abilities of the experts are in some way the accepted truth to which consumers should aspire. D'Hautville (2003) sees the way forward, at least as far as marketers are concerned, as "investigating the formal training which makes it possible for a normal wine drinker to interpret correctly a set of sensory descriptors."

What is striking about this perspective of is the extent to which no-one questions the validity of the position of the expert. A generative metaphor of *wine experts as a priesthood* illuminates assumptions and tacit constraints throughout the literature. Wine experts are highly trained to interpret the scriptures and preach, in the equivalent of Latin, to the masses. They are people of power and influence, their judgements are held as canonical, and their position is unquestionable.

There are of course exceptions. Hilger, Rafert and Villas-Boas' study (2007) examined the extent to which expert opinion actually influenced the sales of wines. They found that "although there is no overall consumer response to expert opinion labels on wine, demand for a subset of *highly reviewed* wines increased". This subset they describe as "low priced, high scoring wines". In other words, these are the bargains, and the attention paid by the experts drew them to the attention of consumers. Hilger et al (2007) speculated that the higher priced wines showed no sales boost through the use of expert opinion to promote them because the buyers of these wines "are more

fully informed regarding product quality, and thus gain little information when expert opinion is displayed". The inference from this study is that the priest-expert can have something to teach novices, but there comes a point where they can add little more.

Within the industry itself, challenges to the established "faith" occur. The popularity and reputation of the wine critic Robert Parker are examples of this. Parker is a lawyer with no formal wine training but huge first hand wine experience. He has what Origgi (2007) describes as a "million dollar nose", and with the invention of his 100 point system, and his disagreements with the wine establishment he effectively made an iconoclastic challenge to the established order.

"His admirers claim he brings a democratic breeze into the wine industry by detaching the evaluation of wines from the reputation of their location and history. His simple and synthetic reports lack the verbosity of those by other critics and are easy to understand. Integrity, democracy and intelligibility are constituents of Parker's self possessed identity, and it is through the appraisal of his identity that consumers decide to trust him. (Origgi 2007).

Battles with Parker are well documented, and it is significant that he chooses to maintain his independence by declining to participate as a judge in established wine shows. His positioning as an independent critic has won him many followers. His publication, *The Wine Advocate*, has 40,000 subscribers (Origgi 2007). However to extend the metaphor, he is to the wine industry what Martin Luther was to the Catholic Church. In taking on the edicts and papal bulls, Parker is creating a new set of rules and a new form of protestant religion with what amounts to only a few committed faithful. His efforts have even prompted the production of similar minded sects. For example *Wine Spectator*, *Wine Enthusiast*, and Steve Tanzer all have separate, documented, but slight different rating systems.

In short, neither the established church of wine experts nor their challenging counter clergy seem to be hitting the mark. Schiefer and Fischer's 2008 study into the competitive abilities of experts and consumers perhaps demonstrates the situation best. Their study sought to compare the rating preferences of a group of wine experts with a group of 36 non-expert consumers. Their result was that the level of correspondence between the two sets of ratings was found to be "insignificant". Put simply, consumers preferred different wines to the experts. The implications noted by the authors from this study were that whilst "some consumer segments may find expert awards to be useful decision cues, for a large portion of the market, there is demand for a more consumer-orientated system of sensory quality evaluation and labeling".

Another perspective on the use of experts is taken by Orth and Krška (2002) who examine the impact of wine show awards, granted by experts, on the prices of wine. They found that by taking on implicit function of endorsing the wine, the expert also takes on the task of endorsing the price differentials asked for that wine. Orth and Krška's work (2002) demonstrates that gold and silver awards can contribute to the demand for a particular product, and with that increased demand come higher prices. The drawing of attention to a particular wine by experts can result in higher prices and scarcity. As a service to the producer, this is invaluable. The value to the consumer is a double edged sword. As an example of this Michael Fridjhon, a leading South African wine expert, commented at one of the public tastings that followed the Old Mutual Trophy Awards in 2009, that the awards given to a particular un-wooded Chardonnay from Ashton Wynkelder, had significantly changed its price and made it virtually impossible to source.

### **5.2.3.2. Use of the Language and Descriptions**

Brochet and Dubourdieu (2002) conclude in their study that the language used by wine experts is "based upon prototypes and not on detailed analytical description". It is a form of shorthand. This less than glowing endorsement is supported by d'Hautville (2003) who goes further and questions, "if experts cannot efficiently describe the characteristics of wine to ordinary wine consumers, how useful for the market are the sensory descriptors provided...?"

Language is clearly an issue. Hughson and Boakes demonstrated that non-expert consumers are more capable of matching wines to the tastes described when those descriptions are short sensory descriptors as opposed to long elaborate ones. Referring to a 2009 study by Mueller, Lockshin, Saltman and Blanford, J. (2009), Lockshin et al (2009b) pointed to a finding that more than 25% of Australian wine consumers find it hard to identify flavours indicated on wine back labels (i.e. detect described tastes) when they tasted wine. Given that the consumer had the taste in their mouth and the description in their hand it is not surprising that Lockshin et al concluded that *"there are indications that the wording of sensory descriptions used in the marketplace can be improved to be more understandable by consumers"*.

Research conducted by Solomon (1990) and Hughson and Boakes (2002) matched the abilities of the consumer against the expert and found the consumer less able. Solomon concludes that non-expert tasters do not have the discriminating abilities of their expert counterparts, and he attributes this in part to the difference in their wine linguistic abilities. Hughson and Boakes further conclude that non-experts' linguistic shortcomings and lack of wine domain knowledge limit their ability to communicate the taste of wine. These studies, along with work by d'Hautville (2003), point to a linguistic constraint that limits the ability of consumers to express what they taste. The work of Melcher & Schooler (1996) demonstrates the lack of ability of people, who are weak in the language of wine, to recall a taste from a description, and identify the wine.

These studies point to the weakness of non-experts to use the notes for identification purposes. What they demonstrate is either a difference in abilities between the expert and the non-expert, or an inability to adequately describe the taste in ways that consumers can relate to, or both.

Teil and Valceschini (1999) demonstrated an interesting extension of this perspective when they wrote the following:

"A first effect of the work of the critic is to publish information on the quality of wine and to raise up vocations of wines lovers, enhancing the place of taste in their buying behaviour. A second effect is to generate reputation and confidence in the quality labels for the usual wine drinker; for him, quality wine is a trust characteristic product. The satisfaction of the drinker relies on the confidence the wine is able to generate, and not on his own perception of the quality of the wine."

This perhaps demonstrates the central issue that experts and non-experts are facing. Throughout all the literature the objective of the expert is to assess wines and determine their level of technical quality. The consumer on the other hand has a different objective, and that is to answer the question of personal enjoyment i.e. "what do I like?" For this reason the focus of the research in the second phase was not looking at this advice *not* as an indication of which wines are of good quality. Instead the research asks, how much use the consumer can make of the advice when answering the question "will I like this wine?"

#### **5.2.4. Phase Two Findings and Contribution to Understanding**

The work of Phase Two did confirm the perception that experts are perceived as the makers of rules and the awarders of praise. What came through strongly however is that they were not perceived as the arbiters of what individuals would like to taste. The essence of the problem is that experts are seen as being focused on quality, not on taste. When choosing a wine a consumer is seeking a taste for a planned context and the quality of a wine is only part of the picture. It seems the consumers reject the opinions of Teil and Valceschini (1999).

In a related finding Phase Two shed some light on the underlying approach that consumers would like to adopt if they could. Rather than being told about a specific wine and then being asked to integrate the information into their own experience, consumers would prefer a model in which they said what they like and the expert *matched their criteria*. The problem is that existing wine writing is seen as "pushing" a particular product rather than seeking to fulfil the demands of the consumer.

The issue of the linguistic constraint was also confirmed as one of the reasons why experts struggle to get their message across. The wine argot is a significant barrier to entry for many consumers. However this is not the whole story, when considering the question of language. Phase Two's main contribution is the understanding that what a consumer is trying to do when they read or interpret the input from an expert is translate the "second access" linguistic or symbolic summary of the taste of a wine into a "first access" anticipated taste. To do this they have to be able to understand the words or symbols used, interpret what the expert meant and then relate them to something in their own personal taste experience. This is a complex task and it explains why consumers resist experts.

Other contributions to our understanding of the positions of experts also emerged. The efforts of wine critics suffer from the fact that they lack a "personal recommendation" quality that is more likely to reassure. This originates partly from the tone adopted but also from the supposed need to remain objective and detached. The lack of shared experience with the consumer and the lack of emotional content in the reviews make it difficult for the consumer to generate the emotional response that their decision strategy demands.

### **5.3. Phase Three: Information and Communication**

#### **5.3.1. Phase Focus**

Phase Two had reached a conclusion that there are missing elements in wine marketing communication. This however does not mean that the existing information is redundant. Phase One had drawn a broad conclusion that existing factual, declarative and assessment information was utilised. Phase Three asks if the information is actively useful, or only used in the absence of anything better. In this literature review I examine the area of alternative approaches to factual and declarative information (Area 1) which incorporates the recent developments in researching how the unconscious mind responds to marketing information. I also examine innovative approaches to considering the use of non-expert to express the wine experience. (Area 2)

Phase Three also examines the potential of synaesthesias as alternative methods of communication, and in Area 3, and I consider the research that supports the concepts of using colour and images to convey taste to the human mind.

#### **5.3.2. Area 1: Factual and Declarative Information**

There is a considerable body of research that examines the impact on wine sales of providing various items of factual information about a wine, discussed comprehensively in the Literature Review for Phase One. Lockshin, Mueller, Louviere, Francis and Osidacz (2009a) summarise the field well when they report that in unpublished research (EBI 2007) indicated that

*"Many consumers use an implicit logical sequence of assessing information available to them to simplify the difficult decision to make a choice from the large number of wines that differ in many attributes. These heuristic cues are used to reduce perceived risk by indicating what consumers can expect to get when they purchase the wine."*

However, later in the same publication, Lockshin et al (2009a) offer a different interpretation of past data, arguing that factual wine information is only really of use to 'highly involved' consumers, and that *"most consumers have difficulties in understanding these interactions"*.

Lockshin, Mueller, Louvière, Francis and Osidacz (2009b) investigated the impact of individual items of information available on a wine bottle or retail shelf. They specifically examined the impact of brand, price, medals, discounts, alcohol level, region, label style, label colour and bottle closure type on the propensity of consumers to choose a particular wine. Lockshin et al (2009b) felt that much of "human decision making is not well thought out and not available to our conscious mind", and hence adopted an innovative research approach to identifying the most influential types of wine information. This approach is supported by Gladwell (2005) who recognised that people do not

always answer fully when interpreting their own actions. "When we ask people to explain their thinking – particularly thinking that comes from the unconscious – we need to be careful how to interpret their answers". This view is based on the work of Nisbett and Wilson on verbal reports of mental processes (1977).

Lockshin and his colleagues challenged the traditional market research programmes in which lists of attributes are presented to wine consumers for conscious rating on a seven point scale. Instead they adopted a method which simulated the actual consumption decision by using a web site that presents the consumer with various product options. They examined the impact of information (such as the region of origin) on the tendency of consumers to choose a particular wine for a specific occasion or context, by systematically including and removing the individual information item. While the investigation confirmed that traditional marketing drivers such as brand were indeed important, surprising new results were turned up by this new investigative approach. For example, the brand-driven segment preferred wines with black-and-grey labels, while the value-for-money segment preferred cream-coloured labels.

Three important changes in methodological approach are all evident in this work by Lockshin et al (2009b). First, they recognised that the cognitive processes of decision-making were not necessarily conscious, and that the supposedly analytical wine consumer's mind must be approached at an unconscious level. Second, the inclusion of context for the wine purchase decision (e.g. "dinner at home with friends or family") grounds the decision process in an imagined but realistic setting. Third, consumers were asked to *perform* the decision making task rather than reflecting in the abstract on how they think they would do it. In these three areas, Lockshin et al significantly raised the bar in terms of investigative methodology.

Despite the improved research methodology, the interpretation of certain results remains obscure, and Lockshin et al are only able to provide unsubstantiated guesses at the underlying mechanism. Most notably, in an experiment to assess the impact of providing three expert points ratings for wines (Lockshin et al 2009b), the results (reproduced below) were readily interpretable in three cases and unclear in the fourth.

**Figure 1: Impact of Wine Critics Point Rating (Lockshin et al, 2009b)**

*Relative impact of wine critics point ratings with high and low average and different degrees of agreement between the critics (ratings are shown in brackets)*

	Increase in Choice	
	Low Average Rating	High Average Rating
<b>High Agreement</b>	1.9% (83;85;87)	9.8% (88;90;92)
<b>Low Agreement</b>	5.9% (75;85;95)	7.2% (85;90;95)

Source: Lockshin et al (2009b)  
How does shelf information influence consumers' wine choice?

For Low Agreement/Low Average Rating, Lockshin et al comment:

"Interestingly, if wine raters disagreed on the quality rating of the wines at the lower average level then consumers seem to be more influenced by the single high score of 95 and hardly consider the very low score."

Given that the experimental subjects were not questioned about their internal processes, but only judged on their behaviour (clicking radio buttons on the website), the status of this interpretation must remain unreliable.

### 5.3.3. Area 2: Assessment Information - Taste Descriptions

Wine experts produce taste descriptions in an attempt to communicate the taste of a wine. Hughson and Boakes (2002) showed that non-expert consumers are best able to match wines to short sensory descriptions instead of elaborate ones. Referring to a 2009 study by Mueller, Lockshin, Saltman and Blanford, J. (2009), Lockshin et al (2009b) pointed to a finding that more than 25% of Australian wine consumers find it hard to identify flavours indicated on wine back labels (i.e. detect described tastes) when they tasted wine.

Lawless (1984) not only examined non-expert interpretation of expert opinion, but also considered the non-expert's ability to communicate the taste of a wine. He established that non-expert consumers succeeded in identifying tastes better when provided with "short concrete flavour descriptions" produced by experts, than by relying on their own "abstract" descriptions. However, it is interesting to note that "composite descriptions assembled from the non-expert group were more often matched correctly than their individual descriptions", showing that descriptions from non-experts do have value.

Gawel (1997) established similar findings about descriptions *produced by a consensus* of either experts or untrained people:

*"The untrained group also matched wines to consensus descriptions produced by experienced oenologists. Both groups were able to match wines to descriptions well above that expected by chance with the performance of the trained group being better in this regard. The best matching performance was attained by the untrained group matching to the expert consensus descriptions .....The results also suggest that descriptions are interpreted by both trained and untrained experienced tasters in a synthetic rather than analytic fashion."*

Taste descriptions are also used as marketing tools to increase sales, and there is evidence to suggest that this mechanism is different from the evocation of a communicated taste. Lockshin et al (2009b) found that the *presence* of a taste descriptor would boost the selection of a wine and that more elaborate descriptions were more likely boost sales. This finding is in stark contrast to the work of Lawless on the efficient communication of taste. Lockshin et al (2009b) also found a wide range of variance in how effective back label descriptions can be, and suggested further research into which specific aspects of the tasting description actually drive choice.

The work of Solomon (1990), Melcher & Schooler (1996) and Hughson and Boakes (2002) who compared the tasting abilities of consumers with their expert counterparts is also relevant. The essential point from these studies was the impact on the discrimination abilities of a weaker linguistic ability. The linguistic shortcomings of the non-expert along with the lack of specific knowledge about wine, limit (in the view of the studies) their ability to effectively communicate about wine. This is confirmed by d'Hautville (2003) who points to unfamiliarity with the use of wine language as a constraint on people to express what they taste.

This body of work has prompted a very interesting experiment that actually monitors the brain activity of people when they taste wine (Castriota-Scanderbeg et al 2005). Using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) technology a group of sommeliers and a group of wine novices were monitored as they tasted wine. The sommeliers showed activation of a cerebral network that involved the left insula and the adjoining orbito-frontal cortex which serve in gustatory and olfactory interpretation and integration. In addition sommeliers activated areas in the dorsolateral prefrontal cortex which implies that a learned cognitive process or strategy was being executed. The researchers speculated that the sommeliers were putting *words* to the *tastes*. Naïve tasters on the other hand did none of this; instead they activated centres that are implicated in *emotional* processing.

### 5.3.4. Area 3: Alternative Communication Methods

The method by which the brain interprets and represents information about a wine has prompted research into the use of colour as an indicator of odour and taste. Other work considers taste synaesthesias and explores the use of non-gustatory sensory modalities to communicate taste.

#### **5.3.4.3. Interpretation of Colour**

Morrot, Brochet and Dubourdieu (2001) constructed an experiment in which wine was smelled and described by a group of 54 people. The analysis of what the participants described shows that the odours of a wine are, for the most part, represented by objects that have the colour of the wine. For example white wine might be described as smelling of lemon. What was very compelling was that when a white wine was coloured red, the 54 tasters used red objects to describe it even though it was a white wine. Brochet described the result as "perceptive expectation" in which the subject experiences or perceives what they expect to experience.

A related experiment carried out by Ballester, Abdi, Langlois, Peyron and Valentin (2009) asked novice and trained tasters to identify red, white and rosé wines by their odour. The important observation from their study brings together the translation of wine olfactory sensations to linguistic descriptions by use of visual imagery; in particular colours:

in terms of wine description, again, a clear segmentation was obtained between white and red wines. White wines were described by yellow or orange odorant sources, while the red wines were described by dark odorant sources."

Zellner and Kautz (1990) demonstrated that colour can change the perceived intensity of some odours. Roth et al (1988) showed that by varying the proportion of green and yellow colouring in a lemon sucrose solution, they could alter the perceived sweetness of that solution. The results show that people associate flavour to colours and by changing colours researchers can induce a different perceived flavour in the observer. As Goode (2007) points out, this is a human survival adaptation. The human brain recognises and interprets objects and their colour as an indication of whether or not they will be acceptable food.

#### **5.3.4.4. Demonstrating Synaesthesia**

Goode (2007) discusses both the work of Brochet and Castriota-Scanderbeg. His observation is that:

*"there is a lot more to the wine experience than just smell and taste: the basic information from these chemical senses is supplemented in a very real way by other inputs, for example from vision, touch and memory. Added to this, the highest-order integration of all this input is a perception (or representation) of the tasting experience"*

In his paper Goode describes an experiment carried out by Bartoshuk (2000) in which the sensory experiences between individuals are compared. In this experiment Bartoshuk contrived a synaesthesia, using the explanation of a taste in an unrelated sense, e.g. vision or sound. The example she quotes describes the comparative *bitterness* of coffee as the *brightness* of a light. Using this experiment Bartoshuk was able to establish different levels of intensity in the taste experience of her subjects. From the perspective of this paper Bartoshuk's work supports the representation of taste as a visual simulation which can be understood and ranked.

Goode's paper, despite the territory that it covers, still comes back in its conclusion to the view that improving wine appreciation requires a "degree of calibration of perceptual representations". To do this Goode suggests "develop[ing] a language of sensory terms — a way to encode and share our representations".

#### **5.3.4.5. Interpretation of Time**

The experience of a wine happens over a finite time period, not instantaneously. This is indicated in linguistic wine descriptions by a sequential convention, ending in the "finish".

However, other time and sequence indicators are feasible. Pinker (1997) discusses the use of metaphor by the mind to represent the concept of time. Time is represented as movement between two locations or seen as a line. Pinker suggests that the metaphor of space-for-time is fundamental to the human mind. He reveals its importance: *"Some deductions that apply to motion and space also apply nicely to ...time. That allows the deductive machinery for space to be borrowed for reasoning about [time]."* Thus we can expect linear spatial arrangements of objects or images of objects, to be easily interpreted as a time line.

### **5.3.5. Phase Three Findings and Contribution to Understanding**

Phase Three of this research programme extends the work of two important pieces of research which were innovative in the field. The first of these is the work of Lockshin et al (2009b) in that it recognised that the wine consumption decision may occur at an unconscious level and in order to find reliable decisions researchers should attempt to simulate the actual decision making process. Lockshin focuses on the actions (in terms of the decisions made), this study looks more at execution of the decision strategy in relation to the available sources of information. Phase Three further extends the work of Lockshin et al by demonstrating that when the information has visual and emotional content the use of the more conventional information dropped away and became (with the exception of price) more or less redundant.

The second area of innovative work is that of Gawel (1998). Gawel took the principle of assessing the matching abilities of non-experts against those of experts, but with a twist. The twist was that the two groups were required to come up with consensus views of the taste of the wine and under these circumstances the performance of the untrained group was not as lagging behind as other studies infer. The best matching performance was achieved by the untrained group considering the expert opinions.

The third phase took this principle one stage further in that the opinions of an untrained group of consumers were combined to provide a consensus opinion on the wine and this was translated into a syntactically consistent visual message. This demonstrates, as Gawel did, that the consensus opinions of groups can create usable descriptions of wines. In Gawel's case the objective was to identify the wine, in this programme's case it was to choose the wine.

Where this third phase makes its greatest contribution is in demonstrating that the work of people like Zellner and Kautz (1990) Roth et al (1988), who were using colour to manipulate the perceived taste of a soda drink, also works very effectively for wine. The integration of colour with the representation of time as a line enables the evolving taste of wine also to be represented visually. This is a key innovative contribution of this research Programme.

The visual representation of wines also reverse engineers the work of Morrot, Brochet and Dubourdieu (2001) in which wines were described by using objects. In this Programme, the conceptual 'circle' was completed by using those objects to describe the wine. Showing someone a lemon is far more effective at communicating taste than verbally describing the taste as 'lemony'. This distinction can be explained by the work of Bartoshuk which supports the visual representation of taste to create a synaesthesia which evokes the taste in the mouth of the observer.

The third phase contributes an answer to the conundrum posed by Goode (2007) which recognised that in order to really communicate about wine we need to develop a "language of sensory terms — a way to encode and share our representations". In failing to challenge his assumption that this new 'language' must be linguistic in nature, Goode found no plausible answer to his challenge to the industry. This phase established that the encoding he called for need **not** be linguistic, but can be the more universal language of visual images.

## 6. Research Framework and Methods

### 6.1. Research Framework:

#### 6.1.1. Framework Principles

The concern that prompted this research is that the existing marketing approaches do not adequately mitigate the risk to the consumer of buying new wines. This represents a constraint to the industry in both the acquisition of new consumers and in the extension of involvement from existing ones. In addressing this, this research programme set out to investigate what the *actual* process of individual selection is, and how can the risk that consumers experience be effectively mitigated.

To do this the research approach must support the following principles:

1. *In depth* examination of *individual* consumer experiences
2. *Remain open* to previously unnoticed aspects of the customer purchasing experience
3. Maintain *flexibility* by allowing the direction of the research to be *responsive* to the actual findings.

#### 6.1.2. Evolutionary Phased Approach

In order to support the principles of flexibility and responsiveness I adopted a phased approach in which the area of investigation and the objectives of each phase were only defined one stage at a time in response to data from the previous phase or phases.

In order to support the principle of openness I preceded the first phase with a consumer survey where the questions themselves were compiled from an open agenda workshop involving a number of wine consumers. The issues identified by the workshop were considered by a wider audience and this enabled me to develop the focus from the first phase.

Subsequent phases were designed in response to the accumulating body of data from work done. Three iterations proved sufficient to evolve a useful and robust answer to the question posed.

#### 6.1.3. Grounded Theory

To further support the principles of openness, flexibility and responsiveness within each of these phases I adopted Grounded theory methods. The value of these methods is that they define an area of interest and are not limited by inflexible or closed areas of specific investigation. As such this approach is much more likely to notice what had previously been unnoticed.

Grounded Theory minimises preconceptions as part of its structure of investigation. The approach prizes feedback from real experience; and the work is *findings* driven rather than *theory* driven.

#### 6.1.4. Neuro Linguistic Programming

The approach of using Neuro Linguistic Programming methods to conduct the research was made because NLP offers a vocabulary and a strategy elicitation process capable of investigating the internal state of an individual as they make decisions. NLP has methods of analysing and documenting the involvement of the senses, the impact of emotions and the changes to behaviour, in this case purchasing behaviour.

##### 6.1.4.1. NLP in Relation to Senses

Dilts & DeLozier (2000) consider that sensory experience to be the primary source of all an individual's information about their external environment. It is from our sight, hearing, touch, smell and taste modalities that we build our own model of the world.

Anyone standing in front of a range of bottles trying to make a wine choice is being presented with a variety of information about the products on offer. They can see the branding and the price, they

can feel the weight of the bottle, they can if a tasting is available smell the wine and taste it. Each of these sources of experience adds to our direct experience of the wine. If there is something written down about the wine the person can take that in as data and using their existing knowledge they can interpret the data and assimilate it into their model of the world. NLP was used because it is structured to examine inputs from all modalities and treat them with appropriate weight.

#### **6.1.4.2. NLP in Relations to Emotions**

In NLP emotions are complex states that have both an internal and an external manifestation. If someone likes something they have an internal state which might be described as being "happy" or "pleased". Externally they may be doing any number of things like smiling and laughing; or if they don't like it frowning and avoiding.

NLP offers a structure through which to link the internal state to the external behaviour. In terms of this research the person standing in front of a range of bottles may see one that is bright orange in colour and on the basis of their model of the world interpret this in a particular way. They might regard it as an indicator of a cheap brand and their external behaviour would be to avoid it. They might recall the colour and recognize the brand and in recollection recall a positive experience. Their internal state may lead to the behaviour of picking the bottle down for further investigation.

In both these examples visceral responses to a colour generated what NLP calls a "derived feeling" or "meta K" and these feelings help determine the meaning we give to a particular experience

#### **6.1.4.3. NLP in Relation to Behaviour**

The value of meta K's from the perspective of this study is that they often function as the decision point when running a particular cognitive strategy (Dilts & De Lozier, 2000), e.g. choosing a wine. The strength of the derived feeling is the source of the decision to buy or avoid. A methodology that enables us to consider the impact of emotions may take us nearer to understanding exactly what is happening because it enables us to understand how the internal state translates into an external behaviour of purchasing a wine.

Lockshin et al (2009b) study examined which pieces of data people used to influence them to buy a particular wine. For example they ran statistical exercises in which the region of origin was visible or absent to the consumer making choices between one wine and a range of others. They determined the value of the inclusion of this information by assessing the statistical impact upon buying behaviour.

This study differs from the work of Lockshin et al by examining behaviour at the individual level, rather than at the statistical group level. This study treats individuals as having internal processes that are susceptible to investigation, rather than as black boxes with no internal structure. NLP enables this "glass box" approach in a useful and practical way.

#### **6.1.4.4. NLP Strategy Elicitation Methods**

**NLP** Strategy Elicitation offers a set of techniques that enable the construction of a Strategy representing a piece of complex behaviour; in this case a decision to purchase wine. An NLP Strategy is a well-formed sequence of modality-base steps that an individual repeatedly uses to make the decision. (See Appendix C for a fuller description of **NLP** Strategies.) Techniques for Strategy elicitation include visual observation of eye-accessing cues, auditory observation of sensory predicates, and broad sensory acuity to notice and follow up specific small behaviours ("tells").

Being able to do this requires considerable experience and sensory acuity. The possibility always existed that the behaviour might not be picked up by the interviewer, and for this reason the interviews were recorded digitally and viewed repeatedly during the interviewing period.

#### **6.1.4.5. Recognition of Consistent Responses and Patterns**

Repeated viewing led to the identification of particular behaviours which, if they manifested with the later interviewees could be investigated in more detail. In this way the gradual understanding of the consistent elements of the participants' diverse strategies emerged and was tested.

One of the key findings of this study came from observing participants casually smacking their lips, or in at least one case taking large sniffs as they considered the picture of a wine. When asked to reflect on what they were doing they became aware that they were trying to anticipate the taste and smell of the wine by recalling their previous experiences of the items represented. Their imagination was employed in combining them in the combinations and proportions represented by the pictures. All this came from the NLP strategy elicitation technique which sought to identify "tells" for the consideration of sensory input, in this case taste and smell.

#### **6.1.4.6. NLP and Domain Language**

One other significant advantage of using NLP which assists in the objective of remaining open to novel findings is that NLP is not concerned with the "domain" of wine. Use of NLP's structure would therefore not bring with it established patterns of thinking or language used within the wine industry.

#### **6.1.5. Ethical Considerations**

The objective of this programme of research is to find ways of improving this communication with a view to democratising the wine product. It is concerned with providing useful mechanisms for small producers to enter and maintain a position in the market, alongside the established players.

In essence the objective is to increase the involvement of "demand pull" in the allocation of resources to wine production. The benefit is that the industry becomes more focused on consumer acclaim and keeps the influence of expertise in better perspective. All phases of research were designed to be consistent with this principle.

### **6.2. Research Methods: Phase Components**

#### **6.2.1. Phase One: Decision Strategies**

The initial scope of the investigation was based on the concern that the marketing information provided by the wine industry in support of its product was of little use to consumers making consumption decisions.

The phase began with a marketing survey designed to elicit at a cursory level whether or not there were grounds for considering this to be potentially true and whether or not there was a case for further investigation. The survey revealed a level of dissatisfaction with wine marketing material and in the light of this the first phase focused on eliciting the strategies that consumers adopt when making wine purchases.

The approach adopted was to interview using Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) elicitation methods. The objective was to document the strategies and understand what use the participants actually make of the information they are given.

#### **6.2.2. Phase Two: Expert Opinion**

One of the key unexpected results from Phase One was the apparent lack of use made by consumers of the advice of experts. The function of experts became the main focus for Phase Two. The focus of this phase was on how the participants learned to trust the information that they use, and on understanding why they felt it had value.

The approach adopted was to set the participants a wine decision task that they had to plan to solve, and then had to solve in reality. The focus was on the information sources they used, and the use they made of them both in the planning phase and the execution.

The other unexpected result from Phase One was that the participants were attempting to anticipate the taste of the wines they were considering. Following the old adage that a picture is worth a

thousand words it was decided to include an experiment to assess the use of pictures to assist participants in evoking the taste of the wines. The objective was to see if this was possible to the point that the participants would feel comfortable making a choice on the basis of the picture alone, or whether brand and description information was also required.

### **6.2.3. Phase Three: Alternative Information and Communication**

When Phase Two confirmed a level of mistrust of wine expertise, and the preference to adopt the help of friends and acquaintances, the focus of Phase Three became the use of alternative sources of information to see how effective they could be in supporting consumer decision making

The first of these alternative sources was the modern business paradigm that supports consumer community networks via the Web. The second was to investigate the utility of visual wine representations as a means of communicating taste from one or more consumers to others.

## **6.3. Research Methods: Principles**

### **6.3.1. Focus On Genuine Responses**

Fernandez (2004) asserts that "Grounded Theory is a rigorous method that allows researchers to produce theory that is relevant to business people". The value in the approach is that "when investigating emerging business practice it is paramount to use a method that facilitates and motivates actors' participation". As Fernandez suggests "the open nature of the interviews, and the focus upon experiences as perceived by the actors" is a way of ensuring genuine and unforced responses. Most importantly the approach reduces the interviewer's influence on the outcome by, as Fernandez calls it, "forcing [the interviewer] to act as a very active listener"

### **6.3.2. Encounter Approach**

The approach adopted throughout this research programme has been to maximise the use of actual consumer decision making as the basis for the findings. This is not always easy to do and the extent to which the methods used have allowed the decisions to be as real as possible is an issue covered under Issues of Validity

The research methodology for the first phase used interviews in which participants recalled how they react in certain wine buying circumstances. The focus was on understanding their decision strategy, and this was managed using NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) techniques and methods to both establish and document what people said.

In the second phase the intention was to move the participants further down the road of having to make the decision in as much of a real situation as possible. For this reason they were set a task to source a wine which was totally new to them and report back in interviews. Also in this phase participants were given the "pictures exercise", where they encountered web based pictures that were intended to represent wines, and were required to explain their reaction.

The third phase represents a synthesis of these two approaches. The method employed requires participants to encounter information, and then react and make many decisions about wines. Note that the participants will be controlled from accessing information at will, enabling the use of the NLP and knowledge elicitation techniques previously employed in the interviews.

### **6.3.3. Specific Use of NLP Methods**

The entire programme of research involved face to face interviews with participants in which the objective was to establish what they were thinking. In establishing the approach for this programme straightforward question-based interviews were ruled out. Reasons for not using this approach are:

1. it would be framed in the language and paradigm used by the wine industry
2. it allows a possible element of leading questions
3. it does not easily lend itself to detailed investigation of what is going on in the mind of the interviewee because the interviewee is not required to explain their thought processes — only some of which they are consciously aware.

It was decided to investigate consumers' behaviour and cognitive processes using the Neuro-Linguistic Programming (NLP) methods of understanding the decision making process of the individual. The specific methods used are based on the Strategies Elicitation work of Robert Dilts et al (1980).

The benefits of using NLP approaches are:

1. they are not constrained by the wine industry paradigm
2. they allow the participants to explain their decision strategies by either recalling events or by demonstrating an actual decision process. It helps them to relive the experience. For this reason the results will be much more solidly based on actual events than they otherwise might have been had extraneous social pressures inherent in the methodology been present. Put another way, it dissuades the interviewee from dissociating themselves from their reality because they wish to appear coherent and well balanced.
3. they allow for the sensory acuity of the interviewer to play a role in sensing psychological changes in the participants, and provides a structure to elicit what those changes are.
4. there is a tried and tested method of documenting decision strategies that lends itself to the identification of common approaches between individuals, should they exist.

#### **6.3.4. Knowledge Elicitation**

One of the clear problems with adopting an interview approach to establish how someone's mind thinks and decides is keeping up with extreme speed with which the mind accesses and assimilates information. This emerged as a difficulty in the first phase of this programme, and in subsequent phases it was addressed by using a technique called knowledge elicitation. This technique is used by knowledge engineers to slow down the person's access to external data, so that the engineer can understand what is going on.

My experience in this regard reflects the work of Gladwell in "Blink" (2005) where he, in the course of the book, explains how a number of research projects have attempted to "thin slice" the information being processed by the brain in order to make it accessible and palatable to the conscious mind.

Knowledge elicitation methods place the interviewer between the interviewee and the information they want. This is done so that when the interviewee requests information, they are required to justify their need and explain what value may come from having the information. Once a satisfactory explanation is achieved the information is released.

It is true that this approach does not limit their access to their own recollections. Monitoring and challenging the interviewee when they are accessing internal information is addressed by the use of the **NLP** methods outlined above. However when it comes to the interviewee accessing external information, this technique will introduce a sufficient pause in which the interviewer can establish the reason for the request and, very importantly, whether the interviewee is clear that they cannot effectively decide without an answer.

## **7. Phase Specific Methods**

### **7.1. Phase One (Decision Strategies) Methods Design**

#### **7.1.1. Marketing Survey**

The marketing survey was conducted as a sounding board of consumer opinion, in order to test out whether there was some prospect of validity in the conceptual framework, identify consumer issues and to assess possible candidates for inclusion in the interview stage.

The survey was completed by sixteen people all of whom are current wine consumers making wine buying decisions. Their level of expertise in the field of wine varied from the effective novice to the experienced consumer. In order to qualify for the survey the individual had to purchase at least ten bottles of wine in a year.

The survey concerned consumer attitudes to wine marketing. The process of completing the survey was:

1. Hold a focus group meeting with a small number of wine consumers and elicit their individual attitudes to wine marketing, citing examples behind the opinions. The group was not required to come to a consensus, and a range of opinions emerged.
2. Document the attitudes found and conduct a survey with a wider number of participants – asking them the extent to which they either agreed or disagreed with the opinions documented. The respondents rated the statement with one of six possible values:

**Figure 2: Marketing Survey**

<b>Agreement</b> 3 = Completely Agree 2 = True some of the time 1 = True but not a major factor	<b>Disagreement</b> -3 = Hold the opposite view -2 = Definitely disagree -1 = Mildly disagree - but not significantly
--	--

3. The statements to which people were asked to agreed or disagreed were:

## **Q Wine Marketing .**

- 1 Serves as an indicator of good brands
  - 2 Provides life style information through the association with a style of media
  - 3 Promotes an exclusivity which leads to a potential customer exclusion
  - 4 Promotes an unrealistic life model and is therefore irritating / ignorable
  - 5 Alerts consumers to "news" and releases
  - 6 Is a necessary guide to a potentially complex product
  - 7 Frequently contains irrelevant / useless information
  - 8 Provides an excess of information in ways difficult to assimilate or compare
  - 9 All conforms to a convention and ends up sounding the same
  - 10 Provides comparative positions for products and is essentially a shortlist
  - 11 Magazines and books are a useful re-accessible reference
  - 12 Can be about the ego / self promotion of the marketer or expert advisor
  - 13 Gives advice on what is essentially a subjective choice - which is irrelevant or pointless
  - 14 Cannot be relied upon to explain where to buy the product
  - 15 Frequently doesn't address peoples' budgets - prices are only implied by the context or approach
  - 16 Is irrelevant to people who already know what they like
  - 17 Is reinforced by personal regard for the Media or Expert Advisor being used
  - 18 Experts are frequently non-committal
  - 19 Is only worth relying on when all other information sources are not possible
  - 20 Is difficult to make full use of as you cannot taste the wine at the same time
  - 21 Misrepresents products to promote sales
  - 22 Language can be pretentious and off-putting
  - 23 Is unintelligible to the uninitiated
  - 24 Expert advice is worth taking seriously as their reputation is at stake
  - 25 Cannot be relied upon as it does not come from independent advisers
4. The survey was completed by email with none of the respondents knowing the responses put forward by other participants.
5. Data analysis consisted of establishing the range of responses and establishing the overall level of agreement / disagreement from the surveyed group. The analysis was designed to give more weight to opinions that were held strongly by the respondents.

### **7.1.2. Decision Strategy Interview Structure (Phase 1)**

The approach adopted in the interviews to elicit strategies used **NLP** tools and techniques. The interviews followed a structured process to promote consistency without constraining how the discussion develops. The steps were as follows:

#### **7.1.2.1. Pre-Frame:**

The objective was to give the interviewee an understanding of what was about to happen and to help them maintain a positive attitude to the approach which 'may at times appear repetitive or bizarre'.





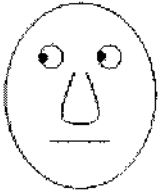

#### **7.1.2.2. Establish How Brain is Organised**

When answering questions an individual will access various centres of their mind in order to establish the information that they need to complete the answer. When they do this the individual

will usually have what poker players might call a "tell". When accessing a particular part of the mind they will metaphorically look towards it.

**NLP** has established that there are two basic configurations on how the brain is organised. These have been termed "normal wiring" and "reverse wiring". With normal wiring the areas where a person will look are as follows:

**Figure 3: Eye Accessing Cues**

		
Visual Recall	Auditory Recall	Kinaesthetic
		
Visual Construct	Auditory Construct	Auditory Digital

With reverse wiring the subject will look to the opposite side to those indicated above: for example, **Ad** (Auditory Digital) would be low and to the **left** as we look at it, **K** (Kinaesthetic) would be low and to the **right**.

Normal wiring occurs in the majority of the population and tends to occur in individuals who are right handed. Reverse wiring is in the minority and does occur mostly in left handed people. However these correlations cannot be said to hold in all cases so "handedness" cannot be relied on as a certain indicator of brain wiring (James 1997). For this reason it is important to clarify how the subject's mind is wired by asking them questions that will reveal clearly how they are configured.

For example:

To elicit where the subject stores visual information the interviewer asks (Visual recall) "Can you remember a house you grew up in? What colour was it?" To elicit how they construct and imagine visual pictures he/she could further ask: (Visual constructs) "What would it look like if you had had it painted pink/ bright green?"

Similarly for auditory memories the interviewer might ask (Auditory recall): "Can you recall a song that you really like? For auditory constructs: "How would it sound if it were played entirely on the trumpet?"

Similar questions can be asked to prompt accessing of the kinaesthetic centres of the mind. What is interesting is that NLP does not predict where a "normal" wired person will access gustatory and olfactory centres. In most NLP elicitations understanding where the visual, auditory and kinaesthetic centres are, suffices. Given the nature of the topic of this study part of the focus of Phase One interviews was to understand where the individual "goes" for gustatory and olfactory memories and constructs. There is little guidance in **NLP** literature on how to do this, so this part of the process represents experimentation with the method. For this reason the interviews included questions

about gustatory and olfactory experiences in order to see if the individual has some sort of "tell" when they are accessing these.

### 7.1.2.3. Establish the Strategy.

Having established the subjects' wiring the next step was to elicit their decision making strategy. This process had the following steps:

1. Establish the target decision that you are going to discuss:  
"Can you recall a time when you made a choice about which wine you were going to buy?"
2. Establish that the decision conforms to the set criteria of this study:  
Confirm the decision ends up as being seen by the individual as a good one  
Ensure that they were wholly responsible for the eventual decision. They can take advice, but in the end they decide.  
Ensure they had to pay for the wine. Financial considerations have to be available as a factor.
3. Establish the Consumption Context.  
From an **NLP** perspective the situation that the person is in may affect the "values" that they bring to the decision-making process. An individual choosing a bottle of wine to impress guests may have a different sense of the important criteria than someone buying a glass of wine in a pub. Also in order to get reliable information it is important to help the individual to return as much as possible to the mindset and circumstance they were in at the time.

The context is established by considering the following questions:

"Can you describe the situation?"

"Who were you buying for?"

"What was the objective of the purchase?"

"What was important to get right?"

4. Establish the Decision Strategy.  
Having established that the interviewee is re-living the event in their mind's eye the interviewer asks open questions that enable the interviewee to "rerun" their strategy. As they do this the interviewer pays attention to the areas of the brain being accessed and the linguistic predicates being used. For example, a normally wired person who says "Well, I saw there were three reds available" whilst looking up and to the left is accessing visual recall.

The interviewer continues with this process enabling the person to repeat the strategy in their head. As this is often a very fast process this may mean that the interviewer will have to ask the same question in a number of ways, and repeatedly go over the same ground in order to be certain about what is going on.

For example:

"I'm just want to be clear... what do you do first?"

"How did you do that again?"

"Just give me the steps in order again? What did you do first?"

"How did you know the wine was the one you wanted?"

"What was it that clinched the decision?"

5. Establishing the Convincer  
NLP recognises that individuals may have what is called a "convincer" strategy. Having made a 'candidate' decision people may adopt an approach to convince themselves that the decision is correct before proceeding to the purchase. The questions to ask may be

"How did you know you had the right answer?"  
"How many times did you go back and check your decision?"

6. Establishing if a Reassurance strategy exists:

NLP also identifies the possibility that for a decision to be recalled positively, some people run what is known as a "reassurance strategy". This is a process that they may go through once at the time of purchase or later that reassures them that what they did succeeded in getting a good result.

Depending on the available time with each subject, I asked them to review three different incidents and to complete a wine-list selection test from a constructed wine list

## **7.2. Phase Two (Expert Opinion) Methods Design**

### **7.2.1. Out of the Box Exercise**

The objective of the exercise was for the participant to identify the methods they expect to employ when identifying a *new* wine for their own use / consumption. The focus was on establishing the approach used when trying to broaden their experience of wines and wine producers.

#### **7.2.1.4. Stages of the Exercise**

Exercise Brief: (given to each participant)

Identify a single bottle of wine that has the following characteristics:

1. Colour: Red wine
2. Origin: The origin of the wine should be South African
3. Novelty: New to the individual conducting the exercise i.e. the individual has never tasted the wine or any of its other vintages, and has no first hand experience of any wine produced by the vineyard.
4. Availability: The wine should be available i.e. having identified the wine it should be possible to obtain / purchase a bottle
5. Budget: The cost of a single bottle should not exceed R130. It is acceptable for the cost to be significantly less — but not more.
6. Scenario: If it assists the participant to imagine a scenario for which the wine is being purchased then this scenario should be of their own creation and preferably realistic. The scenario should be communicated to the exercise mediator.

#### Interview Strategy Phase:

Having been given the brief the participant is interviewed (using the principles of NLP and Knowledge Elicitation) with the purpose of anticipating how they will go about fulfilling the requirements of the exercise brief. The intention is to elicit the purchasing strategy that the participant anticipates they will use.

The interviewer identifies the wine advisors and information that the participant intends to use and asks them for their reasoning and evidence procedure for using that particular source of advice or marketing information.

Participants are not allowed to ask the interviewer for advice and they are not allowed first hand access to any reference material during the interview. The purpose is for them to imagine their strategy, not to begin executing it.

#### Purchase Phase

Using precisely the same brief the participant then executes the purchasing exercise in real life.

#### Interview Debrief Phase

Having purchased the wine the participant is interviewed again (using the principles of NLP and Knowledge Elicitation) examining the actual strategy that they used to purchase the wine and in exactly the same way, identify the sources of advice and information that they used. The interviewer once again seeks the reasoning and evidence procedure as to why they used that particular advice or information.

If differences between the expected strategy and the actual one executed exist, this should be investigated to understand the reason and identify the participant's preferred approach.

### **7.2.2. Pictures Exercise**

Five Sauvignon Blanc wines were selected by the researcher. They represent a range of tastes achievable with the sauvignon blanc grape, from the sharp grassy tastes achieved by harvesting when sugar content in the grape is low, all the way through to the fuller fruit driven sauvignon blanc achieved by using fully mature grapes. As such the selections represent a potential eye-opener to the participants who may not be aware of these possibilities.

The pictures completed in Phase Two were a result of a tasting by the researcher plus two accomplished wine consumers. The purpose of the pictures exercise is to establish if participants are prepared to make wine choice decisions on the basis of visual information and also to establish if the wine tasting note, brand information and kinaesthetic information gained by the participant are necessary or desirable when making their choice.

In addition the exercise is about establishing whether the pictures are an effective means of communication about the subtle differences that winemakers achieve with wines.

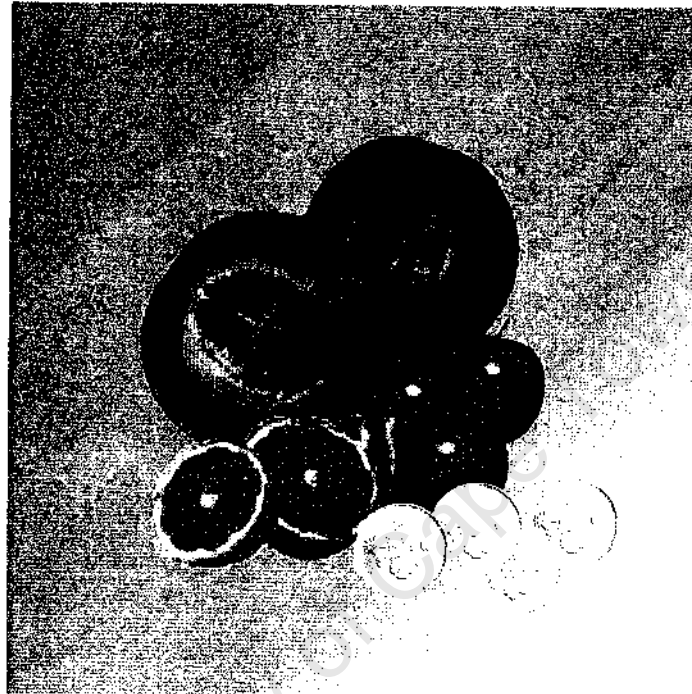
#### Pictures Exercise Part 1: Unbranded

Participants are shown a web page with visual representations of the wines. Clicking on a particular thumbnail enlarges that image in the space below to a 500x500 pixel image. The pictures contain no wine name, branding or tasting information. Participants are asked to react to the images and if possible state which wines they would like to taste. Finally they are asked to make one choice

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## Figure 4: Pictures Exercise Part 1 Unbranded

instructions | **pictures** | further tasting information



Wine 2

### Pictures Exercise Part 2: Branded

Participants are then shown a web page with the same visual representations of the wines enhanced to include a picture of the bottle. Underneath the image is the name of the wine. Participants are asked to react to the images and if possible state which wines they would like to taste. They are asked to make a choice and if this is different from the choice they made originally they are asked using NLP and Knowledge Elicitation techniques to explain the differences.

Originally the wines were shown without tasting notes explaining the images. As a further test of the impact of the tasting note the image optionally included a description to disambiguate the content of the picture. The figure below shows the image with branded bottle, wine name and taste description.

**Figure 5: Pictures Exercise Part 2 Branded**

instructions | pictures | further tasting information



Blank Oyster Latchet Sauvignon Blanc 2007

A zesty blend of grapefruit and pineapple softening to a more herbaceous green pepper and green tea finish.

### **7.2.3. Alternative Information and Communication Interview Structure (Phase 3)**

The interviews followed this structure:

#### **Exercise Brief General:**

The participant was given a short briefing using a prepared form of words that communicated the following:

1. The status of the exercise as an experiment with no correct or incorrect answers
2. The reason for their inclusion as a consumer of wine — not necessarily because they are an expert
3. The number of participants involved and the fact that they are all consumers, not industry personnel.

#### **Part One Briefing**

1. The researcher has taken the "panel" opinions expressed about each of the ten different red wines, and produced ten images to represent the tastes of those wines. The images are directly based on what was said by those people that reviewed the wine; one image for each wine.
2. The goal of the exercise is for you to look at the pictures and based on what you see, express what you think or feel the wines smell and taste like.
3. The researcher will be controlling the "mouse" under your direction

4. You need to consider at least three; you can consider more if you like. You can look at all ten if you wish to.

#### Part One Task — Cues and Focus for Interviewer

5. Consider the ten thumbnail images in front of you. Which one would you like to see in greater detail?
6. Why that one particularly?
7. Interviewee to be asked to talk the researcher through their reaction to the enlarged image, the researcher using language that avoids the use of nouns which would focus the interviewee on specific aspects of the image. E.g:
  - a. What do you think of that?
  - b. How's that?
  - c. What does that do for you?
  - d. What's happening when you look at that?
  - e. How do you imagine that tastes?

Note: The Goal of this particular part of the exercise is to establish whether the interviewees are attracted to or interested in the picture. If so, what is it about the picture attracts them, and what they feel comfortable saying about the image unprompted to respond to any aspect in particular.

8. Would you like to look at another?  
If so then the researcher goes back to point 5. If not then proceed to PART 2.

#### Part Two Briefing

9. You will now be shown the same pictures representing the same ten wines along with reviews about the wines written by the participants in this experiment.
10. Your task is to choose the two wines that you would most like to have — the ones that you fancy the most.
11. You will be given the "mouse" to control provided that you maintain a verbal narrative on what you are doing and thinking as you navigate around the site. Your narrative should include a naming of any hyperlinks you choose to click on.
12. From time to time I may say "Time-Out!". If this happens I want you to stop navigating the site and answer the question that I put to you.
13. You will see letters arranged at the bottom — do not click or go near these with the mouse unless instructed to.

#### Part Two Task — Cues and Focus for Interviewer

14. Interviewee clicks on Part 2 and begins their navigation.  
Note: Researcher / Observer uses sensory acuity to identify points at which significant information was encountered, or when an opinion was formed. Time Outs are used to get the interviewee to explain what just happened.
15. Process continues until the interviewee has determined which two wines they choose.
16. Wrap Up Questions if not covered during the interview
  - a. What made you choose that / those wines?
  - b. Were there any wines where you were put off? If so what put you off?
  - c. What use did you make of the opinions of other people in the group?
  - d. Whose input did you value / not value? Why?

Note:

Additional information about the wine was available on the site. The information was available to users who hovered the mouse over a letter on the site. Users were only instructed which letter to investigate if they asked for, and could explain their need for, the information.

### 7.3. Phase Three (Alternative Information and Communication) Methods Design

#### 7.3.1. Participant Selection

Each prospective participant was sent an email outlining the details of the phase, explaining what the requirements were, and letting them know that their contributions will be visible to other participants. Because of this visibility, they were asked to opt in or out of the phase at this stage. This process continued until the required numbers of participants were identified. Interestingly, no one who was asked opted out.

#### 7.3.2. Profiling Phase

Participants then completed a simple questionnaire that required them to profile their wine preferences and personal tastes within red and white wines. They were also asked to include any personal information about themselves that they felt would be relevant.

Figure 6: Personal Profiling Form

Wine Interests	About You
Please check the wine styles/varieties that you like or are interested in:	Please suggest things that give an impression of what you like and dislike as a wine consumer and/or as an individual
<b>Red Wines</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Cabernet Sauvignon <input type="checkbox"/> Merlot <input type="checkbox"/> Pinot Noir <input type="checkbox"/> Pinotage <input type="checkbox"/> Shiraz <input type="checkbox"/> Red Blends <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. Zinfandel, Cabernet Franc)	• Type whatever you like...here
<input type="checkbox"/> Chardonnay <input type="checkbox"/> Chenin Blanc <input type="checkbox"/> Riesling <input type="checkbox"/> Sauvignon Blanc <input type="checkbox"/> White Blends <input type="checkbox"/> Other (e.g. Semillon, Viognier)	• Type whatever you dislike...here
<input type="checkbox"/> Rose <input type="checkbox"/> Dessert Wine <input type="checkbox"/> Bubbly	

The profile is intended to enable a reader to establish quickly what styles of wine the individual likes but also to see examples of the types of wines they would choose for themselves in a context of their choice. The personal information is included to allow a reader to gain a sense of the person they are reading about and establish their credentials as a wine consumer.

### **7.3.3. Wine Reviewing Phase**

On the basis of the profiles submitted, the participants were divided into two roughly equal groups. The first, slightly larger, group were asked to provide a review of a wine that they personally would wish to recommend to other wine consumers. The second group were each allocated a separate wine, the style of which was consistent with what they said they liked in their profile. It was anticipated that some of this second group would be totally new to the wine they were allocated, and some may have previous experience if not of the wine, then of the producer. This was seen as adding to the realism of the exercise.

Each participant (whether they are recommending or reviewing) was required to write about their wine. The briefing for this task encouraged the reviewer to express their reaction and feelings about the wine without constraining themselves to the formulaic reviews that are typical in the wine industry. The review also required them to provide specific information on which the picture that represents the wine could be based.

University of Cape Town

**Figure 7: Wine Review Form**

Basic Details	
Label / Brand:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Vineyard Name:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Wine Name:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Vintage / Year:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Grape Varieties / Style:	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Review	
One Liner:	<input style="width: 95%; height: 30px;" type="text"/>
Your Review:	<input style="width: 95%; height: 150px;" type="text"/>
Taste Indicators	
Initial Tastes: 1	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
2	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
After a while: 3	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
4	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
5	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Finish: 6	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
7	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>
Balance	
	Low <span style="margin-left: 100px;">Hi</span>
	1   2   3   4   5   6
Acid	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Fruit	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Body	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
☆☆☆ Star Rating ☆☆☆	
	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
	0   ½   1   1½   2   2½   3   3½   4   4½   5
Your Identity	<input style="width: 95%;" type="text"/>

#### **7.3.4. Evolving Visual Cues Framework**

As indicated the data from these reviews was the source for the images to be used in the visual representations exercise. When the pictures were constructed for Phase Two the methodology behind the pictures was evolving. There were lessons learned in Phase Two that are addressed in Phase Three by formalising the framework and syntax of the visual representations.

There were also differences between what was being attempted in Phase Two and the objective of Phase Three. The first important difference was that the second phase pictures were only directed at one white varietal, Sauvignon Blanc. The third phase pictures represented four single red varietals and four very different red blends

The other important difference was that the pictures completed in Phase Two were a result of a tasting by the researcher plus two accomplished wine consumers. The third phase addressed the issues around the translation of reviews from a diverse set of wine talents into images that they recognise and endorse, and more importantly it had to do this in a repeatable fashion.

#### **7.3.5. Web Development Phase**

The profile and review responses were then combined into a non-published web site that enabled each participant to browse and consider both the wines reviewed and the reviewers themselves. Each wine was presented within a template format that gave basic factual information about the wine alongside the personally written review and visual representation.

#### **7.3.6. Interview Phase — Gallery Exercise**

Exercise 1 was a continuation of the 'picture exercise' completed in Phase Two of this research programme. In that phase it was established that participants were able to make decisions about their probable reaction to a white wine, and to choose between close alternatives, based on a picture alone. It was also established that they do this far more efficiently if the image is supported by a brief narrative description of the image contents.

The continuation of this exercise repeated the experiment for red wines, but of a far greater variety of types and styles. The intention of this exercise was to establish whether participants are willing and capable of inferring information and reacting to a wine from these pictures and their supporting descriptions and in doing so whether they intuitively learn to interpret the "syntax" of the picture's communication, or whether an explanation is required.

**Figure 8: Gallery Exercise Screen**



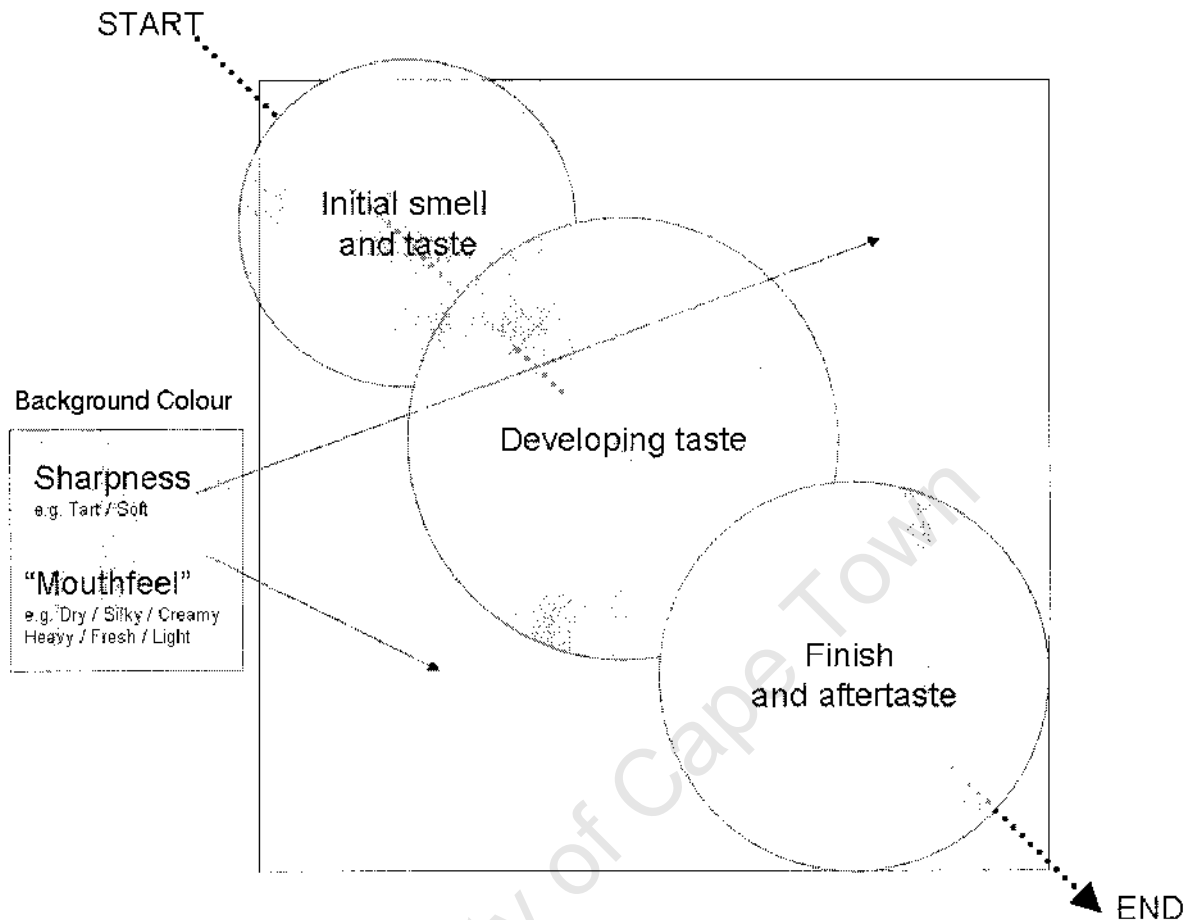
### 7.3.7. Interview Phase — Reviews Exercise

Each participant was given access to the web site and prompted to browse the available reviews in conjunction with the pictures for ones that interest them. The purpose of this phase was to establish:

1. Which wines are considered and the reason why they are considered
2. Which wines are not investigated at all, and the reason why they are not
3. Which information from the personal reviews the participants engage with. What was it about the information that enabled them to feel comfortable using it?
4. What use they make of the reviewer's profile
5. What use they make of the picture that represents the taste of the wine
6. Which additional information they request about the wine. Once they have explained the reason they have for seeking the information, they will be told how to access that information from the site (a collection of lettered buttons will reveal the information requested)
7. Whether there is any difference in behaviour and attitude when the wine being presented is a personal favourite of the recommender or when it is simply a wine that they have reviewed
8. Whether there is a difference in attitude when the participant knows the reviewer
9. The point at which the participant makes their decision on each wine. They are not making a decision to buy the wine, only whether to include it in a shortlist of possible buys



Figure 10 : Visual Cues Framework



## 8. Results and Analysis

### 8.1. Phase One: Decision Strategies

#### 8.1.1. Marketing Survey

The marketing survey was conducted as a barometer test of consumer opinions within the group of prospective participants. The intention was to establish whether there was a range of views, and which components of wine marketing were either broadly supported or condemned. Detailed analysis of the results which linked the views to other factors such as wine knowledge or experience was not necessary. It was enough to demonstrate a diversity of perspectives.

There was only one statement where all 16 participants found agreement. That statement was number 17: "Wine marketing is reinforced by personal regard for the Media or Expert Advisor being used". All the other 24 statements had supporters on both sides of the line.

There were categories of questions which generated some consensus:

1. **Information:** The importance of having access to reference material with an essentially complex product that is changing and has "news".
2. **Practicality:** Marketing material is frequently impractical as a tool because of the information it omits (where to buy and prices) and the lack of personal endorsement of products. The language is seen as difficult.

3. **Integrity:** There were a range of issues where the values and integrity were questioned and the strength of support for statement 17 above demonstrates that trust is an important component.

As a barometer test this was sufficient to indicate that the consumer group had a range of views and that there were consumer issues that could be investigated.

### **8.1.2. Decision Strategy Interviews**

#### **8.1.2.1. Contexts Discussed**

Four actual interviews were completed; plus one trial interview with Participant C to test the methods. Each participant discussed at least three scenarios. The contexts for wine choices showed some common threads but can be divided into those where tasting the wine prior to buying was an option and those where it was not. The scenarios were:

1. Tasting in a Western Cape tasting room, buying for home consumption
2. Buying a special wine in a restaurant for a special occasion
3. Tasting and buying at a commercial wine show for different and interesting wines
4. Buying a quality wine in a restaurant
5. Buying a "midweek" wine in a restaurant
6. Shopping in hypermarket for home consumption
7. Shopping in store for wine to take away on a weekend with a group of friends
8. Shopping in store for an "interesting" wine
9. Shopping in store to find new/experimental wines
10. Shopping in store with a trusted expert advisor

#### **8.1.2.2. Types of Strategies Used**

In **NLP** the term "strategy" is used to refer to "the steps of the mental process or program (in the sense of a computer program) that lead to a particular goal or outcome". (Dilts & De Lozier (2000)).

**NLP** recognises a number of classes of strategy and two of these classes were consistently present in the interviews. The first is motivational strategies which serve to get the individual to the point where they want to make a decision with an idea in their mind of the context they wish to buy for. These strategies are largely idiosyncratic and I have not included them in the analysis.

The second type is decision strategies. These were used to make the purchase choices for the intended context.

#### **8.1.2.3. Decision Strategy: Tasting an Option**

A number of participants described situations in which tasting the wine prior to committing to buying it was an option. They demonstrated a consistent structure across the interviews.

##### Pre-Tasting:

In the run up to the tasting the participants described a number of aspects which affected their level of positive emotion towards the wine they were about to taste. These included the ambience of the tasting facilities, the attitude of the tasting staff, previous experience of the winery style, and perception of the branding. In **NLP** terms they are synthesising the information that is available to all their modalities (sight, sound, smell, taste, touch) into a kinaesthetic emotional state. In a sense this was their mood at the point of tasting and it contributed to a pre-conceived perception of what they were about to taste.

##### Tasting

The critical and dominant part of the process is the olfactory and gustatory experience of the wine. The basic process that the interviewees adopt when judging a wine in these circumstances is to taste it, and allow the tasting experience to modify their feeling about the wine that they have already built up prior to tasting. A positive prior feeling may be endorsed and enhanced, or it may be

challenged. Equally a negative preconception can be overridden or thoroughly supported. The power of the actual gustatory experience to swing the balance either way should be noted as it explains why people value this type of information above all others.

The taster is then armed with a level of kinaesthetic feeling about the wine, either positive or negative. If the negative feeling is strong the wine is rejected. Otherwise the participants assess the level of their kinaesthetic experience against the price being asked for it, and they decide, in the context of the plan that they have for the wine, whether to buy it.

This behaviour comes close to matching the economic concept of "utility" which concerns the satisfaction level generated by the consumption of a good or service (Gillespie 2007). In this case the consumer is evaluating both the current and future anticipated pleasure that they will enjoy through owning and consuming the wine and asking themselves if the price is worth it.

From my perspective the important aspect in this process is the influence on the decision of the olfactory and gustatory experience. Because they taste it the consumer has first hand knowledge of the wine, they judge it for themselves and they trust their own judgement more than any other. There is no need to rely on advice or other cues; they have tasted it for themselves.

#### **8.1.2.4. Decision Strategy: Tasting *Not* an Option**

What is much more interesting is what happens in the second broad group of situations, when the tasting option and the powerful gustatory experience are not available. Typically this occurs in a store or restaurant.

##### Known / Safe Products

One solution mirrors the work of Spawton (1991) and Johnson and Bruwer (2004) where the participant returns to a known product that they have previously tasted and liked; the "safe" option. The strategy used by participants to do this was to access a visual cue, typically a brand name or a label, feel a positive sense of recognition, confirm the contents of the bottle from the visually accessed cues such as varietal, possibly *recall* the taste, and assess their level of comfort about the idea of purchasing.

Typically the motivation strategy, and the context for the consumption that it generates, was the trigger to using this type approach. Participant U used this approach as a way to restock what she called her "house wines" used for everyday drinking; she also used it to buy a wine in a restaurant for a special occasion. Participant H similarly did this when choosing for a special occasion.

##### Unknown / New Products in Stores

However these safe wines may not always be available or, more interestingly, the consumer's motivation strategy may have produced a context that includes the need to buy something new and untried. All interviewees were highly motivated to broaden their experience base; variety and novelty were important. In NLP terms this attitude is understood as a "value": criteria held in high regard.

##### *Short Listing:*

The strategies adopted by the individuals began with personal approaches seeking cues from non-tasting information to provide useful indicators of the style and quality of the wine. The short listing techniques included:

1. Looking at the label, packaging and awards in order to draw conclusions about the style of wine and the brand message that it represents. Interviewees were highly capable of extrapolating a whole set of opinions about a wine (that they had no personal experience of) from just looking at it (visual cue).

2. Receiving spoken advice from advisors that they had decided to trust or accept (auditory cue).
3. Holding the bottle in the hand and gaining a kinaesthetic experience of the weight and shape of the bottle (kinaesthetic cue).

The product of these actions is a feeling or kinaesthetic reaction to the wine. Cues such as the varietal, the country of origin, the region, the similarity or not to wines that they do know all held factual information that enabled the consumer to reference their personal map of the world and judge the likelihood of their liking the wine.

### *Convincer/ Reassurance*

In some cases, interviewees also used the available written information on either the wine list or back label to act as either a convincer or reassurance that their conclusions so far would hold up. Rather than consider the tasting notes in detail, the subjects look to find language that confirms their belief or warn them off. These words can be referring to specific tastes described but are just as likely to be more general concepts such as the tone used by the writer or the level of information offered. Frequently the issue of how much you can trust the information offered was brought up, once again the tone adopted translated into some level of trust that the reader could have in the writer.

### *Gustatory Construct*

On the face of it, it appears that the consumer is examining data and judging in a logical and pragmatic way. However, there is evidence to suggest that this is not the case. In the absence of a real gustatory experience, they seem to be attempting to trigger an olfactory or gustatory memory that will represent the wine for them, or failing that they are trying to construct the olfactory or gustatory experience on the basis of the cues they have gathered. Once they find the trigger that prompts the experience, it is almost as if they had tasted the wine and they do not need to gather further cues. Armed with this internal experience they know enough to make their decision.

### *Price Assessment vs Kinaesthetic Feeling*

If the level of kinaesthetic feeling generated by this process is high enough the decision to buy will already be made. If it is positive but not dramatically so the participants consider whether they have a sufficiently positive feeling to justify the specific price being asked. If so then the choice is positive.

It is important to remember that all the above can take place in just seconds, and it is unlikely that in every judging situation the sequence will be exactly the same. It is particularly interesting to note that the consumer may gather their preferred cues in any order and if they get one that gives a strong negative reaction, it is very unlikely that anything else about the wine will be considered. If you do not like the label, you do not ask about the wine and you do not pick up the bottle.

### Unknown / New Products in Restaurants

This broad approach holds true in restaurants with one fundamental difference. In restaurants price tends to be considered much earlier in the process. Away from a restaurant it is as if people are window shopping, and whilst they may have a general idea of the price point they are standing in front of, interviewees were clear that it was not the driving consideration. In a restaurant the situation is the opposite because of the mark ups applied.

The reason for this is that the initial strategy that the consumers are running is not one that decides on a wine; instead it is one that manages the risk of being "ripped off". All interviewees who described restaurant situations start their descriptions with a review of the wine price list trying to establish if there is a price "comfort zone" for the context they are choosing for, from which they can make their choice. The logical extreme of this approach, which was described by one interviewee (Participant **D**), is that if the general mark up that he sees is too high he will boycott the wine list and choose an alternative beverage.

If they can find their comfort zone then within this zone they will run their buying strategy. It should however be remembered that wine lists are typically not as forthcoming about the wines as the consumer would like them to be. Rarely do wine lists show the label or an image of the packaging. They rarely come with trusted advice and they certainly do not offer the opportunity to handle the bottle before making the choice. Under these circumstances, the interviewees tend to adopt an approach which draws heavily on their "safe" wine list. If they can find something they know and like, then its familiarity will significantly reduce the increased risk of buying at inflated prices. Failing that they will work with brands and then varietals that they find they most consistently like.

In Browns, a Johannesburg restaurant, the owners keep an extensive cellar of wines. As part of the experience at the restaurant, patrons are invited to go into the cellar with a knowledgeable advisor and select their wine to go with the food they have ordered. They can see and feel the bottle, be reassured by the conditions in which the wine is stored, and get helpful and comprehensive assistance. It is only when these cues are restored to the consumer that you realise just how much we rely on them. It would be interesting to find out what proportion of wines bought in Browns are previously known to the customer and what proportion represent novel experiences.

## **8.2. Decision Strategies: Key Findings**

### **8.2.1. Information Based Risk Reduction - Confirmed**

The results confirmed the value of a range of information to different consumers. Personal preferences were evident in terms of which individual sources of information people relied on. To some extent this is consistent with the results of other research (e.g. Mitchell & Greatorex (1988); Johnson & Bruwer (2004), Aqueveque, (2006), Lockshin et al (2009b), that found consumers who had some use for all the cues they were offered.

### **8.2.2. Expert Opinions Low Use**

What was surprising was the extent to which people used the opinions in the form of star ratings or of taste descriptions. They were used as an exclusion filter. A two star wine might not be considered, or a particular word in a tasting note might be sufficient to put the participant off.

Participant U ignores star ratings and tasting notes in shops, preferring to rely on the impression of the branding as an indicator of quality. Participant R uses awards as a short listing tool, but disregards tasting notes except to find "frightening words". Participant D uses star ratings as a short listing trigger but not a final decider, and he ignores tasting notes. Participant H has no use for stars but used the tasting notes to find individual key tastes to be attracted by or dislike.

This low use was surprising and consequently the role of experts was further examined in Phase Two.

### **8.2.3. Gustatory Construct - New**

The most illuminating new finding was that of the inclusion of a gustatory construct in the strategy. By this I mean that the information being accessed visually, auditorily or kinaesthetically was being used to create an anticipated or constructed taste for the wine. This process might involve recalling a previous gustatory experience and comparing it with the constructed one.

The evidence supporting this finding comes from the actions of the participants being videoed during interview and from their linguistic cues that explained what they were doing when deciding. It was not unusual to see a participant's mouth move in a motion that implied tasting even though their mouth was empty. This occurred particularly when they undertook the wine selection exercise where they were required to select from a wine list. The linguistic cues were the use of phrases like "I know what it tastes like" spoken by Participant U about a wine she had never tasted.

The evidence at this stage was not conclusive. This was partly because the nature of the exercise was very much about rational recall of decisions. However, it was sufficient to warrant further investigation in Phase Two.

### **8.3. Phase One — Conclusions**

Viewing the three key findings from this phase as a whole, the factor that stands out is the low enthusiasm that the participants had for the traditional marketing message in the form of marketing information and expert opinion. It is true that to varying degrees participants had some use for some aspect of this data. No-one had a use for all of it and in most cases people chose to dismiss some of the data as irrelevant. Given the marketing investment that goes into producing this data this represented a major endorsement of the view that there is some form of mis-alignment between what the industry thinks is important and what the consumer values.

However people were still successfully choosing wines. This clearly indicates that the remaining part of the marketing message, the brand image, is sufficient to complete the sale. At this stage of the research it seemed evident that the brand message was being used to generate an emotional response to the un-tasted wine, however the possibility of the existence of this kinaesthetic reaction being supported by a gustatory construct was in its infancy.

What this phase had not done is adequately explain why expert advice in all its forms was so undervalued. For this reason the focus of the second phase was to delve into this further. At the same time the previously unnoticed gustatory construct had to be explored.

### **8.4. Phase Two: Expert Opinion**

#### **8.4.1. Out of the Box Exercise: Participant Objectives**

The objective of this exercise was to further investigate the use of strategies by consumers and test their use of expert opinions (in whatever form) when trying to source a new wine of which they have no previous experience.

There were consistent patterns of behaviour exhibited by all the participants in the interviews when considering advice from external sources. In order to see the patterns in their behaviour it is important to recognise the objectives that they all held. These were:

**1. To create a shortlist of wines from which they could make their final selection.**

Typically people wanted to get the number of wines down to just handful. This is consistent with the work of Miller (1955) who demonstrated that the conscious mind is limited to working with  $7 \pm 2$  chunks of information at any one time.

**2. To create a favourable gustatory construct for the wines on offer.**

This is consistent with the work in Phase One of this research programme. In order to feel comfortable buying the wine the consumer needs to experience a sufficiently positive reaction to the wine. In assessing their reaction, the whole product experience, including the taste, is considered by the consumer. This is why it important to a consumer to remember or anticipate the taste.

**3. To gain reassurance that the product is of an acceptable standard, i.e. not faulty**

This is different from considering whether they would like the taste. To pass this test the consumers found ways to reassure themselves that they were not dealing with a poorly manufactured product. Some did this by checking it was at least a three star wine; others considered the brand and reputation of the estate; others looked at the quality of the packaging and extrapolated the effort put into the brand image as being consistent with the product itself.

**4. To choose for themselves.**

Every consumer in this study, regardless of their level of expertise, was highly self-motivated to make the choice for themselves. Advice and information from external sources, regardless of the authority behind that source, could be ignored or downgraded if the

individual chose to do so. The reasoning behind this that the interviewees gave was that ultimately the enjoyment of the wine is a subjective and personal experience. The factors going into the choice of wine go beyond simply what it tastes like, and the best person to assess how a particular wine scores against all the demands placed on it by the individual can only be effectively done by that individual.

#### **5. To develop personal knowledge.**

As a corollary to point 4, all the interviewees wanted to grow their own knowledge of wine in order to improve their decision making abilities in the future.

#### **8.4.2. Short Listing:**

The first objective was to establish a shortlist of wines to choose from. At first glance this might simply appear to be a practicality issue driven by the typically wide range of wines available in a wine store. Instead the underlying issue is that the consumer wants to run their complete wine buying strategy, whatever it may be, on the wine. To accomplish this in a practical time frame requires the number of wines under final consideration to be small. For this reason all the interviewees started their strategy with a step to create a short list.

This short listing step is a major opportunity to take advice from trusted sources. Some consulted books or magazines, others spoke to friends, others confined themselves to just working with one particular preferred varietal or section of the store. All participants spoke about their options at this stage, and the realities of the situation. What was evident from their attitude to the available advisors was that wine expert advice would be considered, but recommendations *from trusted friends* are much preferred when the individual has evidence that that friend has similar taste or preferences in wine.

The evidence procedures (see 12.3.4) adopted by people for choosing a friend as an advisor were varied, but principally the reasons cited included that the person should be known to be credible as a wine drinker, and that preferably they should have at some point both shared *and agreed on* a particular wine. If that wine was close to the style of the choice under consideration then so much the better. On this basis these consumers trust the recommendations and thoughts being put forward by their friends as being worthy of consideration, and reliable. The connection with a friend's experience of wine somehow also seems to add a motivation to share that experience. If the individual recommends the wine dispassionately then people were not motivated by this; however if the friend is eager to explain and seems to be recalling the experience positively, then the wine or vineyard gets shortlisted.

In understanding this approach to advice from friends it is easy to see why professional wine writers do not take precedence in the short listing phase. They have no personal connection with the consumer, the consumer has no first hand evidence of what wine the writer likes or prefers, and they cannot see or hear the emotion offered by the wine writer when putting the wine forward. Instead they typically see a dispassionate academic assessment of the wine, accompanied by a star rating, which tells then how good a product it is, not how much it was liked.

#### **8.4.3. Gustatory Construct:**

The first phase of this research programme found evidence that the underlying theme of a wine buying strategy is to generate a level of kinaesthetic pleasure, and this is dominated by the anticipated taste of the wine, the gustatory construct.

Strategies from that phase demonstrated that consumers will interpret any available information, and draw a conclusion about the wine. In this paper I have categorised this information as either an "assertion or declaration" or an "assessment" (see 12.3.2).

#### **8.4.3.1. Use of Assertions and Declarations**

Typically the sort of information people use is the brand information represented by the packaging and brand identity. Also they take in information on the product content (e.g. varietal, alcohol content), and they consider the awards given to the wine.

then the contents of the bottle are likely to match it. Some simply rely on price as an indicator of the contents; a high price means it must be acceptable. Most of the participants use a wine expert's star rating assessment if it is available.

Assessments of star ratings from wine writers have, like the wine tasting notes, a low level of credence. Ratings were checked by the participants to ensure that at least a three star was scored. With expensive wines the minimum acceptable level was a three and a half star. The star ratings are a summary representation of quality that does not consistently include price as a factor in determining the rating. Some times they refer to pure quality, other times they reflect an element of value for money as well. They are an assessment that tells you nothing about the taste, and therefore the most that can be done with them is to use them for reassurance.

#### **8.4.5. Choosing for Themselves**

Phase One established that people consider the wine and try to generate enough of a positive feeling about the product to feel comfortable about incurring the cost of buying it. In Phase Two two critical elements emerged:

1. Will I like the taste?  
This is where the gustatory construct is used. They anticipate as best they can (see above).
2. How do I *feel* about the wine?  
All the purchasing strategy is attempting to do is to generate an emotion about the wine. This may be based on the taste expectation, but it may also include other elements. For example during this set of interviews the emotions various people were trying to satisfy included:
  - a. enjoyment of a new tasting experience where trying an unfamiliar wine yielded a *really good* addition to their stable of acceptable products (Participant C)
  - b. giving a positive wine experience to their partner by purchasing something they liked and convincing them that they can be accomplished at wine choice (participant U)
  - c. making the choice using her own knowledge; building self confidence about being able to choose a new wine (Participant H)
  - d. finding a great South African Pinot Noir to substitute for Australian Pinot Noir he enjoyed while living in Australia (Participant P)
  - e. wanting to address pre-conceived ideas about Shiraz, and find one to like (Participant J)
  - f. finding something a bit more expensive and feeling good about it being worth the money.(Participant G)

It is evident that each one of these "agendas" is highly personal, and each contains an emotional element with which a detached wine advisor is unlikely to be able to assist. It is true that the input of the industry's advisors was used by all of the interviewees to lesser or greater degree, but what is startling is that they all were much more open to the use of friends and acquaintances as sources of recommendations — because these recommendations come with knowledge about the person and an emotional connection. Even Participant H (who had motivation c above) stated that the higher the risk due to price, the more she would want to consult people around her that she trusts.

#### **8.4.6. Develop Personal Knowledge**

All the participants see their long term objective as gaining greater knowledge about wine. Their reasons for doing this are to increase their selection abilities in order to get a greater success rate when choosing wine. Their objective is a long term strategy which will minimise the risk and minimise the need to rely on expert assistance. For some, in addition, the experience of broadening knowledge in an area of special personal interest is rewarding in itself.

### **8.5. Pictures Exercise: Key Findings**

### 8.5.1. Pictures Findings

1. The pictures achieved their objective of assisting the participants in creating a gustatory construct of the wine, which they could assess. Some constructs were positive and pleased the participants; others were negative and put them off the wine.
2. If the picture contained a large number of separate items, people found this difficult to assimilate and process. (see Wine 5)
3. If items in the images were not immediately obvious this caused distraction to the observer and disrupted the gustatory construct. A disambiguating footnote was advised.
4. Comparison of images side by side was used as a quick means of comparing wines
5. The inclusion of the bottle and brand information assisted the participants in seeing the image as a communication about a wine, and also enabled them to incorporate the additional information in their selection strategy.
6. All participants felt capable of choosing on the basis of the images.

## 8.6. Expert Opinion: Key Findings

### 8.6.1. Impact of Wine Advisors

Rather than building a relationship by aligning to the experts and increasing their reliance on their skills, consumers actively seek to minimise their impact. The highly personal nature of the decision also tends to minimise the extent to which an expert can be recommended. Regardless of the expert's reputation, the best judge of what the individual will like is the individual themselves. The more the individual learns about their own taste, the less important the expert becomes.

There are a number of key factors that tend to diminish the role of the expert.

#### 1. Quality Focused.

An expert opinion is an external, subjective view on the *quality* of the wine. It does not usually give sufficient information on the *taste* of the wine to enable the consumer to be confident of the content. This is why consumers augment the information using other information available to them to guess at the wine taste. In this sense, expert help is not enough in itself.

#### 2. Personal Choice.

Matching a wine to a personal preference is more easily supported by personal advice. Asking someone you know, and who knows you, is more likely to result in a personal recommendation. The remote expert cannot assist here.

#### 3. Lack of Shared Experience.

Consumers like to relate the potential taste of a wine to something they know already. They seek examples of things in their experience that enables them to summon up the taste of the wine. In its most desired mode this kind of experience will come in the form of a shared experience. For example a friend may say "you remember the wine we had at X? Well it's like that but fruitier..." An independent wine expert does not have these shared experiences so they are instantly limited. Equally, because of a reluctance to appear to the wine industry as partisan or biased, they are highly unlikely to feel comfortable recommending one wine by relating it to another.

#### 4. Linguistic Translation Constraint.

When a consumer reads a description they are attempting to translate a linguistic representation (second access) into a taste (first access). Someone accomplished in the language of wine will find this easier to do than someone who is less familiar. In order to understand fully what phrases like "A rich, full bodied wine with black fruit, ripe plums and black pepper" (back label of Ridgeback 2003 Shiraz) mean, the reader needs to have an understanding of each taste in a wine context, and be able to imagine them combined. This is a complex task translating second access information via interpretation to a first access experience. The results from the pictures exercise can be seen as a way of addressing this difficulty.

## 5. Lack of Emotional Involvement.

Doubts and unfamiliarity in the head of the consumer can be overridden by a strong personal recommendation and this is much more likely to come from someone they know and choose to trust about wine. Friends and acquaintances do this better because they can relate and inspire. The wine expert advisor has neither of these advantages.

## 6. Relevance of the Information.

One other factor that emerged in all the interviews, particularly when operating at short listing stage, was that advice from any advisor can be effectively useless if that wine is simply not available. It is all not much use for a magazine to assess a wine as four and a half stars and give it a glowing review, if that wine was available from the cellar door only and sold out a month before.

The restrictive practices carried out by the distributors of wine effectively limit availability of wine both in retail outlets and in restaurants in South Africa (Pietersen 2005). This only exacerbates the problem. Wine lists are effectively bought, and retailers will only deal exclusively with particular vineyards. Unless a wine writer can tell you where the wine is in stock, consumers are left with the possibility of chancing upon it in a retail store, or less likely a restaurant. This problem is particularly prevalent in Johannesburg, away from the wine producing areas, but it is also true in the Cape itself where restaurants such as the Nose Bar go to market on the value proposition that they are truly independent. (Marston 2009)

## 7. Push vs Pull Communication.

The nature of much of the expert opinion is to present or "push" information. In an ideal scenario the consumer would prefer an interaction where they state preferences and relate the wines on offer to things in their own experience where they can "pull" the answers they want. This is often not the relationship that exists.

It is true that in the interviews conducted for this paper there were situations where consumers consulted advisors directly in retail stores. They did have first hand access to an advisor and they try to "pull" the information they needed. In both cases the consumers in question (J and P) needed to convince themselves that the person they were talking to was knowledgeable enough to help, but also in both cases neither was *fully* convinced of the outcome because they had difficulty establishing shared preferences about wine.

## 8.7. Phase Two — Conclusions

At the end of Phase Two the means of communicating taste using first access visual information to stimulate a first access gustatory response showed potential. The visual syntax for the images required refinement. Methods of enabling the consumer to interpret the syntax also required investigation.

As for the expert, the conceptual framework (12.2.5) around which Phase Two was based had been structured around a self reinforcing system in which, over time, the consumer increases their trust and reliance on the expert. As it turned out the objective of the consumer was entirely contrary to this. Their objective is to succeed with less help and less external reliance.

Phase Two's most significant step forward was the establishment of the consistent objectives adopted by all the participants, in particular the immediate need to shortlist and then moving on to imagining the taste and generate an emotional response to the wine. This analysis of the behaviours of the individuals marked a significant departure from the idea that consumers act in conscious and informed ways.

Up until the end of Phase Two the evolution of this programme of research had been divergent, seeking new insights into consumer behaviour. The results from Phase Two are a turning point in the programme. Phase Three is about hypothesising a solution to the question of how wine

marketing material can be improved. Phase Three creates a new marketing experience based on visual cues, and on emotional responses to wines written by peers, and assesses their use.

## **8.8. Phase Three: Information and Communication**

### **8.8.1. Participant Data Gathering**

Prior to the interviews the participants were asked to contribute information in the form of a personal profile and a wine reviews. They were encouraged to express themselves in ways which they personally would find valuable. The contributions demonstrated distinct interpretations of this, with some choosing to focus on communicating only about wine; others gave personal and emotional attitudes, and others balanced both.

It was noticeable that the participants with the least wine experience (Participant G, K and J) avoided the inclusion of technical wine information in either the presentation of their personal profile or the wine review.

The reviews did include a section which required the participants to assess their wine from the perspective of acid, fruit and body. Those with more wine experience had little difficulty; the use of these technical terms (even though they were explained) was a challenge to G and K in particular. However all succeeded in the end.

### **8.8.2. Utility of Reviews to Create the Wine Visual Representations**

The information gathered from the participants was used to create the visual representations of the wines. The number of contributors on each wine was usually 2 or 3, and in one case 4 viewpoints were included.

The images therefore constitute a consensus visual description of the wines taking in multiple perspectives. The utility of getting a consensus had been previously established by Lawless (1984) and Gawel (1997).

Reaction to the images was positive with some contributors recognising the wines without being told and others recognising their contribution into the overall image. Two contributors, who had never seen these types of images before, asked to enhance the information and emphasise particular aspects in order to increase the accuracy of the wine they had tasted.

### **8.8.3. Gallery Exercise**

#### **8.8.3.1. Gallery Exercise Objectives**

There were a number of areas being investigated by the gallery exercise. The results were

1. The use of a disambiguating image descriptor to help the observer identify all the objects proved to be the best way of avoiding distracting confusion.
2. Participants were more than able to infer taste from the pictures despite some of them never having seen anything like this before. It was not seen by anyone as a difficult thing to do.
3. The syntax used to construct the images was usually understood without being explained. The brain naturally interprets the objects as representing taste, which is in line with the work of Goode (2007), and the arrangements as representing a sequence of taste over time is in line with Pinker (1997). Two participants had alternative natural interpretations of the arrangements, but were not unduly confused by the intended message once it was explained.
4. The backgrounds colours were also successful at communicating acid, tannin, and body. What was interesting about this is that people were not necessarily conscious of the inferred taste, but they reported a sense of uneasiness when a particular taste that they personally dislike (e.g. strong acid) was represented. Other interpretations of the background colours were also advanced. What is compelling about this is that people

appeared to enjoy exploring the possible inferences of the colours in the context of taste.

### 8.8.3.2. Gallery Exercise Key Result

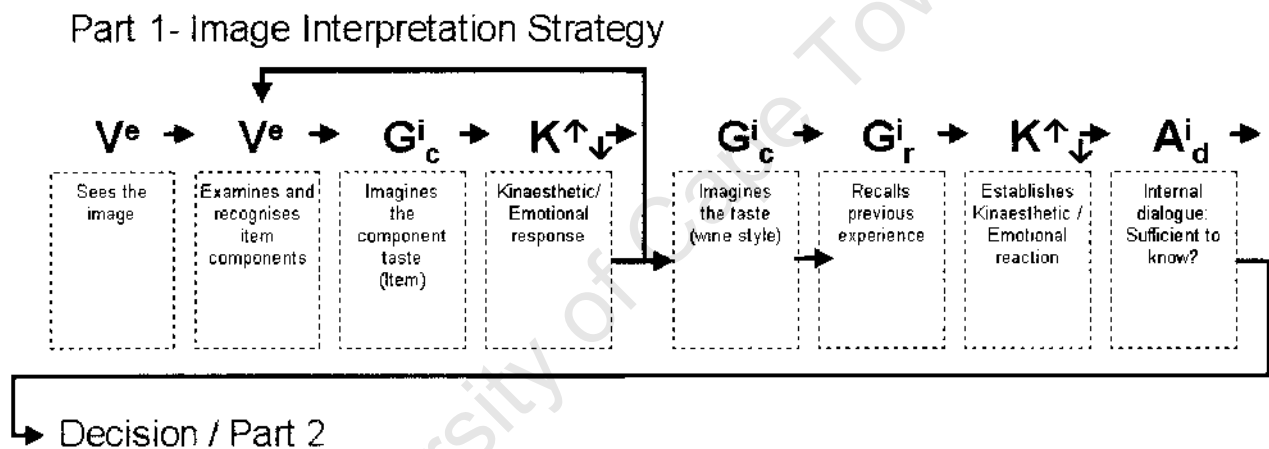
Participants developed a strategy for interpreting the images which led them to:

1. Examine all the objects for items for which they had a strong like or dislike
2. Attempt the gustatory construct, synthesising the flavours they have identified
3. If they could anticipate the taste, they then compared it with their own gustatory memories and generated a kinaesthetic response (positive or negative)

For most people, most of the time, the kinaesthetic response was treated as input to the decision making process about the wine. In some cases however it was sufficient to rule the wine out completely or alternatively make them want to try it without further debate.

This strategy can be represented using the NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) notation used in Phase One in the following way:

Figure 11 : Image Interpretation Strategy



### 8.8.4. Reviews Exercise

#### 8.8.4.1. Reviews Exercise Objectives

There were a number of areas being investigated in the reviews exercise. The results were

1. The utility of the pictures as a source of information was confirmed as people continued to return to them as a quick reference as to the taste of a wine.
2. People made use of the reviews and valued the content because it was frank, open, relevant, factual and subjective material that communicated information and feelings about the wines. All but one participant had a use for both the factual analytical comments and the emotional reactions of the reviewers.  
The exception was G with little technical wine knowledge who preferred to rely on the pictures alone.
3. The profile information was far less frequently used. It was used to establish preferences and values particularly about wine. People were attracted to people who they felt were like them. Whilst this got them consulted it did not guarantee they took their advice.
4. Branding information was incorporated into the decision strategies, although there were instances when people defied their heuristic interpretations of the brand because of the tasting information and reviews they encountered. The influence of brand was diminished.

5. Other Information (e.g. region) was very sparingly consulted. Price and blend information were the two most requested, but this was rare. Most people were content to operate without them because they "knew enough" (Participant U).

#### 8.8.4.2. Reviews Exercise Key Result

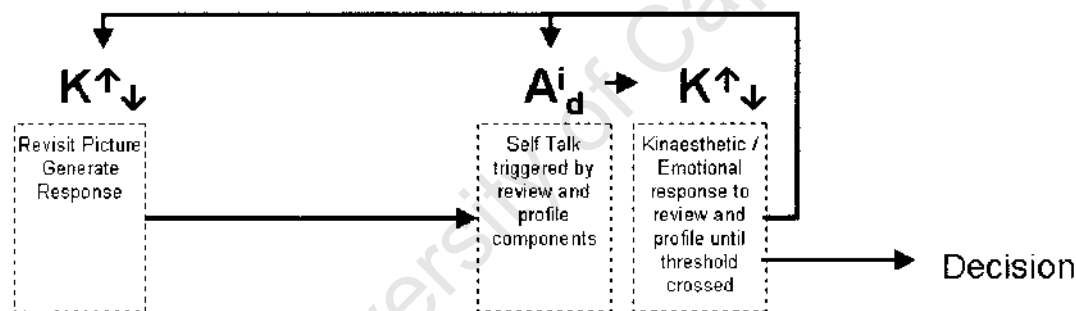
Once again participants developed a strategy for managing the information:

1. Re-examine the picture as a quick reference to taste
2. Decide if they already knew enough to either accept or reject the wine
3. Consult the reviews for information they could use which they would find valuable. Complete a self talk dialogue with each item to assess its utility. Modify the gustatory construct on the basis of the information they chose to accept
4. Assess their kinesthetic reaction and compare it with their threshold for acceptance of the wine.

When it came to the final task of selecting two wines from those they had accepted, the participants sorted and ranked their choices using their personal meta-programs. These are "personality-based" mechanisms for sorting between otherwise acceptable alternatives (James and Woodsmall 1988). The factors used to sort were: anticipated taste; novelty or predictability; mystery/intrigue or familiarity; the desire to be surprised or not; the enthusiasm of the review; and the preference to have more of something they knew they would really like (risk aversion or risk seeking).

Figure 12 : Enhanced Decision Strategy for Short Listing

#### Part 2 – Enhanced Decision Strategy



### 8.9. Information and Communication: Key Findings

There are a number of key findings about the use of information and the ability to communicate both linguistically and visually.

1. It is possible for consumers to taste wine, assess and evaluate it in a written form.
2. It is possible to transform those assessments into interpretable visual representations.
3. These images, along with the reviews, have been proven to be more than sufficient information for people to conduct a selection process and make their choices.

In this regard the use of visual representations has proven to be very powerful. These images were in effect a communication medium whereby one or more consumers could explain their experience of wine. The information they provided gave! very clear indication of the taste and satisfied the need to construct a gustatory experience ( $G_{i_c}$ ) very directly, i.e. directly from first access (visual) to first access (gustatory).

1. Reviews (and to a lesser extent, profiles) were also a powerful way of addressing the kinaesthetic need to have an emotional reaction to the prospect of the wine.
2. This was made easier by reviews that were rich in opinion and frank and open in their delivery.

3. They were accessible to those who understood the language used and the emotional response being presented. This is particularly true when the reader found a voice they could listen to.

## **8.10. Phase Three — Conclusions**

Phase Three demonstrated that by providing information to adequately create a gustatory construct and evoke an emotional response, consumers could make effective wine decisions without involving the traditional marketing information. It is true that the brand information was still present but the reliance on its message was diminished.

There are two developments in this phase that stand out as significant. It was perfectly possible for a fellow consumer, within the context of the marketing experiment, to make a comment typical of both the input and broad vocabulary of a wine writer. However, when the recommendation came from a peer, the participants were much more inclined to accept it, or at least engage with it. The difference comes from the perspective offered by the writer. A wine writer tells you how to appreciate a wine, not whether they like it. A peer consumer presents honesty about their personal taste, and they are telling you what they like. The latter is much easier to read.

The second of the two developments was unexpected and points to possibilities for further research. The combination of the pictures and the peer reviews is inherently educational because it presents information in ways that people can assimilate and can relate to their own experience. I first noticed this in Phase Two when people expressed surprise and fascination about the range of flavours which could be achieved with a single varietal, Sauvignon Blanc. Phase 3 enabled me to understand more of what was happening: it became apparent that through the process of completing a structured wine review, comparing one picture with another, and understanding what other people see of value in a wine, the participants were beginning to understand more about wine and their own relationship to it.

The pictures are a very quick way to take in the complexity of the product, and for individuals to understand why they have a difficulty. At the same time the visual images offer a way through the problem and allow the consumer to begin to understand the structure of what they personally like. It is far more informed to know that you like a lemony, grassy Sauvignon Blanc than to simply know you like Sauvignon Blanc. In order to find what you like you simply look for the tastes that you like.

The peer comments also proved to be educational because they exposed the reader to the mindset and priorities of their fellow consumer. The reader may end up confirming their own perspective, but often people found ideas and approaches that they wished to try that would broaden their experience of wine.

## **9. Programme Evaluation and Conclusion**

### **9.1. Programme Evaluation**

#### **9.1.1. Conventional Perspective — Quality Driven**

The traditional approach to wine marketing is find ways to effectively communicate the quality of a wine (of whatever standard). The Brand message, the quality of the packaging, the information provided, the acclaim reported and the descriptions presented can all be understood as a means to communicate the quality, as a means of explaining or justifying the price.

Star ratings are a measure of quality; sometimes the ratings include an element of value for money, and sometimes they are just an expression of the degree of excellence. Critics' scores are based on highly analytical models that examine every aspect of quality. The quality of the packaging is deliberately managed to represent the quality of the wine inside, and the values and image of the brand are seen by producers and consumers alike as the best indicator of quality.

When describing wine, experts have adopted a linguistic style and archetypal structure that is not universally understood. It serves to provide a dispassionate analysis of what the packaging contains and, once again, communicates a message often more about quality than the actual taste.

### **9.1.2. Alternative Perspective — Satisfaction Driven**

This study has established that consumers, when they buy wine, are trying to answer two questions. The first of those questions is will they personally *like the taste*. The second is whether the wine will meet or exceed the motivation that they set out with when buying it.

#### **9.1.2.1. Anticipated Gustatory Driven K+**

The first question must be seen as very personal; one that can only really be answered by the individual concerned. The value of the work in this study is that the use of visual representations gives consumers a first access route to anticipating the taste with far more accuracy than they have had before. From a consumer perspective this is a powerful method of short-listing and assessing, which simultaneously informs and educates.

From the producers' point of view it is better for a consumer to exclude a wine and opt out of buying it, than to allow them to make the purchase, be disappointed, and then either disregard or worse still criticise the brand. More efficient matching of wines to personal taste can only be beneficial.

#### **9.1.2.2. Anticipated Purchase K+**

The second question is complex and can involve a whole variety of elements depending on the attitudes of the person and their plan for the wine. When a consumer buys a wine they have run a motivation strategy that takes them to the point of making the decision.

This motivation strategy, as discussed in Phase One, is largely idiosyncratic. Once again it produces a personal need that the consumer seeks to satisfy. It is difficult to anticipate whether the product in front of you will address that motivation, and provide a pleasure that has nothing to do with taste. The second key value in this study is that it recognises the worth to the consumer of providing emotional information that will enable them to answer this question. When that information comes from people with the same agenda, then it is more likely to hit its mark.

## **9.2. Programme Conclusion**

The concern expressed by this research programme is that existing wine marketing is insufficient to meet the consumers' needs and that this is a constraint on the development of the product through the expansion of the consumer base. This programme investigates this concern and specifically sought to establish whether there is a miscommunication between marketer and consumer, or whether there is something fundamentally missing.

Throughout the literature on this area of research, I have found calls for a new method of communicating with consumers. Schiefer and Fischer (2008) call for a more consumer-oriented approach, Eves (2004) investigates the use of technology, and Goode (2007) questions whether a linguistic solution can be achieved.

The common point behind these studies is that they recognise that the existing situation is not perfect and they seek ways to improve it. The solution must rest in finding a method that people can understand.

The conclusion that I draw is that there **are** important missing components. The first of these components is the use of visual cues which allow the brain to perform its natural function and anticipate a taste. The second is to allow personal opinions and passion to invade the communication. By asking how people actually decided, rather than the information that they used, I have established that to effectively address the needs of the decider the message must use a visual to gustatory synaesthesia and evoke an emotional response.

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## **11. Appendix A (Goals; Research Question; Validity)**

### **11.1. Goal of Research**

This research programme was based on the desire to acknowledge the individual taste of consumers. It began with the contention that there are consumers who are not necessarily willing to accept the brand messages that marketers deliver, nor the opinions of experts. The issue was how to effectively and honestly market to such a group.

The research goal was to understand how this potentially sizeable group make their consumption decisions; and in doing so to understand the use, not only of the established factors that build up a wine brand, but also of hitherto unexpected influences.

To do this I sought not to ask specific questions about branding information; instead I investigated what is really happening in the minds of consumers by being as open to additional factors as possible.

The objective was to fully establish the communication needs of wine consumers and, if these were not being met, suggest methods and novel opportunities for marketers to effectively communicate to the consumers on whom the wine industry relies.

### **11.2. Research Question**

The above goal was in contrast to other research projects which addressed the issue from the perspective of the product, not the consumer. These projects typically investigate the utility and influence of particular aspects of the branding and marketing message on the consumption decisions of consumers. They assume that the established information set is sufficient and the important thing to understand is which factors influence which groups.

However other research finds the existing communication to be ineffective to some degree because the consumer may not have the skill to use it. The sub-cultural argot of the wine marketers is frequently criticised by consumers, and the wine marketing researchers infer that the fault lies with the consumers who need educating. Whichever is the truth, the existing research suggests that there is a communication mismatch or gap.

The research question for this programme therefore comes in two parts. Firstly, what is the actual process of wine purchase selection? This question must come from the perspective of the consumer and seek answers in an open way that encourages the discovery of previously unnoticed influences. Secondly, if there is a gap, what is the information that can be provided to mitigate the consumer risk, reduce consumer frustration and bridge that gap?

### **11.3. Issues of Validity**

#### **11.3.1. Sample Size**

Typical research into consumer behaviour tends to work on establishing a sample size of consumers involved that will serve to validate the findings by producing a statistically stable result. The disadvantage of such an approach is that the behaviour of consumers is aggregated and the detail of what is happening in individual cases becomes obscured.

In this research programme I opted for a different approach that uses only a small number of participants (when compared with other marketing research) but seeks to investigate each participant in detail. It was clear when beginning the programme that this approach might yield highly variant results from the participants and consistent patterns would be difficult to establish. However, the detail that would be established outweighed the risk in my view. I determined to see whether it was possible to get sufficient information using a small sample size in Phase One, and if problems existed, widen the range and lessen the depth.

The methodology however proved to be extremely revealing and the sample size was kept correspondingly small, peaking at thirteen participants in Phase Three.

### **11.3.2. Personal Influence**

All three phases of this programme required interaction between myself and the participants in order to establish the detail of understanding what was happening from the participants' perspectives. These interactions, whether they are written or verbal, could conceivably influence the consumer in their answers, with my attitudes shaping theirs. Nisbett and Wilson (1977) examined the influence that an interviewer has on the answers that are received, particularly when the answer being sought is concerned with unconscious behaviour.

Neuro Linguistic Programming concerns itself with the modification of behaviour and subjective experience using linguistic techniques. For this reason NLP practitioners are acutely aware of the power of the interviewer, and for this reason I adopted the following approach to mitigate the affect:

#### Choice of Participants

1. Select participants on the basis of their enthusiasm for the product.
2. Ensure when inviting people to participate that a range of experience and tastes is represented.
3. Include the use of people who preferably do not know me or my attitudes to wine. Never disclose my own view during the data gathering process.

#### Written Responses

4. Conduct surveys and written tasks by email so that the participants complete the survey without the opportunity for being influenced by the researcher's perspective.
5. Develop the survey in Phase One using a focus group in order to mitigate any inferential language.
6. Provide written instructions to participants when completing tasks so that requirements could be explained in a consistent and neutral manner

#### Interviewing

7. Undergoing training in the techniques by a certified NLP Master Practitioner and Trainer in order to develop linguistic skills and interviewing style that were as neutral as possible
8. Conducting *training* interviews with the intention of identifying points at which I may be influencing the respondent
9. Video recording all *training* interviews and subsequently reviewing them as NLP training exercises prior to completing the formal research interviews
10. Video recording the research interviews and having them reviewed by the NLP Master Practitioner for comment.

These approaches did, in my view, mitigate the influence of my viewpoint as researcher. However it is acknowledged that some influence was still possible.

### **11.3.3. Procedural Restrictions**

Normally wine consumption decisions are made in bottle stores, wineries, supermarkets and restaurants. The approach of using video to document the interviews made the completion of the research in the consumption environments unwise as I believed that the presence of a camera would be off putting in a public place, and thereby invalidate the results.

As part of the evolving nature of this programme I developed methods to counteract the artificial nature of the interviews. In Phase Two I treated the interviews as a game in which the participant is restricted from information. This technique (See Programme Framework: Knowledge Elicitation) is used to understand the inner workings of the minds of subject matter experts. The intention was to

understand each participant's strategy in the abnormal environment and then interview them again after having chosen a wine in a normal environment and established whether differences existed.

In Phase Three the method I used was to normalise the consumption choice situation as much as possible by providing the selection menu using a web site. Participants were thus taken into the paradigm of seeking wine information in a web environment which is the only normal choice environment which is not public.

These approaches had their limitations but they did facilitate the inclusion of video interviewing which allowed repeated review and analysis of what actually happened without the interpretation and memory of the interviewer acting as a filter.

#### **11.3.4. Familiarity with Other Reviewers**

In Phase Three, there were thirteen participants in all. These were drawn from friends and acquaintances of the researcher, who exist in different contexts and social circles. This resulted in a group where almost everyone knew some of the other participants, but they were guaranteed to have people that they did not know.

In Phases One and Two the deliberate policy of requesting participants not to discuss their involvement in the programme served adequately. Most participants were not interested in the responses of other people, preferring to analyse their own attitudes. Some people tried to use post interview discussions to understand the responses of other group members, and as long as the interviews were both completed, questions were answered as simply as possible.

Phase 3, on the other hand was specifically targeted at understanding the value of friends, acquaintances and strangers in the wine decision strategies. The approach used of allowing participants to adopt a pseudonym maintained a surprising level of anonymity, but when a person was well known to the other participant, familiarity with them and with their taste in wine was a minor factor. Given that the Web 2.0 approach simulated in Phase Three concerned understanding the role of a consumer network, some of whom know each other, this situation only contributed to the realism of the task.

#### **11.3.5. Involvement Issues**

All phases of this research programme required commitment from the participants. Sometimes their commitment was to the production of a document or profile; sometimes it was to participate in an interview where the researcher clearly had an agenda. These situations tend to make people participate and act more thoroughly than they might do in their normal lives. How many would complete a survey on their attitudes about wine marketing unless there was a free bottle on offer? How many of the participants would have documented their wine preferences for a web site? How many of them would continue browsing a web site when they have already made up their minds or have something more important to do?

To counteract but not nullify this effect all participants were told that they could opt out of the programme or aspects of it if they were not interested in participating for reasons that would be their own. If someone dropped out they would be replaced by a new face. This was seen as preferable to getting results under duress, and it also added to the mix of participants.

In order to create a body of participants to allow this opting out option to be realistic, all phases included new participants. Participation in tasks and exercises was equally not prescriptive. People could do as much or as little as they liked without judgment. That having been said, there was definitely an element of pushing through in support of the research agenda. In the end only one request was received to opt out of a task in Phase Three, and this was for personal reasons.

## 12. Appendix B (Research Conceptual Frameworks)

### 12.1. Phase One Conceptual Framework

Each phase of this research programme had marked differences from the others, requiring specific definitions and components to be documented and designed. For this reason the aspects of research design that cover the definitions, concepts and designed components are included on a phase by phase basis, so that the relevance of the work can be seen in the context of its phase.

#### 12.1.1. Production / Stock Decision

This decision recognised the influence of producers and distributors on which wines were available to the public. The producer in deciding what to make, and the distributor in deciding what to ship, fundamentally set the tone for what wine is available.

The production decision is influenced by factors such as

1. the physical vines they have available
2. the availability price and quality of purchased grapes
3. climate and terroir
4. the product reputation of either the winery or winemaker
5. current available stock
6. achievable profit margins on specific products
7. level of competition in the market
8. brand image
9. consumer market trends

The stock decision carried out by distributors will be taken in the context of the last six of these factors and others besides. This explanation was included as it demonstrates that consumer demand for specific styles of product is only one of many factors. In this scenario it is plausible to see why producers and distributors decide on the past experience of the market rather than recognising new trends and successes and moving towards them. They make and stock what they know they can sell, and the alignment of this to the actual preferences of consumers is questionable.

*Indicator: Alignment of available wines to consumer preferences.*

#### 12.1.2. Broadcast Marketing

The term Broadcast Marketing was adopted to represent any communication to consumers about the wine product. As such it covers a multitude of media and styles. It includes:

1. Billboards
2. TV campaigns
3. Direct postal / email marketing
4. Magazines and articles
5. "Purchased" wine list
6. Specialist books such as the Platter Guide
7. Wine shows
8. Cellar door sales
9. Establishment advertising
10. Use of expert opinions
11. Specialist wine buyers
12. Awards shows

The variety of the communication approaches is an indication of the range of solutions that consumers are prepared / expected to deal with when considering wine. The assumption in the conceptual framework is that marketing material in its various manifestations has issues. The extent

to which it all credible and useful is the focus of the initial Marketing Survey used to shape the focus of Phase One.

*Indicator Credibility of wine marketing as perceived by customers*

### **12.1.3. Purchase / Risk Reduction Process:**

Whenever a consumer purchases wine, whether it is in a bottle store, a restaurant, a winery or a bar, they make a decision on what wine they wish to purchase. In order to do this they employ a decision making process that they have evolved over time. The purpose of this process is to minimise the risk of purchasing something that they subsequently dislike. Mitchell & Greatorex (1989)

Risk reduction strategies will vary from individual to individual and from situation to situation. They may be as simple as "buy something you know you like"; they may involve taking advice from others or allowing others to choose; or they may take in the myriad information presented with the wine in order to assure the consumer about the characteristics of the wine.

When someone is executing their strategy, they are trying to match a product on offer to their own personal taste and pocket. The more informed they are about the wines on offer, the more likely they are to make an informed choice and make the product match *that suits them*. They are choosing the "best" wine for them.

Empirically such a subjective concept would be difficult to quantify or plot. The essential element is to postulate that in general, the greater the level of understanding about the choices on offer, the more likely it is that the consumer will end up with something *they* like.

*Indicator: The degree to which the purchaser can match the product attributes to the consumer's personal preferences.*

### **12.1.4. Consumption / Evaluation**

Having made the purchase, the consumer consumes the wine. In doing so they are likely to make some level of assessment about the wine. At its most basic the question they will be asking is whether they are *satisfied* that they made a good choice.

In economic terms they will be assessing the "utility" of the purchase. "Total utility" is the total satisfaction from the consumption of a product (Gillespie: 2007). In this case, it is primarily the satisfaction they gained from the bottle or glass of wine they consumed.

In reality the "satisfaction" is a complex evaluation made up of a variety of factors that will vary from consumer to consumer, from product to product and from context to context. The evaluation by a consumer of, say, a car will vary depending on what they want from the purchase and where they want to use it. And so it is with wine. In determining the utility of a particular wine, the consumer juggles a whole range of factors before coming to a conclusion.

For example a consumer may consider an eclectic mix of factors:

1. was the colour and style and taste of the wine acceptable?
2. was price that was paid for it alright?
3. how suitable was the wine for the context in which it was consumed?
4. was the packaging pleasing to the eye?
5. did the wine appear to please guests?
6. does the wine evoke any particular memories?
7. do I like the closure / packaging?
8. does it have an impressive or famous name?
9. did the waiter say "good choice"?

- 10. did it have awards?
- 11. did drinking it compromise / support my political sensibilities?
- 12. am I happy with the way the wine was produced?
- 13. was I happy with the story / history behind the wine?
- 14. did the wine come in a quantity that I wanted?
- etc

This illustrates the variety of triggers that may or may not exist for an individual when assessing a wine. To add further complexity each consumer may use different combinations of factors with varying weightings at different times.

For the purposes of Phase One I treated "satisfaction" as whether the enjoyment derived reached the *threshold* level where the consumer was happy to classify the purchase as a good one. It may well be that the experience far exceeded the threshold or was way beneath it. There is a continuum of satisfaction levels but in the end, the consumer will come down to a simple result: it was either a good purchase or a bad one. A good purchase may be repeated; a bad one may not.

On the assumption that humans learn through their successes and their failures, one would expect the success rate, or the frequency with which they get a satisfactory result, to improve over time. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this is not *always* true, but if it is then the rate of improvement would be driven by just how good their particular strategy is at making the right purchase choice and how well they store and recall previous experiences.

*Indicator: Satisfaction, defined as Total Utility achieved compared against a minimum threshold required.*

#### **12.1.5. Phase One Conceptual Framework Diagram**

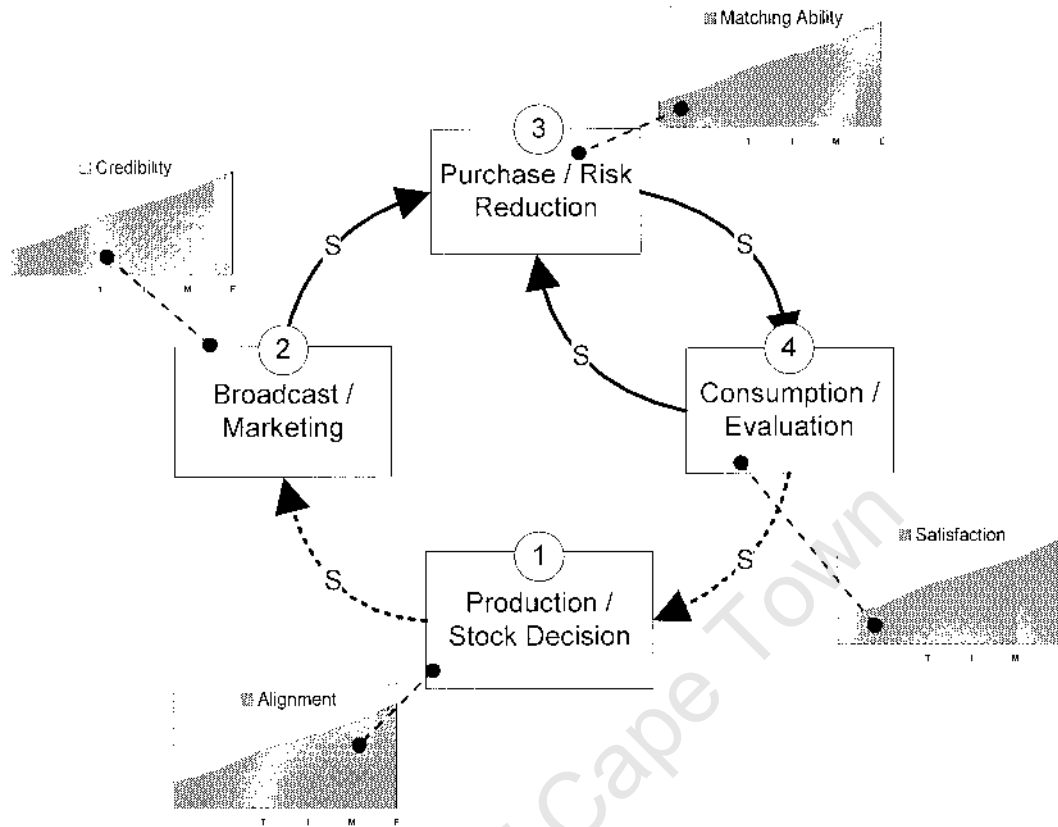
The figure below represents the current interaction of consumers and their suppliers in the wine market. In broad terms the normal interaction of the players follows a reasonably standard business pattern

1. Producers and retailers make decisions on what products to offer to the market
2. These products are marketed and communicated to the consuming public
3. Consumers make purchasing choices and decide whether/what to buy
4. Consumers evaluate the choice they made and consider whether to repeat the purchase.

A satisfying purchase is likely to be repeated and the cycle represented by boxes 3 and 4 may be repeated many times as the information gained by actually consuming the product constitutes a major factor when reducing risk with the next purchase. Conversely a less than happy purchase leads to information that will equip the consumer to avoid that wine or producer in the future.

Over time, the consumption patterns generated by a whole market of consumers lead to a body of information that, in principle, enables producers to fine tune their production and stock decisions.

Figure 13: Phase One Conceptual Framework



The focus of Phase One was to investigate the link between Box 2 (Broadcast Marketing) and Box 3 (Purchase / Risk Reduction).

The contention is that the lack of awareness about consumer satisfaction manifests itself in a lack of alignment with consumer wishes. This in turn manifests itself in broadcast marketing which is insensitive to needs. If this is the case then the attitudes of consumers to broadcast marketing will reflect the extent to which they value the information and trust their supplier.

Phase One examined the participants' purchase or risk reduction strategies to establish the extent to which the marketing information used in these strategies was trusted and relied on when making product choices. The approach worked on the basis that if the information provided is valuable it should feature extensively within risk reduction; if it is perceived as untrustworthy or misleading it will be ignored.

## 12.2. Phase Two Conceptual Framework

### 12.2.1. Reputation and Attributes

Both individuals and organisations have reputations and skill attributes which, to varying degrees, they communicate to those they come into contact with. These reputations will accumulate over time. For the individual, this is about their character, skills and personality; for the organisation it is concerned with their public image. In both cases reputation is not what is projected; it is what others perceive when representing the individual or organisation. It is a précis of who or what individuals or organisations are, and what they are skilled at doing.

In the context of the wine industry both individuals and organisations build reputations based on their performance. The extent to which a positive reputation is known and understood is a function of the consistency of delivery over time and the extent to which they are recommended by other consumers.

*Indicator: Extent to which the reputation and attributes are known (Awareness)*

### 12.2.2. Advisor Selection

Consumers select the advice sources that they wish to use from the wide range that is available. Some will rely on more knowledgeable friends; some will consult periodicals and books. Some will trust no one and seek to taste everything they buy.

Advisor selection is the process by which an individual consumer elects to use the skills of a particular advisor. They will do this because they establish sufficient evidence, using their preferred evidence procedure.

This aspect of the relationship is fleeting; it is about the consumer giving the advisor a chance based on a positive result in an evidence procedure. At its simplest it might be that a consumer decides to listen more closely to a particular friend about wine because they share a liking for a particular wine. At a more complex level they may decide to consult a particular guide whenever they go shopping. In both cases it is because the consumer recognises some potential benefit.

It is also important to note that an advisor may be selected for only part of their skills. You might trust a particular wine expert to give you good advice about Sauvignon Blanc, but never trust their judgement on anything red.

Part of the focus of this paper is to examine these evidence procedures in order to understand what the benefits are and how an advisor's skills are selected.

*Indicator: Whether individual consumers select the advisor.*

### 12.2.3. Alignment

Alignment is the process by which the consumer deepens the relationship with the advisor. This will occur over time, the result of consistent successes. The more someone is aligned to their advisor the more they *trust the assessments* that that advisor gives as being in accordance with their own view.

*Indicator: Extent to which individual consumers are aligned / trusting / utilising their advisor. (Utilisation)*

### 12.2.4. Recommendations

Recommendations are when one wine consumer gives a positive endorsement about a wine advisor to another wine consumer. When an individual recommends something, there are two processes occurring. The first is that they assess the individual or organisation they are considering recommending. They do this to satisfy themselves that they feel comfortable doing so. If they have built up a long term positive trust of the subject, then this is relatively easy to do. The second

This selected information constitutes facts which can be verified and held up to scrutiny. Someone with moderate wine experience may be able to take a combination of the grape varietal used, the alcohol content, the region of manufacture, the winemaker's name and the longevity of the farm, and have a reasonable guess at what the wine will taste like. This is their objective.

Not everyone uses all the available information. It depends on what they trust. For example wine awards generated different responses in the group. For some a "declaration" like a wine show award is a positive endorsement that the wine will be of good quality. For others it is a negative factor, particularly when the awarding authority is held in low esteem. For some it is simply something they ignore, because they cannot guarantee to like what the assessors liked. Declarations therefore do have a role with consumers when anticipating wine *quality*.

#### **8.4.3.2. Use of Assessments**

When it comes to anticipating the tastes it seems reasonable to expect that the tasting notes "assessments" would fulfil this function. However this does not universally appear to be the case. Some of the participants either ignore the notes or pay very little attention to them as they tend to be garnished with rich images that tell the consumer very little about the wine itself. In order to be of some value notes need to be easily accessible, brief and written in plain yet still evocative language, entirely focusing on the taste in the bottle. It should be remembered that the consumer is trying to evoke the taste, so any distraction to that process will interrupt the thought and make this harder. All the respondents who bother to read tasting notes do so with a certain amount of scepticism as they are associated with marketers rather than with wine tasting professionals. Typically people are really only seeking any key words that will confirm their suspicions, good or bad, about the wine.

Tasting notes that come independent of the bottle get more credibility, although here too people do not treat them as factual. The ability to trust what a wine writer says at this point is really a function of the tone adopted and the manner in which the information is presented. The more personal enthusiasm the writer puts forward for the wine, the more people notice the review. Analytical reviews are more easily ignored. In all the interviews conducted there was only one instance of a wine review that held any sway with the reader. This was with a wine consumer who has some experience in a limited range of wines. He delighted in the description of the wine he chose because it enabled him to summon up the taste very well.

In general however wine tasting notes are ignored because they do not serve the function that the consumer needs them for, or because they lack the passion of committed recommendation that they may get from a friend. They are an analysis not an approval. Wine notes suffer from the fact that the person writing them is writing them for a general audience and they cannot readily make a personal recommendation without knowing the person. Another key limitation which was noticed by many of the participants is that a friend's information will refer the consumer to other wines and styles that they know they have tasted. Having a shared point of reference is a key to the efficiency of the communication, and wine writers are very unlikely to talk about one wine by comparing it with others on the market that may be familiar to the consumer.

Put simply, people try to construct the taste of a wine from the available information. The brand, the image, the tasting notes and the assessment all play a part. People make the best they can of the tools available, but mostly the reaction from the participants is that the information is insufficient to do a completely satisfying job.

#### **8.4.4. Gain Reassurance of the Product's Acceptable Standard**

The participants in this study all had a need to reassure themselves that the product was at least manufactured to an acceptable standard. With the uncertainty of trying a new wine from a new vineyard, they had none of the reassurance of familiarity with the other products from this estate. In order to gain some reassurance the participants all ran reassurance strategies. Some checked the quality of the branding and packaging material; the thinking here is that if that is of a good quality,

process is that they consider the person they are making the recommendation to. The question they consider is whether they can see a potential match for this new person with the subject of the recommendation. Do they see some potential benefit for them?

For the recommendation to occur, all three parties need to share some perspective about wine and be aligned around some common values to some degree or another. The person making the recommendation will support it by justifying which attributes they see as being of value, which they think the other consumer will also benefit from.

If the recommendation is given to someone who can see no worth in the attributes, then it will evaporate as if it never happened. If the opposite happens, then the advisor attributes are perpetuated and reinforced, building the reputation of the advisor.

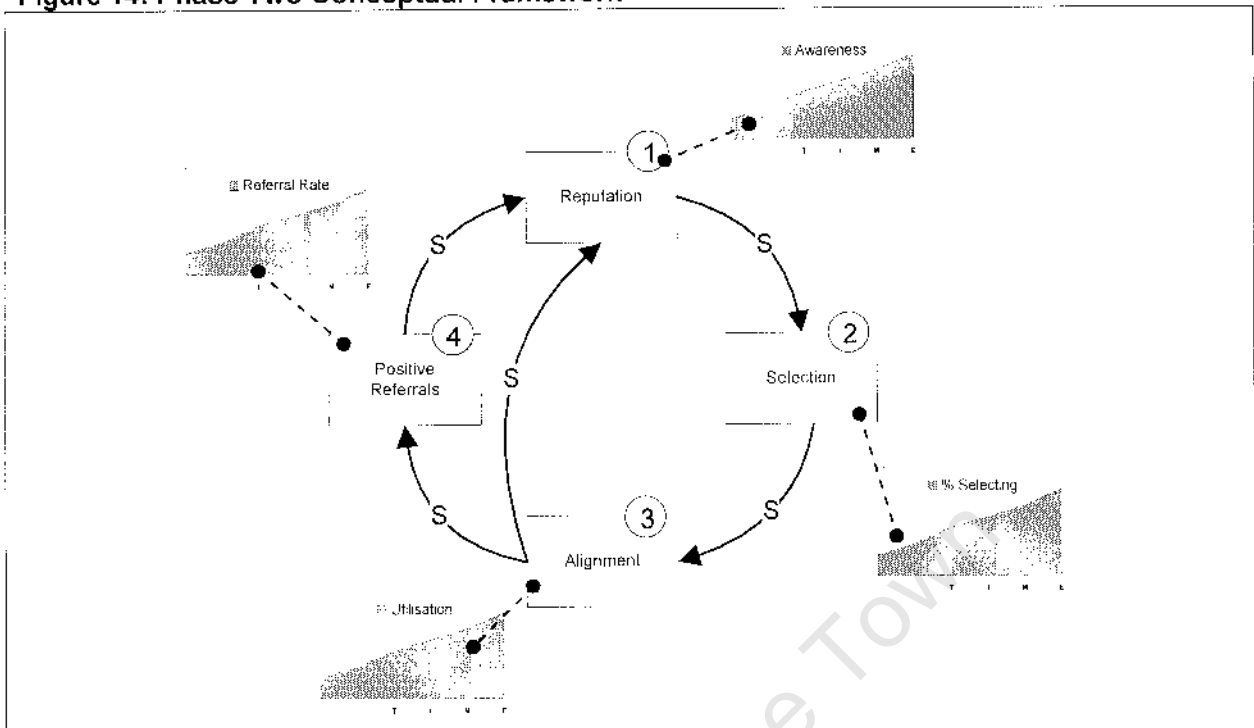
*Indicator: Propensity to refer (Referral Rate)*

### **12.2.5. Phase Two Conceptual Framework Diagram**

The diagram below represents the building of relationships between individuals and advisors over time. It demonstrates four stages of a deepening relationship:

1. Reputation: An advisor has a growing reputation of which consumers can become aware. The reputation will be a combination of what the advisor does and how well they do it
2. Selection: By applying an evidence procedure the consumer will choose to select the advisor and consider their advice further.
3. Alignment: The consumer learns more about what skills in the advisor they can trust and rely on. They will rely on those skills in which their opinions are aligned. This happens over time and is the result of finding continued successes.  
It should be noted that this is not guaranteed. Either side of the relationship may change and this may cause it to diminish or indeed evolve into something different. As an example, a wine consumer who as a novice treats something like the Platter guide as "the bible" may over time develop their own level of expertise and begin to find less in common with the publication. They might abandon its use altogether, or what they use it for might change.
4. Positive Referrals: the recommendation by one individual to another about the utility of a particular advisor. This utility is based on all three parties having some degree of a shared perspective about wine.

Figure 14: Phase Two Conceptual Framework



### 12.3. Other Phase 2 Definitions and Concepts

#### 12.3.1. Wine Advisors

Phase Two was concerned with how wine consumers get advice from the myriad of potential sources available. The paper examines how consumers select their sources and how they build a working relationship over time with those sources, to the point where they are happy to recommend them to other people.

These wine advisors may be private individuals who happen to be knowledgeable about wine or they may be individuals or organisations not directly connected with one particular manufacturer that have something to do with the industry in either a supply chain or critical capacity.

Examples of wine advisors are:

1. individual consumers that other consumers refer to for advice as friends or acquaintances
2. retail outlets that position themselves to serve wine consumers and assist in consumption choices
3. restaurants that supply wine and offer assistance to the consumer either through wine lists or wine waiters and sommeliers
4. wine critics and experts who write for magazines and other publications
5. industry guides such as the South African industry's Platter guide
6. wine clubs such as "Wine of the Month Club"
7. internet wine vendors

#### 12.3.2. Advisor Functions

Wine advisors perform three basic functions for wine consumers. In order to be clear about the focus of the second phase it is important to examine these in detail. The framework used is based on the work of Budd and Rothstein (2000) in which they examine the five actions that are possible using language. Of these five the first two, *requests and promises*, are not the domain of the advisor. The remaining three have a relevance to advisors and wine advisors in particular. These three are:

a) **Assertions:** An assertion is a statement that someone makes for which they are willing to provide evidence. In this sense assertions will be factual in nature and put forward by the advisor because they consider them to be relevant or worthy of note. This would typically be information such as the varietal, the winemaker, the winery or the percentage of alcohol.

b) **Declarations:** A declaration is a proclamation or utterance which someone with authority makes and in doing so brings something into being that was not there before — or at least modifies its status. In the wine context I am using this term to refer to awards conferred by organisations and individuals connected to the industry. For example, good Robert Parker ratings are highly sought after, and carry considerable weight. Wine show awards that confer medals are similar declarations of quality. Awards conferred by organisations like the South African Platter guide similarly fit the definition. Such awards include titles like "Winery of the Year", but also include the status awarded to a very small group of wines, the "five star" rating.

c) **Assessments:** An assessment is a judgement call; a subjective opinion. As such it cannot ever be completely verified and tends to be highly influenced by the individual's personal preferences. In the wine context I consider these assessments to include tasting notes or descriptions of wines which act as an analysis of the style and taste; and also the star ratings where no award (no declaration) is implied i.e. 4% stars and lower.

Most importantly the term "assessments" includes the *possibility* of a *personal recommendation*. A recommendation is an assessment that has two particular qualities. Firstly the advisor must be endorsing the product personally; they have to like it themselves. Secondly, their advice must be tailored to the preferences and budget of person they are advising. There is no point in recommending a very expensive wine to someone who cannot or chooses not to afford it. To fit both of these criteria the advisor must know a reasonable amount about his/her audience.

### 12.3.3. Trust

In the second phase the term *trust* is intended to apply to very specific conditions. *Trust* can only apply to the *assessments* that an advisor gives. Assertions and declarations are matters of record and can be verified, assessments however are personal judgements and cannot.

The term "trust" indicates when an individual has, for whatever reason, determined that they can rely on the opinions of an advisor to reflect their own opinions. There is, to some degree or another, a sense of alignment which has developed over time. In short the person expects to agree more often than they do not.

### 12.3.4. Evidence Procedure

If anyone asks an individual *how* they know something, they will explain what evidence they seek in order to establish whether something is true. They will cite the "evidence" they need, and the process they go through by which the evidence is established. The "evidence" is therefore an indication or cue that a particular goal or circumstance is being met and the evidence procedure as explained in Neuro Linguistic Programming is the process through which this evidence is established (Dilts and DeLozier (2000)).

In practice an individual has a set of rules that enables them to assess a situation. These rules typically follow the format of: *if X is true then I have evidence of Y*. Asking someone how they know if a tree is alive, the evidence they cite and the rules they apply may depend on the type of tree and the time of year.

These rules are developed by the individual as a result of modelling and experience. They can be context specific and different rules may apply to different groups, individuals or roles. Because we

model ourselves on different people and because our experiences are widely divergent the evidence procedures used by different people to assess the same situation may vary considerably. This is particularly true when the individual is being asked for evidence of whether something is good or can be *trusted*.

## **12.4. Phase Three Conceptual Framework**

### **12.4.1. Consumer Reliance on Brand Image**

Faced with a wine that he cannot sample, the consumer is forced to be reliant on other available factors to influence his purchasing decision. These factors vary from individual to individual, and the weighting applied to the factors will also depend on the context for which a wine is being purchased.

Brand image is not limited to the visual impact of the packaging. It may include other factors that marketers also consider when placing a wine on the market. For example, the bottle closure used; the quality of the label itself; the type of image used; even the method of affixing the image; the colour and shape of the bottle; the style of marketing (modern and progressive vs. traditional and established); the public perception of the brand; the awards; the physical location in the store; and very importantly, the pricing point adopted.

As demonstrated in Phase One of this programme and also by Halstead (2002), in the absence of taste, consumers will extrapolate these and other factors, combine them with factual information about the wine and make a decision on whether to buy it. Brand image is critical to the eventual decision.

*Indicator: Degree of reliance on Brand in Decision making*

### **12.4.2. Investment in Brand Marketing**

Understandably wine marketers recognise the importance of the brand. Increasingly, the effort put into creating a viable brand image is seen increasingly as being of great importance. Peskett (2006), reporting a debate on the extent to which brand has become important, quotes Halstead: "our life is about codes...we deal in semiotics, the art of symbols". Another contributor to the debate (Keith Lay of Ehrmanns) reported tests in which "good packaging sold poor wine — once only".

The combination of these contributions tells a story in which the branding is seen as a reflection of the wine quality and style, and that marketers have invested in creating the correct image to reassure the consumer of the experience in the bottle in as positive a manner as possible.

*Indicator: % Expenditure on Brand Marketing as proportion of overall budget*

### **12.4.3. Marketing Restrictive Practices**

The cost incurred in creating a viable brand can be a considerable burden to a vineyard or distributor. The value of the brand itself will be reflected in the balance sheet as an asset. Having endured the cost it is not surprising that marketers in South Africa do what they can to leverage and protect it. Pietersen (2005) reports a number of practices that the dominant producers and distributors have adopted to ensure the flow into the market of their products. Such practices include "buying wine lists" and "cash benefits". Retailers also control both the supply and the price by seeking exclusive rights to sell wines from a particular vineyard. With larger players they will not succeed, but with a smaller operation, eager to get a foothold in the retail market, these agreements are a seemingly necessary but undesired step.

*Indicator: % of Brands available as a proportion of overall available*

### **12.4.4. Brand Centric Marketing**

Brand centric marketing is when the marketing approach adopted is to promote the attributes of the brand rather than the product itself. Typical examples are when brands are represented as being "icons" or as having been in production for centuries. Other styles of brand marketing speak to the lifestyle aspects of the brand rather than the product itself, placing the product in a desirable context or setting.

*Indicator: Extent of Brand vs Product attribute marketing*

#### **12.4.5. Entry Barriers to New or Small Producers**

Entry barriers are circumstances which prevent a new or small producer from effectively operating in a particular market. They may be financial barriers, they may be logistical problems, and they may be an unwillingness of someone in the wine supply chain to even consider stocking a new or small producer's wine because of the impact on their existing business.

These barriers are not necessarily conspiratorial in nature. They may simply be issues like the retailer justifiably seeking to stock wines where he/she is confident in the brand and the product is being supported by a well run advertising campaign, and where continuity of supply is guaranteed.

*Indicator: Extent of New producers in Market*

#### **12.4.6. Availability of Wines**

Availability of wines refers not to the general availability in terms of shops having stock, but rather to the availability of a diverse range of wines at prices that reflect their true production cost and value added by the logistical journey they have made.

It is possible to source most wines by either contacting the vineyard directly, or by working through an intermediary who specialises in wine. For the customer who is placed a considerable distance from the source of wine in South Africa, i.e. away from the Western and Northern Cape, this may involve a considerable amount of complexity and cost. It is not uncommon for retail outlets that source a wine for a customer to charge up to 300% of what it costs directly from the vineyard. Wine logistics firms also will charge for packaging, insurance and delivery to the door which adds considerably to the cost of the individual bottle. These costs are more justifiable to the consumer if the wine itself is expensive, but if the product is a cheaper wine, the effect on the overall cost is dramatic. The result is that, particularly in markets away from the Cape, the wines that are present are those with sufficient support to justify the cost of mass transportation resulting in economies of scale.

*Indicator: Proportion of products made available in the market*

#### **12.4.7. Level of Consumer Awareness**

The level of consumer awareness refers to a number of aspects of knowledge.

Firstly there is knowledge about the product itself. Marketing material speaks either to the brand or to the accomplished wine consumer. Attempts to tackle this problem come in the form of publications such as the Wine Magazine and the Platter Guide and schools such as the Cape Wine Academy; however the effectiveness of these efforts was found to be low in Phase Two of this research programme.

Secondly there is knowledge about the range of products available, both in terms of what they are and where to buy them. In order to be able to predict with any certainty where a product may be available in (say) Johannesburg, the consumer would benefit from knowing who the agent is and which outlets that agent services. This of course is not common knowledge. Sometimes the only solution is to get the agent's contact details from the vineyard then establish the location.

Lastly, and more critically, is the knowledge about what is good / what they would like in the market. The second phase of this research programme found major flaws in the logic that marketing information will tell people what is worth buying. Consumers consult marketing information and expert advice, but they have learnt that it lacks the necessary personal endorsement of a product required to make it attractive. Word of mouth is relied on, and this is less than efficient.

*Indicator: Range of products sold*

#### **12.4.8. Utility of Marketing Information**

The concept of Utility of Marketing Information concerns the extent to which the available information addresses the needs of the consumer. Both Phase One and Phase Two of this programme established that each consumer develops a strategy for making wine buying decisions and that they use the available information to support this strategy. The need that they have is to establish whether they are going to like the wine and enjoy consuming it. The fact that they may

have to satisfy this need by examining the marketing material on the bottle, does not mean that they are happy doing so. For a more accomplished consumer, interpretation of the information may give them a strong understanding of the product's style and its relationship to their personal taste; for the less accomplished the information may serve as a distraction and they either accept or reject the risk, and rely on the symbols and codes they can interpret as indicators.

*Indicator: Consumer attitude index to marketing*

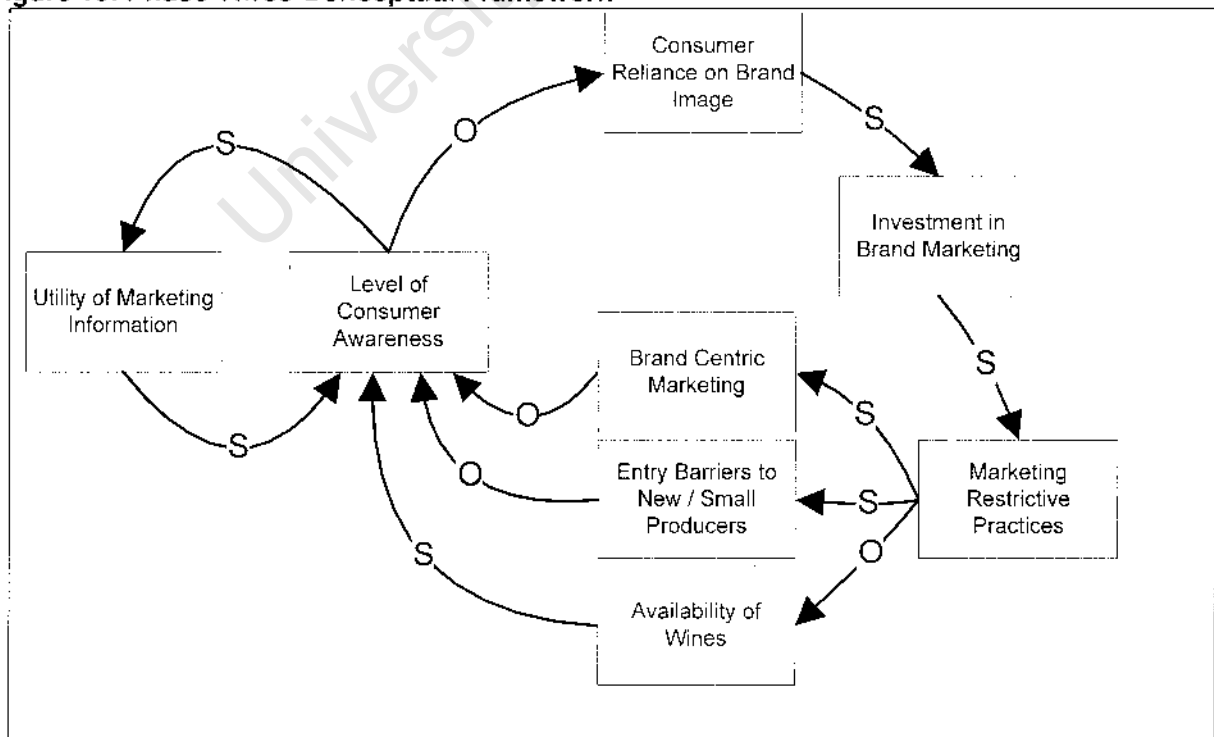
### 12.4.9. Phase 3 Conceptual Framework Diagram

This diagram represents how the concepts outlined in the conceptual framework above interact to cause a less than virtuous circle that diminishes the wine experience of the consumer and suppresses the efforts of the new wine producer. The causal relationships operate in the following manner:

1. The low level of consumer awareness about wine products determines the consumer reliance on brand information when making their wine buying decisions
2. This in turn drives the investment in brand marketing as the "go to market" strategy for the wine industry
3. The expenditure in brands encourages restrictive marketing practices in order to gain the most advantage out of the branding expense
4. This in turn encourages brand centric marketing from distributors, it creates barriers to entry to smaller players, and the availability of a range of wines is suppressed
5. These situations maintain the low level of consumer awareness.
6. Low levels of consumer awareness maintain the low utility of current styles of marketing information

As an example of how established this situation is in Johannesburg, armed with a list of 75 wines identified from the Platter guide as worth sourcing, I tried three specialist retail outlets. Only one of the wines on the list was physically available.

**Figure 15: Phase Three Conceptual Framework**



## 12.5. Other Phase 3 Definitions and Concepts

### 12.5.1. Web 2.0

Searching the Internet itself for an explanation of what Web 2.0 is will generate much disagreement about which developments in the uses of the web and the underlying technologies that enabled it should be included in the definition.

Put briefly, it is not a software release; it is a revolution in business thinking that has been supported by innovators in web technology. Whilst recognising that it does represent the second iteration of web technologies, in the context of this research programme the term Web 2.0 is used to focus on the changes that have come about in business use of the technology. Levinson et al (2008) explain the phenomenon as a shift in culture where genuine relationships, honesty and co-operation are valued over bean counting, hucksterism and competition. The collaborative changes represent opportunities both for the consumer and the small scale entrepreneur.

### 12.5.2. First Access / Second Access

The term "first access" is used to describe sensory information provided to the brain directly from the five senses of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell, without the involvement of a linguistic description. Any word-based representation which must be interpreted to an internal sensory representation is called "secondary access".

The taste of a wine in the mouth is a first access experience. Reading about it is a secondary access experience because of the involvement of linguistic interpretation.

"First access to first access" is therefore the process whereby sensory information in one sense, (e.g. visual: sight of things other than words) directly stimulates a gustatory or olfactory sensation without any intermediate use of linguistic representations.

### 12.5.3. Advisor Functions

In Phase Two of this programme I documented a framework for classifying the types of input presented by wine advisors (see section 10.3.2). This framework continues to be valid in Phase Three.

## 13. Appendix C (NLP Strategy Notation)

### 13.1. Strategy Documentation

**NLP** notation records the involvement of the five senses plus internal debate, in the making of a decision.

The principle is that information is sought and/or received by any of the senses and this triggers responses which may include internal debate.

The notation also deals with whether the information is coming from an external source or is internal i.e. something the mind is creating

The notation also distinguishes between internal information that is recalled (memories) or constructs (imagined).

### 13.2. Notation Specifics

V: Visual : Pictures and images

Visual external	Something the client actually sees in the environment (written Vey)
Visual internal recalled	A remembered image in the 'mind's eye' (written Vir).
Visual internal constructed	An image in the 'mind's eye' that the client creates by an act of imagination (written V <sup>ic</sup> ).

### A: Auditory: Sounds, voices and words

Auditory external tonal	A sound or tone the client actually hears in the environment (written A <sup>et</sup> ).
Auditory external digital	A word the client actually hears in the environment (written A <sup>ed</sup> ).
Auditory internal [tonal/digital] recalled	A remembered [sound or tone/word] in the 'mind's ear' (written A <sup>t</sup> , or A <sup>d</sup> ).
Auditory internal [tonal/digital] constructed	A [sound or tone/word] in the 'mind's ear' that the client creates by an act of imagination (written A <sup>t</sup> <sub>c</sub> or A <sup>d</sup> <sub>j</sub> ).
Self talk	The comments, questions and 'dialogue' that the client generates internally and 'says to him or herself'(written A <sup>d</sup> ).

### K. Kinaesthetic: Feelings and emotions

Kinaesthetic positive	A pleasant feeling (written K <sup>+</sup> ) e.g. 'silk against the skin' (proprioceptive K <sup>+</sup> ) or 'happiness' (emotional K <sup>+</sup> ).
Kinaesthetic negative	An unpleasant feeling (written K <sup>-</sup> ) e.g. 'stubbing your toe' (proprioceptive K) or 'disgust' (emotional K <sup>-</sup> ).
Kinaesthetic 'meta'	A feeling about a feeling (written Km), for example, 'I'm ashamed (meta) about feeling scared (negative)' .

### **13.3. Notation Example**

The following is a documented strategy taken from *Coaching Jack: A Case Study in Anger Management Coaching Using NLP Techniques* (Hughes 2006). The strategy outlined is one in which the subject (Jack) translates a visual or auditory external trigger into an outburst of anger followed by internal distress.

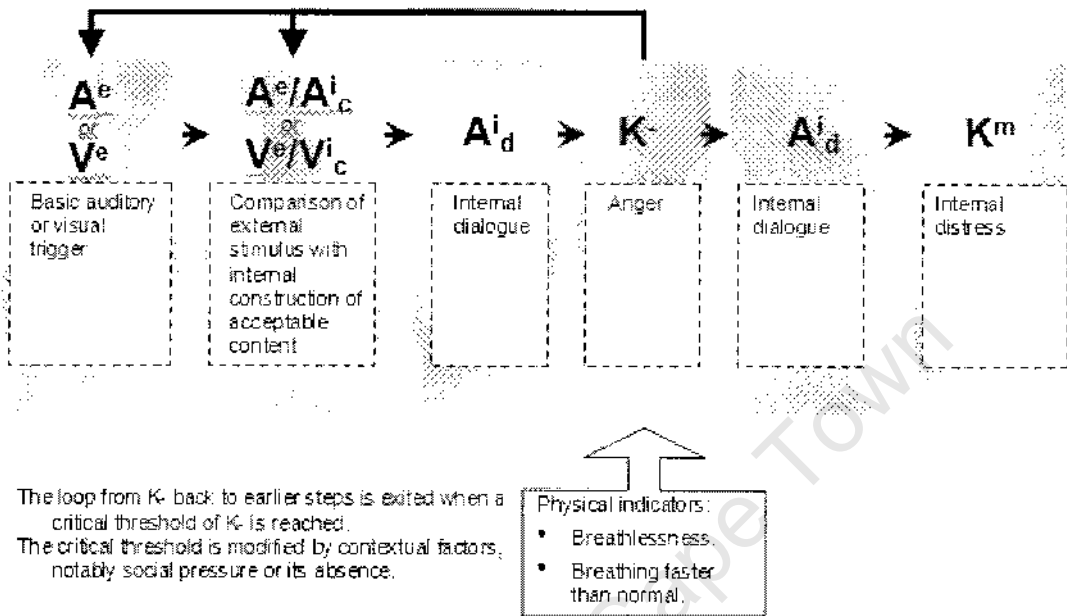
#### **Figure 16: NLP Strategy Notation Example**

Jack's underlying strategy for getting angry

## Underlying strategy

The basic strategy is modified depending on:

- modality of trigger:
- personal/impersonal sub-modality for visual modality trigger:
- physical presence of anger target.



## The Strategy Explained

The following are the steps in Jack's strategy:

- He sees or hears something external.
- He compares this 'trigger' with some acceptable event (internal construct').
- If the comparison is unfavourable, Jack goes through an internal dialogue, telling himself how unacceptable the trigger event was.
- This internal dialogue produces a negative feeling (anger). While the anger is below a critical threshold value, the strategy loops back to the internal dialogue, thus increasing the level of the negative emotion. Eventually, the critical threshold value of the anger is exceeded and the loop exits.
- At this point, Jack is angry, and demonstrates his anger in some way.
- After his external reaction, whether it is a verbal outburst or something else, Jack starts a different internal dialogue step. In this step he tells himself his outburst was bad/unacceptable, and so on.
- This leads to a meta-feeling, an internal distress, in which he feels bad about his anger.

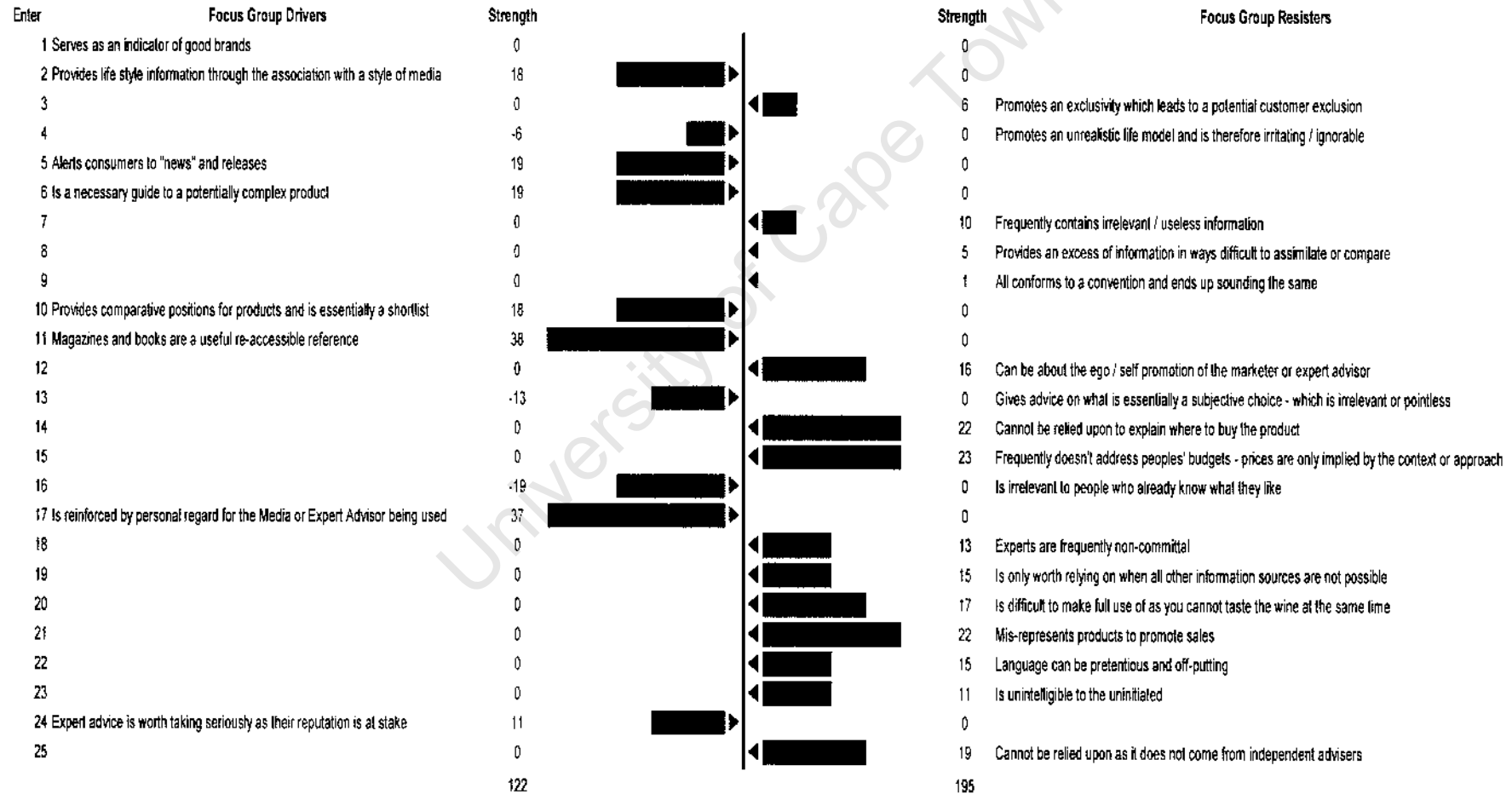
The loop takes Jack through the process frequently enough to escalate what could be mild irritation all the way to "righteous rage" (Hughes 2006).

# 14. Appendix D (Phase One Detailed Results)

## 14.1. Marketing Survey Results

The statements were classified depending on whether they were a positive statement in support of existing marketing (Focus Group Drivers) or negative statements about the same (Focus Group Resisters). The degree of agreement/disagreement is shown by the bars. When the bar is located on the same side as the statement it implies the focus groups views were supported by the survey. When the bar is on the opposite side the survey produced a contradictory result

**Figure 17: Marketing Survey Results**



## 14.2. Strategy Interviews Exercise Results

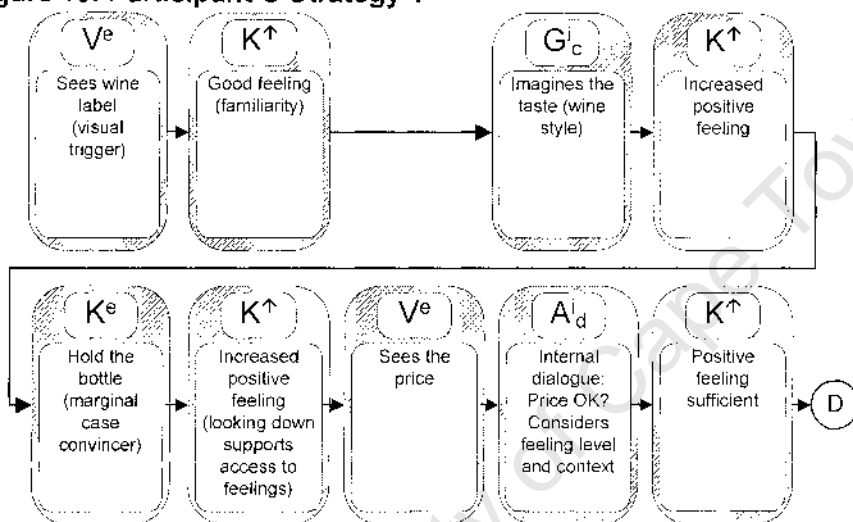
The results of the interviews are represented by NLP strategy diagrams. For an explanation of the notation see 5.2.5

When interviewed participants recalled and explained strategies that they use when they are able to taste the wine and when they are unable to. The strategies documented relate to situations where the consumer had *no direct method of tasting before buying*. These represent the most interesting strategies as the consumer essentially has to solve the no tasting situation. When tasting is available it dominates the decision process and other factors are marginalised.

### Participant U (Scenario 1)

Shopping for Sauvignon Blanc in Makro without expert assistance.

Figure 18: Participant U Strategy 1



Participant U maintains a personal list of wines that she particularly likes to return to. On this particular trip her intention was to purchase some of these wines and some new ones to go with them. Her first task was to select the familiar products — what she calls her "house" wine. Her approach is to reach the Sauvignon Blanc section of Makro and scan the range available. "U" is not aware that the products within a varietal are arranged in price order so she is scanning randomly.

Eventually she sees a wine that she knows she likes and zeros in on it. The familiarity of the label triggers a positive feeling and then she begins (unconsciously) to construct the taste of that particular wine. As she has had it before, she is probably basing this on her memory of the wine but it may be simply what she anticipates it tasted like. This representation in turn increases her positive feeling about the wine.

In some cases this was sufficient to justify selection. In others where she was not sure or was debating between options, she either looked down at the bottle or held the bottle and looked down at it. When she recalls this part of the process in the video she is looking down to her right which is symptomatic of her accessing her positive feelings about the wine she is looking at.

Once she has established just how good she feels about the wine she accesses the price information. Then she has a short internal dialogue in which she considers the positive feeling she has created about the wine in terms of the context she has planned for the wine and the price being asked. Is this price worth paying for "house" wine? If so, the decision is made.

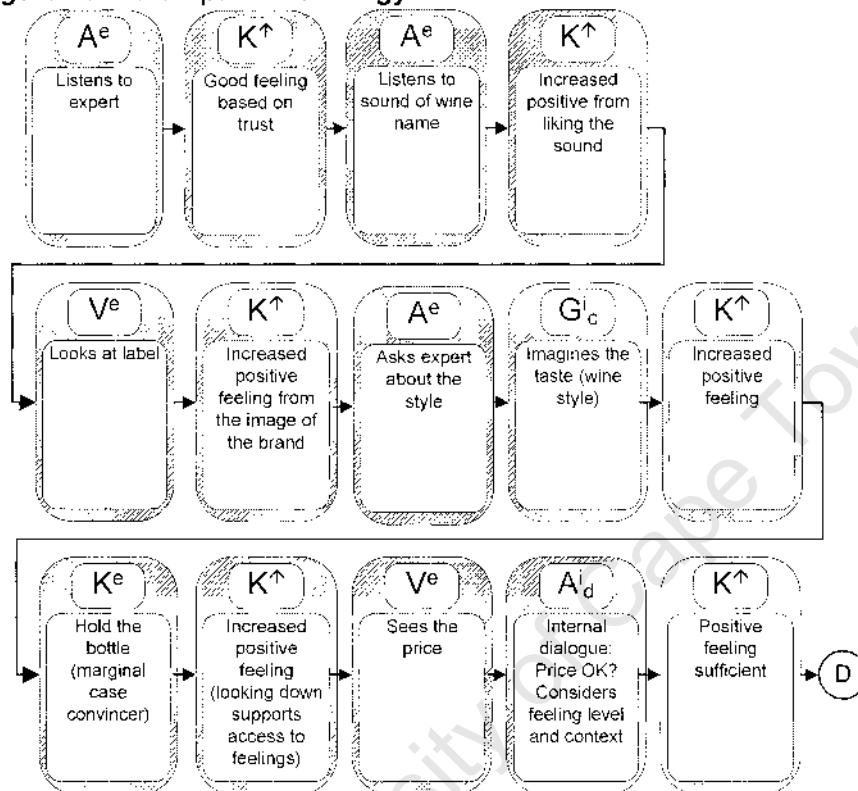
At any time in this process the feeling being generated might not be positive. The label may not be

familiar, she may recall disliking the taste, the bottle might feel wrong, or the price might be too high. If she hits one of these moments, then the process stops and she moves on to consider another wine.

Participant U (Scenario 2)

Shopping for Sauvignon Blanc in Makro with expert assistance.

**Figure 19: Participant U Strategy 2**



On this occasion "U" met a friend who is a wine buyer for a restaurant. She took the opportunity to find some new wines to go with her familiar set. These were to be more special wines for experimental purposes.

The basic structure of her strategy holds true. The last ten steps are more or less identical to how she was selecting wines on her own. The only difference is that she has added steps at the beginning of the process where she asks for and gets advice.

What she is asking for are recommendations for good but unusual Sauvignon Blancs. In the event her friend gave her about five to choose from. As he pointed them out she assessed the sound of the name and examined the label.

By the time this test had been applied the possible choices were down to two or three. At this point she asked for more information. What she was looking for was information on how the wine would compare with her familiar choice. What she wanted was something which would be similar or better in quality and style, but which would bring novelty and variety. If it was exactly the same then there would be little point in buying it.

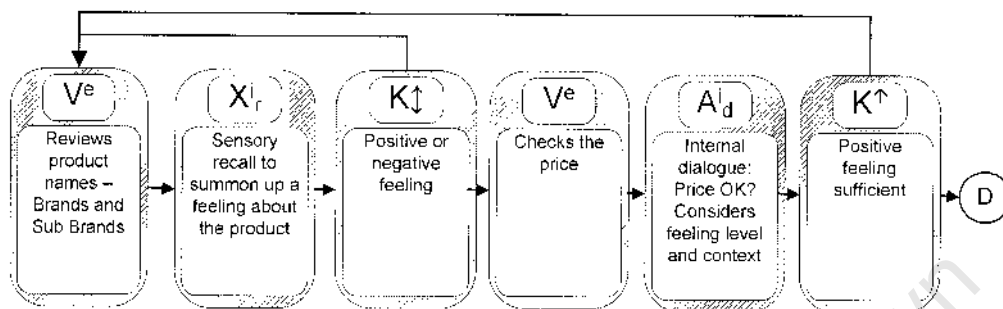
Her friend described the taste of the wine and she anticipated the style he was offering her. If the representation matched what she was seeking then the bottle remained in the list.

After the taste test one more wine was excluded and she considered the price, and although a little concerned, she bought the remaining two. The trust that she had in her advisor was the deciding factor that enabled her to pay the asking price.

Participant U (Scenario 3)

Choosing a wine in an expensive restaurant to please her partner and match food

**Figure 20: Participant U Strategy 3**



In this scenario U had gone to a special restaurant with her partner and was seeking to find a wine that would suit the occasion. Her motivation strategy had established a number of key values that needed to be considered.

She did not want to pay a high price for wine that she already has at home. She was therefore looking for something previously un-tasted which would appeal to her partner and which would cost no more than their agreed budget for the occasion. Her partner prefers Shiraz.

When presented with the wine list she went straight to the Shiraz section and was reviewing the Brand names and sub brand names, seeking for something that she recognised. In essence this is the same approach as when she was seeing her "house" wines, except that here there are no pictures and labels to guide her — only names.

She could not find a Shiraz that she knew so she started the process again, this time in the second favourite red wine section. Once again she was stumped. She repeated the process a few more times until she had reached Merlot — which is a varietal which she knows is pretty far down the list of her partner's favourites.

Here she found a brand name she knew. What is more important is that she knew she enjoyed the style of wine from that particular farm. She did this by recalling *other* wines that she had had from them and the resultant positive feeling was sufficient to warrant checking the price. The price was acceptable in the context so she ordered it.

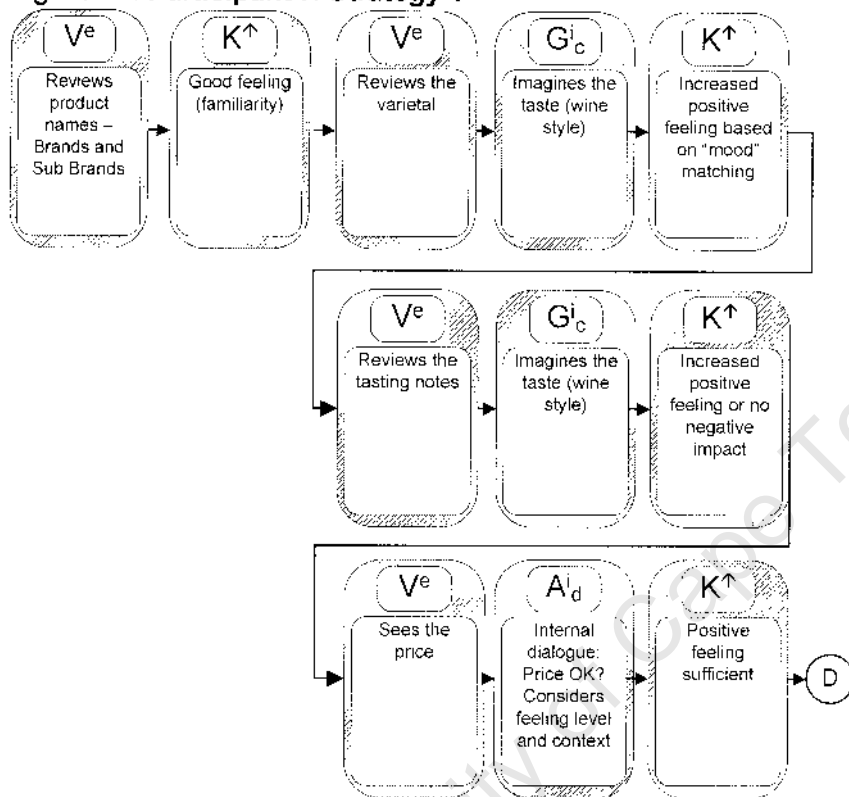
In the notation the recalling of other wines is denoted with X'. The "X" is intended to indicate that from the interview it is not clear how she did this, i.e. which representational systems she used to recall and build her opinion of the brand name under scrutiny. What is clear though, is that she was seeking to assess whether she had previously enjoyed the brand, and she was happy to take that combined with her liking for merlot to determine that the nearest match had been found.

What also comes out in the interview is that when asked who tasted the wine when it was brought, she insisted that her partner should try the wine, because she says, his opinion was the important one and because she "knows what it tastes like" — she said this even though the wine was new to her which would indicate that she was supporting her choice with a gustatory construct, although this is not certain.

Lastly, on this occasion, she did not use wine tasting notes to make her choice. This she says she will only resort to if there is no brand or product with which she already has familiarity with.

**Participant H (Scenario 1)**  
**Choosing a celebration wine in a restaurant**

**Figure 21: Participant H Strategy 1**



The context for this particular wine choice was a small scale celebration in a restaurant. H's view of the context was that the wine should be pleasing but not too expensive. She prefers not to pay restaurant prices for wines and even though it was a celebration this rule held true. The food had been chosen, and in the context of the choices made, she was looking for a red wine.

H scans the whole of the red section of the wine list seeking brand names that she is familiar with herself or which she has heard positive things about from people whose judgement she trusts. In the scenario she described she found a particular brand that she had positive feelings about. This was based on her experience of a different varietal produced by the same winery and the fact that the varietal on offer was one that she likes and suited her mood.

In terms of her process she constructs what she anticipates the wine will taste like by combining her experience of the winery style and the varietal characteristics and gets a sufficiently positive match with what she described as her "mood" that she went straight on to check the price and make the decision.

**Choosing from the interview prepared wine list**

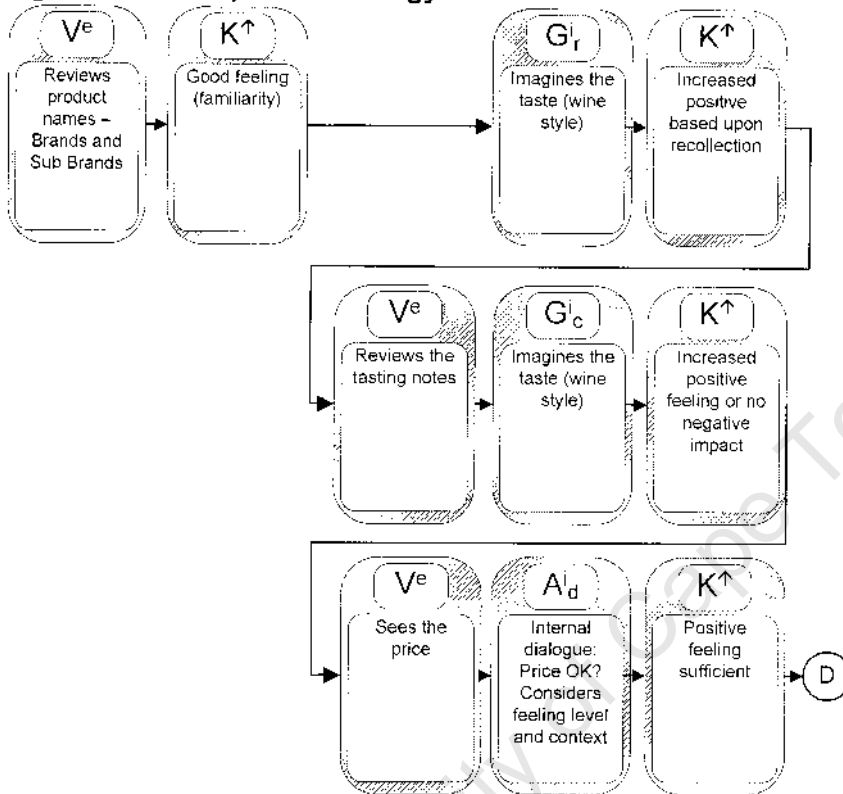
H imagined herself in a similar context but from the list she was shown she managed to find four wines that she was pleased to consider on the basis of their received reputation and her personal experience of the style. She chose between them by first adding the three middle layer steps where she read the varietal notes picking up key words that gave her a positive gustatory representation (or at least gave her nothing bad). Unable to differentiate on this basis she returned to choosing the

varietal that most matched her "mood" and confirmed the price of that product and with that the decision was made.

Participant H(Scenario 2)

Choosing a chardonnay to take along to a wine club tasting.

**Figure 22: Participant H Strategy 2**



In this scenario, H's choice of varietal had been made by the context she was buying for — it was a chardonnay tasting. However, H has a set of values that she brings to this type of situation where many people will be trying the same wine. Those values are that the price should be in a certain "modest" range (in order to demonstrate that a good wine can be bought at that price point) and that the wine should promote discussion / disagreement amongst her fellow club members.

When H makes her choice for this context she follows an almost identical strategy to the one she follows in the restaurant.

She begins by reviewing wine producer names in order to provide herself with a shortlist of wines that she has some exposure to either through direct tasting of the style of the producer or through reputation that she has heard of from people she values as knowledgeable. On this occasion the wines she shortlisted were based on recollection of the estates that she had previously encountered although the actual varietal in question was not something she had tasted.

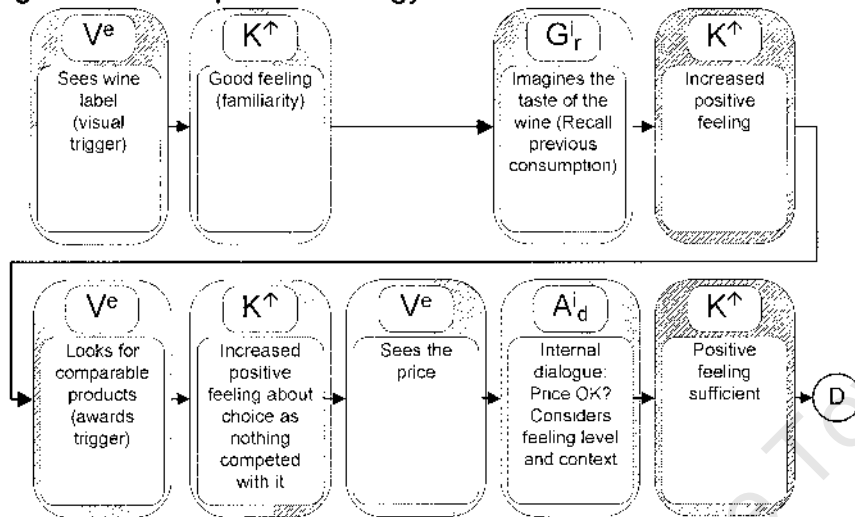
Once again, H's filtering strategy is to read the back label information. She does this for two reasons: firstly the language used can put her off particularly if it is either too elaborate and detailed or at the other end of the scale, quite patronising. Essentially she is looking for enough information to produce an adequate gustatory representation on which to base her decision. It is worth noting that "H" has one of the best noses in an "amateur" that I have personally encountered, so her reliance on this approach is understandable.

She compares her positive feeling, checks the price is in the acceptable range and once again considers the wine for the context she intends, and then she buys.

**Participant R (Scenario 1)**

**Shopping in Makro for wine to take away on a weekend with a group of friends.**

**Figure 23: Participant R Strategy 1**



The context for this particular purchase was buying "house" wine for a weekend away with a large group of friends. R was planning to buy some better quality wine to accompany main mealtimes, but her objective was to get a significant quantity of "decent" wine which would be acceptable to all participants. As part of R's motivation strategy she had preselected cabernet sauvignon as the varietal that she would target, and she had a particular visual memory of a particular vineyard that she set out to find.

R found the cabernet sauvignon section and she saw the label she wanted, created the gustatory memory and at this point the majority of the decision was made. However, as a convincer strategy R looked for visual cues of wine in the same section and price range that may offer up an alternative. Her evidence procedure of a good challenge is the presence on the bottle of an award sticker for that specific bottle of wine.

On this occasion she could see nothing that would serve as a challenge, and even if she had it would only have served to bring the quantity of the chosen wine down to be substituted by the new alternative.

This was interesting in that she displayed seemingly quite contrary needs. On the one hand the wine that she bought was well known to her, she sees it as a good reliable wine, yet at the same time she is seeking an alternative to give some variety. When there are no triggers that she relies on to prompt an alternative she simply buys the quantity she requires in the one wine.

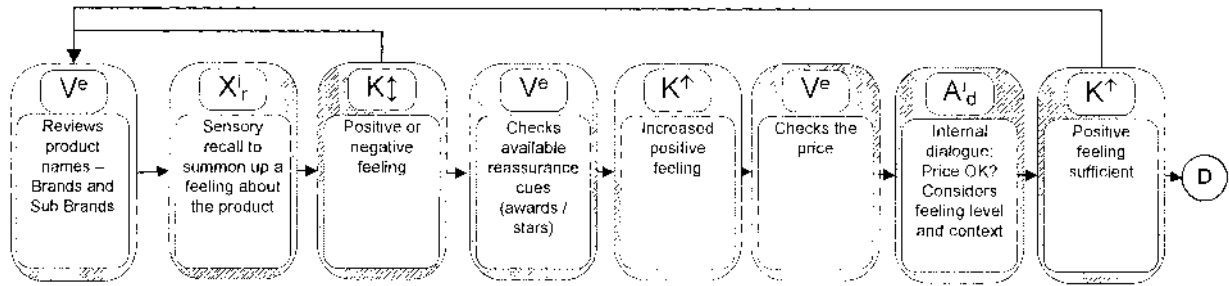
It should be noted that R did not choose to examine wine notes on the back of bottles, she relies heavily, when making an adventurous choice, on the presence of awards that confirm the wine has some quality.

Having failed to find a viable alternative she checked the price for the context she intended, made a calculation and decided to buy the wine.

**Participant R (Scenario 2)**

**Choosing a wine for a celebration from the example wine list**

Figure 24: Participant R Strategy 2



The context painted for this choice was one of a weekend celebration with her husband. Under these circumstances **R** explained that there would be a price ceiling to avoid paying excessive restaurant prices, but that the ceiling in this case would be higher than normal. As her fictional dinner partner was her husband she was also prepared to be more adventurous than she otherwise might be. Consequently she is seeking something "distinctive" with "personality". The other rule that she firmly applied was "it must be a red". This was due to the time of day and the fact that her husband doesn't drink white wine.

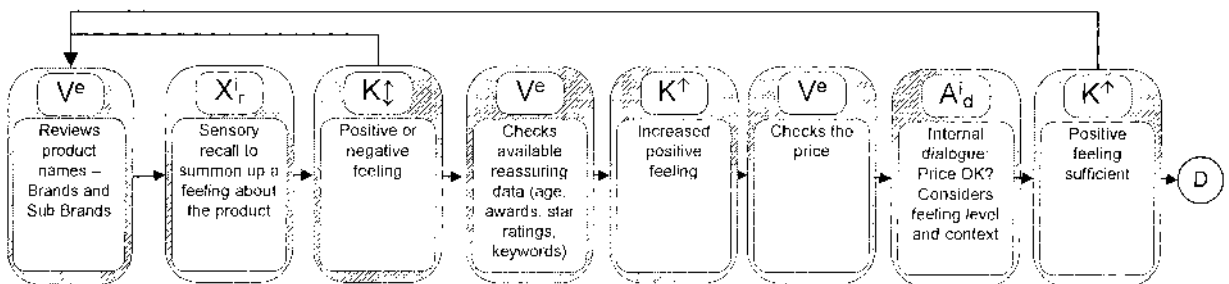
**R** scans the wine list and reviews the brand names and varietals. For each wine that she looks at she creates some sort of kinaesthetic representation of that particular producer / varietal combination. Each offering is quickly judged by summoning up a feeling. These may be visual memories, they may be tastes, and they may be auditory recollections. From the available information in the interview it is unclear how she does this — and her approach may vary from wine to wine. One wine, for example, was rejected because it was well liked but "too familiar" and failed on the desire to be adventurous; another was rejected because she has never liked the style of the vineyard — even though it has a huge reputation

Once a wine with a sufficiently high feeling is found she then checks the available cues to confirm her selection. In this case this was the Platter star rating. Finally she reviews the price and confirms it is suitable for the occasion — and then she ordered.

Once again she did not choose to review the tasting notes before she made her choice. When asked to do so, she said that she uses tasting notes as a convincer that nothing is wrong. She looks for two things: firstly she wants to check there are no words that "are frightening" and bring up a negative internal representation, and secondly she seeks words that indicate that the wine is distinctive in some way. On this occasion however, she was sold without reading the notes, and did not feel she needed to read them.

Participant **D** (Scenario 1)  
Buying wine in a mid range restaurant to drink with friends

Figure 25: Participant D Strategy 1



For D when buying wine in a restaurant, the context does not directly drive his price ceiling. Instead, what he does is scan through the list in order to find a product that he can be reasonably sure he knows the retail price of. He then calculates roughly the extent to which the restaurant is marking up prices. If the mark-up is high he may choose not to buy wine, or look only at the lower price end, because he "hate(s) being ripped off." If the mark up is low or reasonable this will lead him to look at the higher priced products. He is not looking at absolute price, rather the value for money he is getting.

In the context D chose, the objective was to get a reasonable quality wine without being overcharged. Having conducted the above exercise in his head, he had a price bracket in mind. All this activity can be usefully treated as part of his motivation strategy.

He began his search by looking for familiar reference points — which could be either brands or labels with which he was familiar. To be familiar with a brand D will have had to taste their wine before. If he finds something using this approach then he will shortlist it and do a comparison between the ones he shortlists.

On this occasion nothing familiar in the chosen range was forthcoming, so he was going to have to "take a flyer". Interestingly, D's willingness to do this is driven by his impression of the quality of the restaurant itself. A better restaurant will lead to a more adventurous spirit on his part.

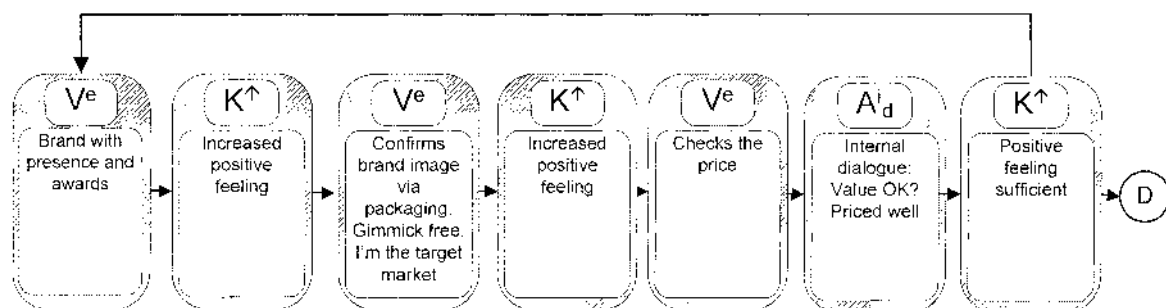
Without familiar names D then seeks indicators of quality. On this occasion, in the absence of any rating stars, he used varietal, wine age and price as indicators combined with a novelty factor which he associated with not being boring. Put simply he avoids the big brands and is reassured by a higher price as long as it is within the range he has established for the restaurant.

D's approach appears on the face of it to be very different from other interviewees. He presents his process in as a highly heuristic set of rules that he applies. Examining the structure of what he does, the steps are not too different from other interviewees, but he sees it as a logical application of principles more than making a best guess.

What is interesting however, is that when he was presented with a wine list that only offered him the barest of details about a wine, he still had ways of translating this information into a judgement about the wine and he chose the one which in his opinion offered the best chance or probability of success. What is also interesting is that his method of translating this information is based purely on his own personal experience and received rules. In the end he chose a 5 year old cabernet which was at the top end of his acceptable range. The price was reassuring and the ageing indicated that the wine was "not likely to bite your head off". If D has other information he will incorporate it into his judgement process; but in the end he has to come down to a gut feeling.

Participant D (Scenario 2)  
Buying at Makro to find new/experimental wines

**Figure 26: Participant D Strategy 2**



D went to Makro with the specific intention of buying new or experimental wines. He is someone who is highly motivated to try new products and he describes himself as constantly pursuing new or interesting products.

D's strategy for spotting the product in the Makro situation is to wander the aisles and look for new brands or labels that he is unfamiliar with and which have arrived in significant numbers — "presence" - *and* with significant awards. Brand presence is an indication that Makro presumably feels that the wine will sell.

On this occasion he found a new brand offering three different blends. D's view is that blends (particularly the more complex blends) are much more difficult to anticipate how they will taste.

Having established that the wine is there in sufficient presence with awards to recommend it, he then looks at the brand image and the packaging. D needs the packaging to be gimmick free and classic in its approach. Anything that uses a "neon" label or a strange bottle is not, he feels, being marketed at him, and is therefore unlikely to have something he will appreciate in the bottle. Anything trying to grab attention in ways that is not about the wine should, in his view, be avoided.

D essentially sees the branding as the "window to the soul" of the wine, and from it he will extrapolate a whole series of "facts" about the actual contents of the wine. If these facts are to his liking he will consider the wine further and on checking the price, if he feels the value being offered is OK, he will buy the wine.

Once again D is relying on a tenuous set of data to put together a story for the wine. What is not available from the interviews is the extent to which he tries to anticipate what the wine will taste like. At no point does he say he refers to the tasting notes, being happy to rely on the information of varietals, awards and presence.

## 15. Appendix E (Phase Two Detailed Results)

### 15.1. Out of the Box Exercise Results

Note: Documented responses in normal text. Interviewer notes and perceptions are in bracketed italics.

#### 15.1.1. Participant H: Approach / Plan:

- H starts by selecting the varietal she requires. In this instance she chose Pinotage because of personal preference and because the number of options and choices is less daunting
- She then chooses a vendor. Here she chose Makro because she is impressed by the variety and price range, and finds the mark-up acceptable. Previously she had had positive experiences and she knows the store well. (*Vendor functioning for her in the role of advisor.*)
- H then visits the vendor (Makro) and directly finds Pinotage section because she does not wish to be distracted from her varietal decision.
- She then selects new wines by scanning wine branding images/labels. H is put off by labels that are not "serious" wine product: "no kiddie pictures". Such a product might be considered last if nothing else is available.
- She then reviews each wine as she finds them, confirming the price first to ensure it is within the range she intends to pay.
- H then checks the back label. Here H checks for keywords that confirm a positive view or keywords that will mean the wine fails and is rejected. (*Wine label represents separate advisor.*)

- **H** is also seeking factual information. She examines the region information as this enables her to feel more comfortable with the product if she is comfortable it is good region for the varietal. She examines the tasting note and is particularly interested in the fruit style / degree of fruit dominance. She tries to avoid very fruity wines. H will continue doing this until she has a shortlist of around 5 wines,
- Then she filter wines out on the basis of price. Although she has already considered price she looks at it again to gain reassurance / gain an understanding about the quality of the product. Typically she is looking for a product that is in the range of R80 — R110 as this she feels confirms good quality at the price point. Below this price is risky from a quality perspective, above this the risk also increases (even though she has a budget that can go beyond this point, she feels it is risky in terms of wasting money should the product fail).  
*(Anticipating a negative kinaesthetic experience should the wine not produce value for the money spent.)*
- Then she filters out wines on the basis of wine label tone and relevance. She seeks labels that offer a straightforward tone and addresses the product itself, not its heritage.
- Having done that H anticipates that she may (optionally) use the Platter rating and feedback as an external validation. She uses Platter because she is familiar with it; it was what she was introduced to. If she does this H is seeking some agreement between Platter and the bottle label for the specific wine. She also seeks confirmation of at least a 3 star rating in the context of the price range. Also H will gain a general impression of the quality coming out of the vineyard from the ratings of other wines they produce. *(Reassurance strategy)*  
Whilst she is familiar with Platter she has found herself to hold different views to the Platter printed results and for this reason she would only use it to avoid high risk wines below 3 stars.
- Finally she reacts to wines based on the general impression of the wine brand and the deal it offers. She freely admits to letting her gut reaction to the brand be the final factor that will clinch the deal. *(H is not excluding wines at this point, more seeing which one she has the generated the greatest positive kinaesthetic response to, taking in all the factors. In a sense she runs her whole strategy for each bottle, scores it, and takes the one where she has the most positive feeling.)*

#### **Actual Strategy Used and Outcome:**

H ran her strategy almost entirely in accordance with her plan.

- She found that finding labels that did nothing to explain the wine but sought to portray a picture of the heritage/makers of the wine put her off
- She considered wines as low priced as R45 which was below her anticipated low price and the average price considered was around 85-90
- After she had selected her shortlist she was surprised to see the Platter star rating on the Makro price label. She used this as a reassurance strategy that she had selected well, and nothing was excluded on star rating.
- She tried asking an assistant for a Platter wine guide, but they didn't know what she meant.
- She considered "googling" her selection with her phone internet access but could not get reception and was not overly concerned.
- She considered awards granted to her shortlist (Absa Top Ten Pinotage / Veritas / Michelangelo awards) and was reassured that if they had awards then they must have something going for it.
- She went back to the label and was swayed by the label that gave her the information she needed as factually as possible.

#### **Tasting Result**

H was not convinced that the label notes represented the wine fully, but she enjoyed the wine and was happy with the outcome. The wine was of the style that she prefers for that particular varietal.

She was happy to add the producer to her mental list of acceptable producers.

As a pure coincidence she was talking to a peer-friend who had been tasting wine in the Cape and who had also selected the wine H chose. This external endorsement from someone who had tasted the wine was very reassuring.

**Advisors discussed but not used:**

Internet sites	Has no familiarity or relationship with them to relate her taste to theirs and learning to work with them "adds to the complicatedness" of the problem.
Peer friends	She sees this as an option but chooses not to use it because she doesn't see them as more knowledgeable than she is, and whilst she will listen for ideas she won't take them as definitive. She also finds that she does not agree with people in this group very often. There was one friend that fits the bill, but she likes to make up her own mind.
More wine knowledgeable friends / relatives	<p>In general H sees using this as an option takes away part of the fun of finding out for herself. Once again she is interested to hear ideas as long as she has the independence to process them and make her own judgment about her own preferences. Being restricted to the advice of others removes the possibility that she may find something that suits her but not her advisors. For H wine choice is a "personal thing", so in the long run she needs to develop this skill for herself.</p> <p>In essence she says she thinks she has spent enough time to get sufficient skill to be able to interpret the information presented well enough to make a judgement for herself about how a wine matches her personal taste, and someone else cannot do that for her. Advisors are only required if you cannot do that for yourself.</p> <p>In a subsequent conversation clarifying this view, H confirmed that she is more likely to use help from more knowledgeable friends or acquaintances when the risk of getting the decision wrong more than offsets the potential fun she will get from choosing herself. Such situations might occur with special occasions where she would want to choose an expensive wine that she is unfamiliar with, or when she is buying wine as a gift for someone else.</p>
Wine Magazine	She has never bought it or read it
Absa Bank Pinotage Top Ten Competition	<p>Might be of use but the availability of the top ten wines is unlikely to someone on a budget. She is seeking good wine at a value point and this competition excludes the level of wine she is targeting.</p> <p>She also doubts whether a panel of experts will have "her taste buds".</p>
Members of the public "panel"	Individually she would not see any value in taking their advice, but if sufficient numbers were supporting and advocating a wine she would give it a look.
Shop assistants	Although she sees them as trained, she does not see them as adding anything that she cannot get from her more trusted sources.

### 15.1.2. Participant C: Approach / Plan:

- C said that she needed to start by generating ideas — but rather than looking at Platter which offers no help as to availability, she would have to go to a shop.
- C needs a shop that has a bigger than usual range (not necessarily mainstream). She anticipates that this will be necessary in order to get a vineyard that she is not personally familiar with. As she is based in Johannesburg she nominated Bootleggers because of their reputation for not being "afraid of the unusual".
- Had she been in the Cape she would have used other specialist restaurants/wine bars as an idea generating approach. These she sees as knowledgeable with no axe to grind. As an alternative she is considering looking at a web site for one of the bars that she is familiar with and impressed by (the Nose Bar). The issue here with this approach is availability. She anticipates being attracted by the wine/vineyard name of the wine backed up by style information. She uses the Nose Bar specifically as a good filter because she trusts them to select good quality for all pricing points. (*C does not view this particular source as a vendor with expertise. From her perspective they are operating more as friends or acquaintances whom she recognises to have skill in this area*)
- C anticipates that when she goes to Bootleggers she will start by looking at the section that deals with her favourite varietal. If this fails she will move onto other varietals.
- She scans labels seeking ones with which she is not familiar.
- On seeing a bottle that she does not know she gets a sense of that wine through the branding and name of the wine. She is looking for a "serious image" that seeks to justify a price in excess of R100.
- Having passed the "taking it seriously" test she would check the price as a reassurance of the seriousness of the product. Under R85 will be excluded — given the objective and financial constraint of the exercise.
- Having created a shortlist in her chosen varietal she will then repeat the procedure in other sections of the store to see if there are any serious challengers to her existing shortlist. C anticipates at this point that there would be a large number of options.
- Next she would like to lift and review each bottle of wine. Given the number of options she will start by consider those wines that are packaged in bottles/capsules that she is attracted to. She anticipates she will review all her options in this way. This will give her a benchmark with the first bottles she reviews and then those that follow are trying to match up to it. C is reviewing information on the bottle, looking for reasons to exclude it. This will include factual information about the wine production technique which she does not have a preference for, but it will also include the language used in the context of the wine product/branding. She is looking for information about the wine itself rather than seeing generic information or pretentious food matching comments. The tone and focus adopted is seen as a reflection of the "seriousness" of the wine maker.
- By this process she reduces the shortlist to a manageable number. She will record the details of those wines on her shortlist.
- Then C anticipates consulting other information sources about the wines on her shortlist. She would like to be able to consult other people/acquaintances but she is not comfortable doing this unless she casually runs into these people. These people would be selected on the basis that she has evidence that they are passionate about wine and like styles of wines that she likes, but who will broaden her experience of different vineyards. Here she would be looking for other new ideas / confirmation of her existing shortlist, but also evidence that the wine was available in Johannesburg. However if this doesn't happen she will proceed without it. The Nose Bar website might also be used at this point.
- Once the shortlist is created she *might* use Platter as a sanity check to confirm her impression so far of the wine and ensure there are no facts which she might use to exclude the wine e.g:

region, and ensure the winemaker is not someone she knows she does not like, an excess of awards (making it potentially overpriced) etc.

- In the final instance she will decide between the remaining shortlist items by using the strength / emotion behind the recommendation. If the recommended wines are not available she will revert to the branding / feel of the bottle to decide.

#### **Actual Strategy Used and Outcome:**

- C usually buys wine by visiting vineyards and tasting wine. In this sense her plan represented very much an imagined path that she thought she would use. In the event C's use of her anticipated plan was not as thorough as she thought it might be.
- She went to Bootleggers as she thought they had a reputation for unusual wines and she quickly tried out the strategy and created a "quick" shortlist. She then by coincidence went to the Cape and in the course of her visit tried out some of these wines. This is her primary strategy that she prefers to use because it involves tasting. By accident she did visit a vineyard that she had categorically ruled out on the basis of its brand image and was frustrated to discover that she really likes their wine and would not have bought it had she not tasted it.
- Another consequence of the trip to the Cape was that in preparation for the trip she had prepared a list of wines that she would like to try — but which were at vineyards which were not open for tasting. This list she uses in bottle stores in the Cape to find wines that would otherwise might not be available in Johannesburg. This list was derived from an extensive review of Platter that only occurs whenever she goes on a wine buying trip. Platter here is being used as a shortlist maker of vineyards to visit — not wines to buy.
- After her return from the Cape she went on her second trip to Bootleggers to try again. She found very little that she was not familiar with — which surprised her. She did not have her bottle store shortlist with her as (from her previous visit to Bootleggers) she had drawn the conclusion that Bootleggers reputation was not well deserved and that the wines on her list would only be available in the Cape. She now regards Bootleggers as mostly "mainstream" but that they are still her best Johannesburg option.
- C went to the Shiraz section as planned and scanned for unfamiliar wines. She was very disappointed to find only one new wine. For this reason she broadened her search into other areas of the shop — including premium blends.
- Here she found three more new wines and she ran her strategy, as she anticipated, assessing them. The first of these failed because of the branding "pitch", in which she resented the content. The second failed because of the pretentious nature of the marketing "pitch". The third failed for the same reason. She was looking for information about the source vineyard and the varietal and other factual information — but in all cases she had to get past all the marketing pitch and by the time she had read it she was already rejecting the wine.
- As an aside, C would like to see reviews / reaction to the wines that explains very clearly whether the reviewer liked the wine — rather than simply an assessment of it. This she says does not exist.
- She continued to search for wines in other areas but could find nothing to challenge her existing selection, so she bought the wine. Her choice was influenced by the varietal blend, the region and she was not offended by the marketing material.
- It should be noted that the remainder of her anticipated plan included consulting friends, the Nose Bar webs site and Platter. In the event she did none of this because, firstly the opportunity of talking to friends did not come up and in her view it would only throw up ideas which she would already knows or which were not available. In short, she was very disappointed by the experience of trying to buy wine without visiting the Cape as the range was far more limited than she thought it would be.

## Tasting Result

C was a little apprehensive about the wine choice as it was an unfamiliar varietal blend for the region, but that was an exciting prospect. In the event she thought the wine was of reasonable quality but slightly over priced for what it was. This may be a result of being used to cellar door prices from more unusual vineyards. In short her preference remains to visit the vineyards themselves.

### Advisors discussed but not used:

Platter	Obvious point to start but not helpful as it is comprehensive and does not help generate ideas.
Wine Magazine	Wine reviews are random and she believes promoted / sponsored by the vineyards — and she does not know the reviewers.
Awards in Bottle store	Regards them as no guarantee of quality
Bottle Store Assistants	They have no chance of helping because they do not know what she does not know — in terms of vineyards and her preferences.

### 15.1.3. Participant G: Approach / Plan:

- G is a relatively novice drinker of wine; she says her knowledge of wine is not extensive. Consequently her approach is a function of this situation.
- Her instinct is that because she has little knowledge she would like to tackle the exercise on her own. She is prepared to ask people for advice but she is clear that she does not necessarily wish to take it. In this sense she is interested to get a greater understanding of what she likes, of her own taste and methods of selecting wine. She carries around a little note book in which she takes notes of wines that friends and acquaintances either recommend or which she experiences. This she does to create shortlists for either new or return buy wines. G is prepared to ask people that she knows *personally* and considers more knowledgeable about wine. When talking to them she gives them clear criteria for what she is looking for and she tells them what she knows she likes. Her strategy is about extending her range of familiar wines by picking peoples' minds and cutting down the overwhelmed feeling she has in front of a wall of bottle choices in a shop.
- Armed with her notebook containing her existing notes, she will go to Makro. It is convenient for her, and convenience is a factor. She chooses to go to a particular section — the unusual varieties / wines. This is because she has found wines in this section before that she enjoyed. She is aware of all the different varietal sections but she could not tell you what a particular varietal tastes like — so knowing what it is does not help her (at this stage) select a wine.
- G has a price "rule" in her head that says for a red wine she is prepared to pay between R80 and R100. More than that and she feels uncomfortable with the expense and the potential risk if she does not like it; less than that and she recognises the quality will drop.
- In order to select the wine she adopts an approach which does not use any factors such as varietal, vineyard, region etc. At this stage she takes a "lucky dip" approach based on whether she likes the name of the wine or the labelling, or if she finds a taste note that *attracts* her, she will give a wine a try. She does not rely on any particular element to attract her. Once she finds something she finds attractive, she takes the plunge.
- G accepts that this is really random, and this she sees as a function of her current level of knowledge combined with her desire to learn for herself.

### Actual Strategy Used and Outcome:

- As chance would have it G was in the Cape meeting a client at a winery for lunch. She had never been to the winery before. She decided that she would complete the exercise at the estate because it was more exciting to do so, and in the process purchase a wine from a location where she had visited and was creating memories.

- In effect she ran her strategy, only in a different location. She examined the bottles on offer and was "taken" with the Syrah. Once again it was her desire to find new things which prompted the sale and in this case it was the varietal name Syrah as opposed to Shiraz. She knew they were linked in some way, but the mystery of finding out whether the Syrah would be different was enough to tip the balance.
- She did not taste the wine before purchasing it.

### Tasting Result

G was delighted with the wine she chose. It delivered the new experience she was looking for and the winery has gone into her book, so that she can buy wine from it again.

### Advisors discussed but not used:

Wine Writers

G does not use wine writer experts as a source of ideas because she cannot explain to them what she likes or what she is looking for, and they are not her friend.

She also thinks that she does not have the language knowledge to get the most out of what wine writers say.

A personal recommendation from someone she trusts carries a lot of weight but G cannot get this from experts.

Shop Assistants

She has not had a positive experience of assistants. She wants to be certain that they know more about wine than she does, and she is not convinced of that. Her own lack of knowledge is an inhibitor here as she is uncertain when she gets good advice

Platter

She has never looked at Platter because she is happy to take a risky approach and does not welcome the effort required to get into understanding the subject at that level.

### 15.1.4. Participant J: Approach / Plan:

- J's first step is to consult Wine magazine. He intends to look for an estate that he has never heard of. He would be scanning articles and seeing if there is anything that he knows to be different. This may be the estate, the cultivar, the blend.
- He would read about the wine referenced in order to establish whether the wine was worth a look. He would want first to know the price bracket/ball park that the wine is in. This needs to fit with what he is intending / looking for.
- He would then read any wine notes written about the wine and seek reassurance that the wine connoisseur is confident that it is a "great tasting wine". He is particularly drawn by descriptions that enable him to evoke the taste of the wine, and when he anticipates that the wine is something he will like then he is drawn to that wine. For J the clarity of the taste description is a major driver of his decision process.
- J then moves on to looking at the presentation of the bottle and the label. He is assessing how sophisticated the wine branding appears to be and checking that against the price asked.
- J's next step is to try to source the wine, and he particularly has a preference for using places where he may have an opportunity of tasting the wine, as this reduces the risk.
- If he does not have an opportunity to taste it he will, given the opportunity, consult knowledgeable friends whom he believes have tastes similar to his. If he bumps into such a person in the course of his day, he will ask them all about the wine. He will seek information on value for money, vintage tasted, taste sensation. The difference between the feedback he gets from a passive expert writing in a magazine and the feedback from a friend is that the friend's feedback will be tailored based on their knowledge of J's preferences and established likes and

dislikes. He particularly likes it when the friend can relate the new wine to something that he already knows. The interaction gives him reassurance.

- J does acknowledge that this could happen with a wine critic if you had followed their writings for a number of years, and understand their writing style and when their recommendation will be something worth looking.
- During this process J may look at Platter to establish the feedback for the new wine and at the same time would look up wines he does know in order to check that the descriptions he is getting for the new wine give familiar tastes that he prefers. (*Interestingly J has found a method of trying to compare tastes that are described linguistically which he cannot readily imagine without referring to something he already knows.*)
- J would also use Platter to prompt him with new (to him) estates with good reputations. He might look for reassurance of his impression of a reputation that he has picked up over the years but never acted upon, or he would be happy to look at estates that he has never heard of but which appear from Platter to have a consistently good reputation.
- The effort that J is planning to put in is driven by the price budget of the exercise. If the limit were lower then he would take less trouble and accept more risk.
- Then he would go to a quality retail outlet with his shortlist. He anticipates using Norman Goodfellows because of their knowledge of wine. He would ask them for information about wines on his list. He would find the following useful: Background on the wine; taste information; current popularity and sales; winemaker; profile of the wine consumers who have bought it; — in the sense of what type of wines do they like. (*Here he is trying to link back to something he knows.*) On the basis of the answers he gets he tries to relate it back to something (cultivar, estate, etc) within his experience.
- He would finally examine the wine that appeals to him the most and check the information from the estate on the back label to confirm what he has understood. Once again information on the contents of the bottle is the information he seeks.
- If he is happy with the price he will buy the wine.

#### **Actual Strategy Used and Outcome:**

- J determined to use the exercise to find something that was very far "out of the box" for him. He decided to try to find a Shiraz, and given that his belief was that he did not like Shiraz, he thought this would be interesting and challenging.
- He executed his plan looked at Wine magazine but instead of looking for wines he found himself looking for a new estate with an obviously good reputation. He augmented his search for an *estate* by including the Platter guide.
- His evidence procedure for this reputation was built upon being attracted to the background to the history of the estate and their *reputation over time*. The history on its own he sees as being of no value, but the history in the context of what the winery was producing he sees as firm evidence of a focus on the product. He also wanted to know where the winery name comes from, which area are they in, and which wines they make.
- Once he found some wineries he departed from his plan and went to visit their websites. This he did to confirm his impressions so far. *It should be noted that this is something J didn't usually do and was prompted to do so by the discussion on whether he ever did this that happened in his first interview, and the idea of using this as a source took hold.*
- J was taken by one particular winery. He was drawn to a number of diverse facts about the winery, these were principally awards won. What also attracted him was the Southern African character of the branding, which he saw as being celebratory of African culture and history without playing up to the "African" image that appears on so many brands.
- The distinguishing factor for J was that the particular winery had produced good results from inception. This he thought was impressive and showed that there must be something worth a

look at. The reputation of the winemaker, and her story also filled J with a sense of excitement about her talent.

- Having established his winery he then looked at the wines. He was still open to considering any varietal but was particularly taken with the tasting notes for the multi-award winning Shiraz, which fulfilled his criterion of providing a good description of the wine which produced a very positive taste expectation. He was also taken by the idea that the winery was, over time, trying to reduce the alcohol levels in the wine in order to not mask the taste of the fruit.
- At this point he realised that having found such celebrated wine he would be unlikely to actually find a bottle — particularly since the vintage was 2003.
- His excitement level took him through a high number of phone calls to a number of different wine shops. Eventually he found one that had the wine.
- He went to the shop and decided to get the views of the senior "wine connoisseur" in the shop. The very strong recommendation which was based not on the accolades but on first hand experience of tasting the wine gave J further positive evidence.
- It was only at this point that J asked the price. He expected the price to be way beyond the exercise limit, but was delighted to discover that it was not. By this point J's evidence as to the quality of this wine was extremely strong. The price was still sufficiently high to give him reassurance of quality. He decided there and then that he was unlikely to beat the deal that was on offer by further searching and consulting of friends so he bought the wine.  
*This is consistent with the findings of Phase One where the consumer builds their kinaesthetic reaction to the wine using whatever strategies are available to them and once a threshold is passed they will buy the wine — regardless of whether they have considered it from all their preferred perspectives.*

### Tasting Result

J was "beyond impressed" by the wine when he tasted it. It fulfilled his expectations and made him revisit his opinion of Shiraz. What was also very evident is that the experience of finding this wine broadened J's knowledge about wine, and he was clearly excited that he had had such a positive result.

### Advisors discussed but not used:

Platter Ratings	J's tasting experience and ratings do not always coincide with Platter.
Assistants in Large Supermarkets	He does not believe they have the necessary knowledge.
<b>Internet</b>	Not a Internet consumer
TV Adverts	Not influenced by them unless they are humorous and indicative of the experience that the wine is suitable for
Wineshows / Winex	Not reliable because Winex is more of a social event and these events can be expensive events.
Shop wine tastings	Makro tasting on a Saturday is inconvenient.

### 15.1.5. Participant U: Approach / Plan:

- U determines varietal required in order to reduce the complexity of the choice.
- Consider looking through recent Wine magazine for feedback on the chosen varietal. **U** likes Wine magazine for this because it offers feedback on a range of price tags for a varietal selection enabling her to fit the budget. She calls this "Cold expert input". This really is an ideas generating process, looking for which wines are currently getting exposure. Her husband buys Wine magazine and it is therefore accessible. She likes the magazine because using it has

been previously successful and educational. She also values that it presents a focused, manageable number of newly available choices.

- U will read the description, taste and style and tries to anticipate if the wine is of a style that she likes and is familiar with. The limitation is that she does not know the person who has done the tasting and cannot therefore be sure how well their tasting preferences will coincide. U only uses stars and awards as a trigger to read those wines first.
- U wants to consider wines that are close in style and taste to wines she already likes. In order to do this she would ask friends whom she knows have tasted wines that she likes and they also like. This she calls the "sense check". She is looking for some confirmation that she has not found something that is too far from her familiar territory. She is also looking for additional fresh ideas from this group.
- Availability of the wines is the next problem. She might call or visit a top level wine merchant to see if they had the wines on the shelves.
- If successful in this regard she would look at the bottle itself — face to face, with the bottle in her hand — and would assess the wine for its aesthetic impact. Price would be part of this kinaesthetic reaction to the wine.
- If the shop owners / assistants offer help she would be reluctant to allow them to interfere with the process as this is reintroducing complexity — and her existing route has already taken in advice from sources that she personally trusts more, and her advisors so far will not stand to profit from giving their advice.
- The nature of the trust that she wants to rely on is that it is personal. Her friend-advisors' response is based on a personal relationship not complicated by a business transaction — and the emotional investment is the key to the trust. Sharing and enjoying the decision also adds to the fun.

#### **Actual Strategy Used and Outcome:**

- U did as she expected, and consulted the Wine magazine. She selected three wines for a shortlist on the basis of the description reflecting her preference for a more fruit driven Shiraz — which is what she was looking for.
- She did not confirm anything in Platter as she had anticipated because the advice is not personally tailored.
- She then sought advice from a wine-knowledgeable acquaintance that gave feedback on her shortlist to date and added some additional options which she took on board and assessed based on the attractiveness of the name.
- She then went to a retailer (Norman Goodfellows) because of proximity. She was seeking the ones she found most attractive but was disappointed not to find her first choice available. Without the confirmation of what the wine looks like she looked for other wines on her list.

On subsequently seeing an example of the wine she went off her unavailable first choice wine because of the image of it.

- She subsequently found her second choice and was attracted to the image and brand as she anticipated, but she read the back label in order to deal with doubts that she was having about the taste of the wine. She was concerned not to get an over spicy Shiraz. The notes on the back had key words that were sufficient evidence of what she was looking for.
- Having found something that "worked" she actively resisted the offers of help from assistants. She would only have taken on additional help if something that she had on her list were not available. She then bought the wine.

#### **Tasting Result**

U was pleased by the wine, and she was surprised by the presence of the spice being early in the taste, rather than later at the back of her palate. This she saw as different to what she expects from a

Shiraz, but it still did not fully solve her issues with the level of spice in Shiraz. As it turned out when she did taste her initial first choice which was not available at the shop but available at friends, she liked it a lot more.

#### **Advisors discussed but not used:**

Wine Merchant	She would rather not take advice from people who may not have tasted her "reference wines" and do not understand her preferences. She also does not know how knowledgeable they are.
Platter	Too big to offer advice. Checking the star ratings does not enhance her understanding of the wine. Her routes preclude the suggestion that she would be looking at poor quality wine so Platter adds nothing.
Internet Sites	Might serve if Wine magazine did not offer a reasonable selection — but she has never done this.
Bottle Store Browsing	Rejected because of the time commitment and it is "not as much fun". By this she means that the information overload means that it is hard work to filter down the selections — and the sources of advice are not her trusted ones.

#### **15.1.6. Participant P: Approach / Plan:**

- P describes his personal preference as finding wines that are "really enjoyable, but at a good price". He describes himself as not being particularly influenced by ratings, and he is put off by high prices. So in order to achieve the exercise P would start by reviewing recent Wine magazine editions with the purpose of establishing whether the characteristics described in the wine are consistent with his !!!what?. His view of Wine magazine is that it is the only publication that *regularly* produces reviews and assessments on South African wines (as opposed to annually). He has a history with the magazine and values the information on the characteristics of wine. Currently he believes the magazine is declining in utility from his perspective because it is "Cape centric".
- P also values information on the estate so that he can assess the methods and approach to the production of wine that they adopt, in order to see whether it resonates with his personal values.
- P will particularly take into account the comparative review of a particular cultivar — which is the way Wine magazine often approaches the issue.
- P's next step would be to go to Norman Goodfellows, where he has a longstanding relationship, and knows he can get stock of wines that he likes and get discounts.
- To choose a new wine, P would then consult a particular wine expert at Norman Goodfellows that he knows. P sees her as a credible expert because of her qualifications and reputation as a wine critic. P also has had recommendations / evaluations from her in the past where the results were "mixed", so he would be prepared to listen to her advice but would make his own assessment and decision.
- The use of her expertise would be in the form of getting specific responses to a "brief" which P would give her which would represent both the style and quality required of the wine.
- He expects her to give him options and he would then further question her to embellish her recommendations. Listening to her responses, P would assess which wine resonates with his personal preferences. Typically, he is more interested in understanding her personal view of the wine. P has assessed that this particular expert's palate is different from his own, and he will have to "decode" her responses to translate them to his own taste. He does not feel comfortable relying on her to understand and recommend for his palate.

- At the same time as this interaction is going on, P will simultaneously be processing other information from the branding and packaging of the bottles being discussed (if they are visible). He will consider the estate and its reputation, the location and climate; he will consider the varietal / blend under consideration in the context of the climate;
- P will consider the price and the brand image, he takes cues from the packaging which reflects the attitude of the winery to innovation vs. traditional approaches, and depending on what he is seeking he will take this into account.
- He accepts that he will be more likely to spend more money in pursuit of quality, as he feels that in general you get what you pay for.
- In the normal course of events he would at this point make his choice.
- P's preference when choosing wine is to utilise wine tasting opportunities at wine shows such as Winex, where he will attend with a prepared shortlist that he will actively seek and taste. P's shortlist in these circumstances is drawn from information from Wine magazine but also from taking input from friends and relatives that he considers to be knowledgeable about wine.
- P's preference for this approach is driven by the risk reduction strategy of having direct tasting experience of the wines. He sees the intervals between wine shows as an inconvenience and consequently finds himself buying a lot of wine to last for a period of time. This is the downside of this approach.
- P is also considering using the Winesense shops that allow for tasting as an alternative to this approach. He has, as yet, never done this.

#### **Actual Strategy Used and Outcome:**

- P determined that what he wanted to do with this exercise was to try to find a really good South African Pinot Noir. He started by contacting the Winesense shop that is relatively near to his home to ask if they had a particular wine that he had been recommended by a friend available for tasting. They said they didn't but they would arrange for the wine to be available when he came.
- P visited the shop and was delighted with the result. He then tried other Pinot Noirs that were available on tasting to see how these compared. This he saw as part of his short listing process and by the end of the visit his firm favourite was the one he had been advised to try.
- P decided that he wanted to pursue his strategy of taking advice from Wine magazine, so he did not buy the wine at that point. Instead he reviewed the last four issues of the magazine and was dismayed to find only one Pinot Noir reviewed, which was one he had tasted at Winesense and *not liked*. He had not been comfortable with the wine storage conditions of this particular wine at the Winesense store, and so thought the tasting may have been less than optimal, however the negative experience he had had of the wine still put him off risking the expense.
- P then decided to go to consult his expert at Norman Goodfellows. The expert he knows well was not in the store so he spoke to colleague of hers who was new to him. He gave him a brief for the wine he was seeking and he gave the assistant his views on Pinot Noirs that he is familiar with in order to give some calibration for his own taste. The assistant returned his views on these wines and it was apparent that they were not in complete agreement as to what is desirable in a Pinot Noir.
- The assistant recommended a wine that was outside both the exercise's and P's price limit. The assistant was "not as discriminating" as P wanted him to be. The second wine that the assistant recommended more strongly was from a vineyard that P is familiar with for other varietals.
- At this point P decided to buy the wine he had tasted and enjoyed at Winesense, but Norman Goodfellows did not have the wine available. P was now running out of options so he plumped for the wine from the vineyard he was familiar with. (*P thought at the time that having never tasted the Pinot Noir from this vineyard that he would not be outside the rules of the exercise.*)

*Given the relative scarcity of this varietal in South Africa and the difficulty of making Pinot Noir in this climate, I appreciate he had few options and therefore the choice should stand, but it is interesting that when his choices were limited he felt reassured by a brand that had given him satisfaction in the past.)*

### **Tasting Result**

He intends to buy a six bottle case of the wine he tasted and like in Winesense.  
He was disappointed by the wine he chose — giving it a five out of ten score.

### **Advisors discussed but not used:**

Platter

Not used for selection as the information on the characteristics of the wine is too Spartan. Can be used for verification purposes using star rating — P excludes anything under 3 star.

## **15.2. Pictures Exercise Results**

All interviewees were asked to complete the "wine identikit" exercise. Each participant expressed views on the utility of the pictures in assisting them in establishing a taste for the wine and in selecting the one they preferred. The reactions are:

1. Participants with a lesser experience of wine tasting notes found the images initially difficult to relate to. They found it difficult to identify some of the more obscure images (e.g. the flintiness represented in Wine 1), and this tended to throw their concentration and ability to assess the taste.
2. Similarly, those with less experience found the combinations of tastes to be off-putting. They viewed these combinations literally unappetising. (e.g. pineapple, peas and gravel in Wine 3). The corollary to this is that other people commented on how they could assess the complexity of the wine taste from the image. Wine 3 was commended for this reason.
3. Those who are familiar with the typical tasting notes were much more able to identify both the individual items and the blends and styles they were intended to represent. Very proficient participants inferred qualities for the acid structure of the wine from the colours used in the backgrounds.
4. People who describe themselves as "visual" (Participants U, H, J) were particularly taken with the images and found it extremely natural to start generating their anticipated taste for the wine and were happy to decide on that basis.
5. Less "visual" participants also created taste sensations in their mouth, but this tended to occur when they were either confronted with something they were particularly drawn to or put off by. The metallic sixpences in image two found a number of people pulling faces in anticipation.
6. The ability to compare one image with another enabled the users to select a wine purely on the basis of taste, and for some participants who were not aware of the range of possible taste sensations from a Sauvignon Blanc, this was an illuminating experience.
7. The range of tastes represented enabled the more experienced in the group to consider choosing wine for a particular mood or an occasion. They were happy that they would like the wine but would like it more if it addressed the context they planned for it.
8. People continued using the broad strategy that was established in the first paper, i.e. continue considering a wine until you either find a sufficient K+ (positive kinaesthetic) to justify the selection or you find something that gives a K- (negative kinaesthetic) which removes the wine from the shortlist.
9. Everyone was comfortable choosing a wine on the basis of the images that did not contain the image of a bottle. However when the bottle was added to the image, the reactions of the participants were enhanced. Placing the taste in the context of a wine bottle focused the ability to relate to the image as a *wine* taste.

10. What also happened was that people ran their usual strategy about the bottle/brand image and combined it with their taste expectation. In NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) terms they were taking in and processing factual information which they analysed and assessed in the usual way but they had the advantage of combining it with a taste and smell experience created from the first access visual cue of the picture. This enabled them to have a much more emphatic reaction to the wine. In effect they were being fed with information from the senses of sight, smell, and taste along with information from the secondary access linguistic descriptions, and this made it *very easy* to decide.
11. People said that the fifth picture was contained too much information to effectively take in. Instead they would want an image that contained up to five tastes representing the dominant effect of the wine plus the underlying supplementary tastes and finish.
12. Participant H said that the picture represented a better description of the full effect of the wine.
13. One participant (C), who had experienced some of the wines, used the pictures to recollect her experience of them and compare her tasting conclusions. It was a point of interest rather than disagreement when differences occurred, and reassuring when similarities were recognised.
14. For one participant (U) whose strategy is particularly driven by the visual image of the bottle, the introduction of the bottle was distracting to her taste assessment.
15. When the chosen bottle was produced for them to examine, some participants took the opportunity to read the wine note and said that it did not enable them to generate the taste experience at all or as effectively. NLP suggests that this is because the source of the information about the wine was of a secondary access linguistic nature rather than being first access (visual).

## 16. Appendix F (Phase Three Detailed Results)

### 16.1. Profiling Task Results

The profiling task sent out to all the participants required them to complete a structured form in which they were asked to identify their wine preferences and to present any likes and dislikes that they thought would represent them as a wine consumer or as an individual. The intention of this relatively broad brief was to establish what kind of information they felt other wine consumers would value.

As it turned out the responses revealed a range of taste preferences and a diversity of what people thought would be valuable. There were, broadly speaking, three classes of answer. Firstly, there were those who made no reference at all to their wine preferences or consumer attitudes, choosing only to present information about themselves and their personal interests. Then there was a group that focused the other way, detailing their preferences to varying degrees and advancing their views on wine consumer issues. Lastly there was a group that managed to do both, combining their preferences and attitudes about wine with personal information, attitudes and humour.

It is possible to speculate as to why these patterns occurred, but that was not the purpose of this study. The only observation of relevance is that the first group, who made no reference to wine in their profile, are also the individuals who are enthusiastic about wine, but whose knowledge by their own admission is not significant. Their reluctance to address wine issues indicates a lack of comfort about presenting their knowledge, and this may be linked to their lack of familiarity with the "language" used to discuss wine. These people are participants K and G and to a lesser extent F.

### 16.2. Review Task Results

#### 16.2.1. Narrative Reviews

The second item the group was asked to provide was the actual wine reviews. The form was constructed to provide a standard set of information about each wine in order to gain sufficient

information to produce the visual representation of that wine. One important feedback item obtained from someone with a passion for wine but with only an emerging understanding of it (participant F) was that the form was particularly useful in helping him appreciate and analyse what he tasted.

The form came with a set of instructions to enable the participant to understand what was being sought as basic wine data along with one particular instruction designed to open up the possibility of *personal* recommendations.

"When writing the review, consider what you might say to a friend or acquaintance who asked you about the wine. You can include anything you like, anything you think is worth sharing that will help them get a feel for what the wine tastes like".

This approach yielded a broad range of responses. Here again the same issue of personal vulnerability presented with a few people who consider themselves to be less able, but in general the "conversational" instruction gave people enough flexibility to feel comfortable with what they wrote. A mixture of styles emerged with people adopting one or more of them in each review. People presented facts about the wine; they gave personal analysis of the wine's style; they suggested food to match the wine; they presented positive and negative emotional responses to the wine and in some cases wrote extensive reviews that included stories and humour acting as a fuller explanation of the whole experience.

The thirteen reviewers produced a total of twenty-two reviews on ten different wines. It was notable that in the narrative part of the review those with a lesser appreciation of wine language continued what they had done when writing their profiles and did not speak of the wine in specific terms. Instead they chose kinaesthetic words like "sharp", "smooth", "soft"; and by making suggestions on food, emotional reactions and the context in which you might enjoy the wine.

At the other end of the scale some reviews were accomplished in their analysis of the tastes, providing useful tips on storage potential, presentation of the wine, consumption contexts, and useful warnings to alert people to the presence of low body, high acid, or excessive tannin.

From a research perspective the variety of narrative responses was enlightening in that it demonstrated the kind of information that the reviewers were capable of giving, or felt was valuable or enjoyable. It should be noted that the reviewers were not given an example to consider as this would have been influential in modelling the responses and this was not the intention.

### **16.2.2. Taste and Balance Indicators, Star Ratings**

The second component of the wine review was to provide detailed specific tastes, to score the wine from the perspectives of body, acid, and fruit, and to give an overall star rating.

Nobody reported any difficulty with the scoring aspects of this task. All the scores were completed. Given that the task entailed tasting a wine and reacting there and then to it on the basis of first access taste experience this proved to be not too difficult. It is perhaps interesting that the linguistic pitfall did not disable people, although one of the reviewers (K) reported no acid in one wine when others reported (accurately in the researcher's opinion) that the wine in question had medium well balanced acid. This indicates, in this case, a lack of precision about the term used and suggests that the data collection form should assist more in defining the term. On the other hand, this part of the exercise was the component that participant F said he found educational.

The one word taste indicators followed a similar pattern with the "wine literate" group (including participant F) coming up with some interesting, compelling, consistent and (in the researcher's opinion) accurate taste indicators. The other "wine learners" struggled with identifying and *naming* tastes. Participant G gave only one fruit taste on both the reviews she did, but she was delighted later to see that fruit appearing in the visual representation. Once again the translation from first access to a second access linguistic description proved difficult for this group

### 16.3. Utility of Reviews to Create Wine Visual Representations Results

One of the functions of the review and taste indicator documents was to act as the consensus source information on which to create the visual representations of the wine.

From the data gathered, ten images were created without further consultation with the reviewers. One image was created for each wine based solely on what the participants had reported on their review forms. In some cases the visual representation was based on one review; in the majority of cases there were two or three reviews, and in one case four reviews from which to construct the image. It proved to be a relatively straightforward task to find sufficient information to construct the images using the strict syntactic rules detailed in the Visual Cues Framework.

The essential issue was whether the information available would be sufficient to create an image that the reviewing participants would approve of and hopefully recognise. Could the input of people who are not wine masters be used to create images that would effectively communicate what they had tasted in the wine?

The result was particularly strong. Eleven of the thirteen participants saw the pictures. Nine were very taken with the images of the wines they had tasted. They were pleased by the process of recognising their input and recalling the wine they had tasted by using the picture. Some even recognised the wines they had tasted on the picture alone (participants H, B, C).

The remaining two of the eleven participants were also very taken with the process. However, having now seen the output of the process in the form of a picture they asked to enhance the information and emphasise particular aspects in order to increase the accuracy of the wine they had tasted. As these were both very early incidents in the interview schedule I enhanced the two pictures as requested. The revised pictures were endorsed by the other reviewers who had also tasted those wines. What is also interesting is that after the explanation of the syntax of the pictures, the two who wanted enhancements were able to specify completely the changes they wanted.

### 16.4. Gallery Exercise Results

In all, eleven interviews were completed. The two review contributors who were not interviewed were not available during the period when interviews were conducted. However, the required target of ten interviews was reached.

In this first exercise, the interviewee was presented with a non-published web site which showed all ten visual wine representations on a single page as thumbnail images. Selection of an individual thumbnail caused a larger (600 x 600 pixel) version of the image to be displayed whilst still leaving the thumbnail versions of all the wines visible to the user. The larger image also included a single sentence "tag" description of the image to assist users to accurately identifying the items in the image.

The objectives of Exercise 1 were in the following four areas:

1. Tag: Do the participants require the tag description for disambiguation purposes?
2. Infer Taste: Can they feel comfortable / capable of inferring the taste of a wine from a picture supported by a tag line that describes the image and the wine?
3. Syntax Comprehension: Is it possible, through exposure to the images, to infer some or all the syntactic rules by which the image was constructed?  
Once the syntax has been established either through inference or being explained, can the observer apply the syntax with good effect and understand the visual message being delivered?
4. Background Interpretation: Can participants interpret the implied messages for body and acid communicated by the background?



(G) words such as "sweet", "delicious", "plummy", "sharp", "tang" implying an internal gustatory construction was happening as it had in previous experiments. Some chose auditory digital words (A<sub>o</sub>) such as "serious"; "complex"; "interesting"; "standard"; "usual"; "mystery"; "different" indicating that the taste was being assessed by the observer at an intellectual level. Olfactory words and phrases were also forthcoming: "bad smell"; "I can smell coffee" indicating that the visual trigger had stimulated an olfactory reaction in the observer. Participant A, on seeing the picture of wine G, wrinkled up her nose and said straight out "I wouldn't touch it!"

In many participants the visual cue generated a large positive or negative emotional reaction within a very short space of time. On a number of occasions, on seeing the picture in its full size format participants reacted instantly, beginning by smiling broadly and saying something like "Wow! Now that's my kind of wine!"

What was also interesting were the verbs used by people to describe their reaction. G, for example, said that she "just *saw* it would be delicious" indicating a visual to gustatory translation. K, looking at the picture of wine I said, "I can actually *taste* this thing". This indicates a strong gustatory reaction to a visual cue.

#### **16.4.3. Syntax Comprehension — Confirmed**

The syntax rules themselves were readily understood by the participants. For the great majority the left to right, top to bottom, background to foreground paradigm was natural. It was described by people as corresponding with reading a book. The relative size of the objects in the pictures was also naturally and correctly inferred as representing the relative dominance of a flavour.

Some of the participants picked up readily on *all* the aspects of the syntax, so much so that they strongly advocated the need to formalise the arrangements of the items in the picture to ensure that a more coherent message could be communicated — not knowing that this had already been done and that they were already interpreting it. Participant A (an artist) said that "it makes sense in my mind, and from an artistic point of view history is always in the back".

Other participants picked up on the more obvious syntactic rules (such as size representing dominance). They were also aware that there might be other rules but they were unsure of exactly what they might be. With these people, a simple explanation of the syntactic rules they were missing, equipped them to view and interpret the pictures they had not yet visited with an ability to comprehend that had not been consciously there before.

Two of the interviewees (K and D) showed an awareness that the objects were arranged to imply the unfolding "journey" of the experience of the wine over time, but their internal representation of time required that the foreground was the start and the objects further away in perspective were the finish. They reversed the "time-line" but when the intentional time line was explained they adapted to it without much difficulty, maintaining that their way seemed more natural.

One of these two (**D**) suggested that instead the picture should start in the bottom left corner and the time line should go away from the observer to the top right.

Although there were these two individual different perspectives of the time syntax, what is significant is that people naturally began to put a structure onto the pictures in order to interpret them, the structures they created served them well, and the message of the picture was communicated. When misinterpretations were communicated, people readily adapted.

#### **16.4.4. Background Interpretation — Confirmed**

The syntactic rules that describe wine body, acid and overall balance are the most subtle and yielded the most interesting results. Within the displayed pictures there were wines that were represented

as being:

1. dominated by acid (wines D, E and to a lesser extent G)
2. dominated by tannin as a component of body and "mouthfeel" (wine G)
3. dominated by fruit (wine I)

All the other wines were represented as being well or predominantly well balanced. With these wines there was no concern expressed from the participants' point of view about an imbalance because of an excess in one of these areas.

#### **16.4.4.1. Acid**

When it came to examining the acidic wines people expressed their expectation that the wine would be "sharp" or "have a tang" (Participant B talking about wine D). In the case of wine D this can be inferred from the inclusion of grapefruit in the image and in the tag line, but in the case of wine E the components are less obviously acidic and the inference of an acidic component came from the more vibrant background colours. What was particularly interesting was that when questioned about the "acid" style or level of the wine participants (B and F particularly) were uncomfortable with the word "acid", preferring the words and phrases outlined above. Those of the participants who are more accomplished in the "winespeak" (Searle 1983) use of the term "acid" to imply a particular taste and astringency in a wine were capable of seeing the link and interpreting it. Those with less command of the traditional language stuck to their own phrases. What is interesting is that they had detected the taste without being able to *express* it in the wine industry terminology. Once again the visual to gustatory communication worked well, but the participants struggled to explain it linguistically.

#### **16.4.4.2. Tannin / Body**

Similarly, the representation of high tannin content (wine G) had been achieved by the inclusion of grape stalks in the image combined with a brown filter applied to the whole image. Since this wine was also reported as being acidic, the image presented has a somewhat unwholesome appearance to which people reacted. Once again the participants' translations of the internal sensations to linguistic descriptions did not always hit upon words like "tannin" even though this was in the tag line. Instead they chose words like "bitter".

During Exercise 1 all the participants who viewed wine G expressed a level of concern about the wine which they could not always pinpoint. This demonstrates that the communication of first access visual cues to first access gustatory results was happening. The inability of people to explain their concerns demonstrates the difficulties people have translating first access gustatory information through an interpretation process and into a linguistic form.

#### **16.4.4.3. Fruit**

The fruit dominated wine (wine I) was a different story, because some of the participants were particularly fond of that style of wine. Those who saw the dominant fruit images and the depth of colour in the background and rejoiced. Those who do not like this style also detected the message and to varying degrees reserved judgement.

What emerged from Exercise 1 about the representation of these components of the experience of a wine is that it is possible to convey the message, but that people are not necessarily conscious of it or capable of expressing it in standard wine terminology. Also when a wine is in balance, the absence of any dominant feature in the image is not necessarily consciously perceived; only the absence of an issue is registered. There were occasions when people expressed the idea that they thought the wine was "well balanced", and when asked why they thought this they said that the background was the source of this information. This suggests that the first access to first access communication was effective and working but because the gustatory result was not concerning or indeed pleasing, the participants were not distracted by it.

#### 16.4.4.4. Other Interpretations of the Background

One participant (A) took the interpretation of the background to a higher level. She picked up on a "smoky" taste; an "edgy wine" (i.e. not smooth); a "heavy" wine; a "young" wine; an "intense" wine; and a wine with a "bad smell" that she "would not touch". She even saw the background as representing the need for wine H to breathe in order to reach its potential, which was probably true of the wine concerned. Participant H felt that the changing colours in a background were intended to reinforce the changing taste over time, which they were.

#### 16.4.5. Gallery Exercise Key Result — The Image Interpretation Strategy

For more than 50% of the participants the presentation of images to represent a wine was a totally new concept. For the others who had seen five such images in Phase Two, it was still relatively new. What became clear during the interviews was that without a significant level of pre-exposure the participants worked in a largely consistent manner to understand the image. This consistent manner is a strategy, similar to those discussed in Phase One of this programme. It is similar also in that it takes the participants a very short time to execute the strategy; sometimes it was completed more or less instantaneously. The strategy is made up of the following components:

1. Examine the items in the picture in order to establish if there are any individual elements for which the participant has either a strong liking or disliking. The participant continues examining the items until they reach a point of decision where they have ruled out the possibility of problems or found something they really like.

Participant H was immediately put off wine D because of the presence of grapefruit, and since she has a strong dislike of citrus she struggled to consider the wine any further. Participant G has a great liking for chocolate and consequently she was so highly committed to wine B that she claimed not to even have seen the dominant coffee flavour represented.

2. If all the component individual tastes are acceptable then the participant completes the gustatory construct established in Phase One and confirmed in subsequent programme phases. They attempt to synthesise the flavours they are presented with in order to complete their internal gustatory construct.

When the items making up that construct are all familiar tastes to the individual, this is achieved simply. For example, Participant S's reaction to the chocolate and vanilla ice cream of wine F was a highly vocal series of gasps and laughs accompanied by head movements of delight as she moved in and out examining the image closer.

When there are elements that are unfamiliar, the process founders. Participant K at one stage said that he was unfamiliar with some of the fruits in wine D and therefore he could not anticipate how it tasted. A similar thing happened with participant B when examining wine J. The most telling example of this came with participant F attempting to image wine G, with all its suggestions of tannin and acid. F had made reference to the unwholesome colour of the plums in the image and eventually declared "I cannot imagine the taste".

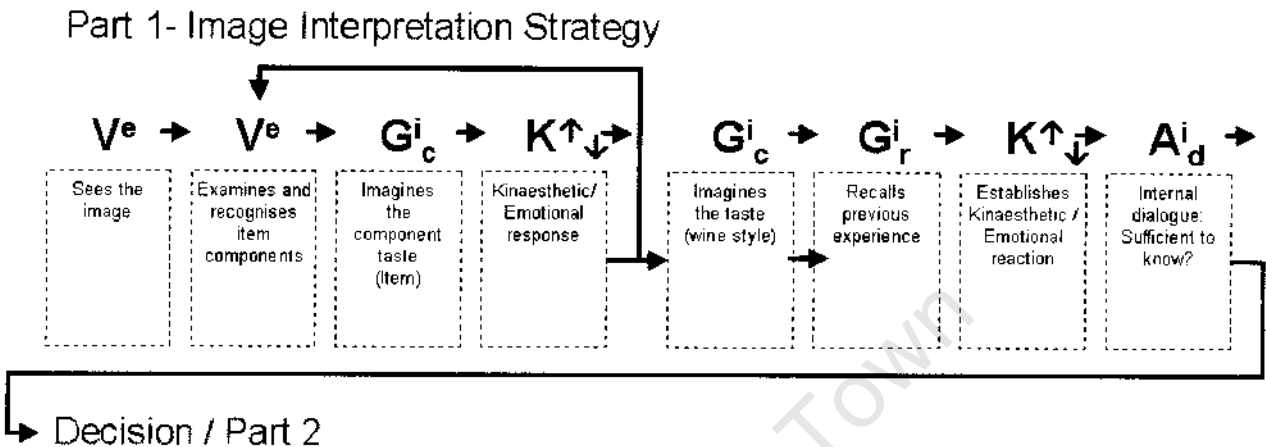
3. If the participant had successfully constructed a taste, the next step is to compare it with their own internal memory of wines tastes. If it is something they are familiar with they have a "label" they can pin on the synthesised taste whether it be good or bad. If it not a familiar taste or one that they cannot anticipate, then the participant is in unfamiliar territory. They cannot make the comparison. In these cases the participants did one of two things: they either label the taste as an experience they would like to try, or one they would seek to avoid depending on what they have constructed.

This reaction is the product of examining a picture. For most people, most of the time, the reaction was information which contributed to the decision making process about the wine. In some cases however it was sufficient to rule the wine out completely or alternatively make them want to try it

without further debate. Participant F for example took one look at wine F and knew he would choose it.

This strategy can be represented using the NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) notation used in Phase One in the following way:

**Figure 28: Image Interpretation Strategy**



## 16.5. Reviews Exercise Results

### 16.5.1. Reviews Exercise — Overview and Objectives

The objective of Exercise 1 was to establish the utility of the images as a means of communicating the smell and taste of a wine from one consumer to another using predominantly visual cues backed by a disambiguating tag line. Such images were outside of the normal experience of consumers, and it had been established that at the point of starting Exercise 2 of the interview all participants had, to some degree or another, developed an opinion about the wines they had considered. Some had gone so far as to decide already what they would choose, others had an effective shortlist.

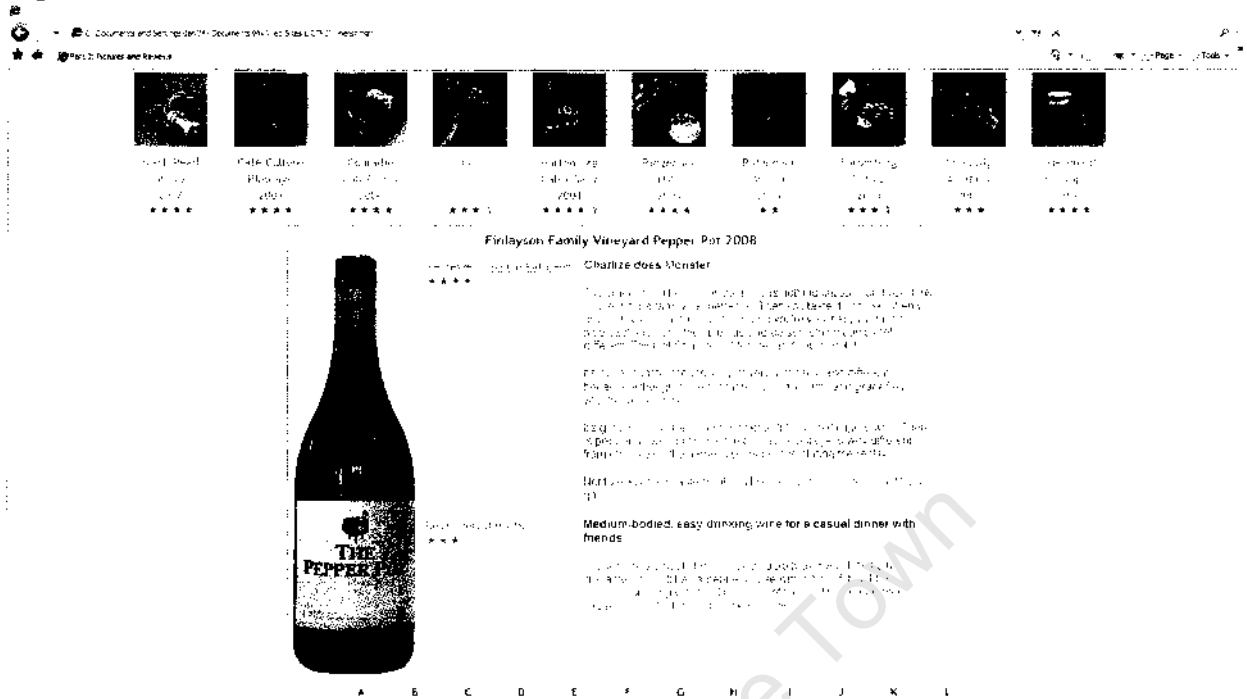
In Exercise 2 the participants were introduced to another relatively unfamiliar experience, the wine review completed by *another consumer* who is *unknown* to them. Putting this into context, in Phase Two of this programme the wine reviews under discussion were those produced by wine masters and wine industry experts. Such people are unknown to the great majority of consumers. The results of Phase Two were that, rather unexpectedly, consumers chose to minimise the use of such people when making decisions, much preferring the input from fellow consumers who were friends and acquaintances.

Phase Three is about establishing whether it is possible to accept the reviews of a fellow consumer who is unknown to you, or whether they also need to be a friend or acquaintance.

In Exercise 2 eleven interviews were conducted. In these interviews the additional information that the participants were presented with was:

1. the brand image and name of the product as presented on the bottle
2. reviews, including personal and average star ratings, written by other participants
3. personal profiles of the reviewers, written by those reviewers

**Figure 29: Reviews Exercise Screen**



Within the group of eleven people everyone knew at least one other participant, but in all cases each person had a reasonable number that they did not know. Identities of the individuals were concealed to varying degrees by pseudonyms adopted by the participants. It was accepted that it was not beyond the wit of the participants to delve into the profiles of the individuals and make intelligent guesses at identifying who's who, sometimes with a complete certainty. However the presence of complete unknowns made it possible to compare their reaction to those they knew and those they had never met. In a high proportion of cases, the pseudonym was sufficient to hide the identity even from good friends.

In analysing the reactions of people to this situation, the research focus was on investigating a series of issues that can be seen in detail in the Research Methodology of this paper. What emerged was that there were four key questions:

1. **Pictures:** What influence did the experience of first reviewing the pictures (Exercise 1) have on their actions? What use did people continue to put them to?
2. **Reviews:** What use did the participants make of the reviews? What did they find valuable? How much were they influenced?
3. **Profiles:** What use did they make of the profiles?
4. **Other Information:** What use did they make of the branding material and other standard information that they would normally have to rely on in the absence of an advisor?

#### 16.5.2. Utility and Influence of the Pictures – Confirmed

On opening up the screen for Exercise 2 people did one or a combination of a number of behaviours:

1. Some reviewed the array of wines along with their brand names seeking the wines they knew and/or had reviewed. They examined the picture of the wine and confirmed its identity. They considered whether the picture represented the wine. They considered which of the wines they already knew.
2. Some went straight for the wine that they had highest on their shortlist, using the picture as the reference point, and began to investigate it further.

3. Some scanned the pictures from scratch and decided where to start, picking on individual features or backgrounds that had intrigued them.
4. Some chose a systematic approach and began with the first wine at the extreme left.

The first three of these responses demonstrated an engagement with the pictures and the presence of some level of intrigue or taste expectation which they wanted to pursue. The fourth approach does not rule it this out, but it more likely demonstrates a systematic approach to problem solving or a desire to examine the first wine.

What was particularly interesting was that all the participants, during the course of Exercise 2, made use of the thumbnail images as a quick reference guide, and they also made repeated trips to visit the fully enlarged picture of the wine to refresh their view of it — running the picture interpretation strategy again and synthesising the results of it with what they were now reading.

Perhaps the most revealing quote about the pictures came from Participant **R** looking at wine C. She said "Somehow it's much nicer looking at a picture of this than reading it....you can convey so much more with a picture".

### **16.5.3. Utility and Influence of the Reviews — Result High**

The participants had all written reviews, and as explained earlier, they had achieved this by adopting different styles of writing. Some were predominantly simple and factual, others displayed personal interpretations and assessments of the wine, and some presented an elaborate story using metaphor, passion and personal information to illustrate their point. Most were combinations of these approaches to some degree or another.

#### **16.5.3.1. Understanding of the Reviewer**

Most notably, the participants confirmed that the reviews reflected two things about the reviewer: their personal values or perspective, and their experience as a wine consumer. Participant A suggested that the reviews were far more instructive than the profiles because "you could lie about yourself in a profile, but you give yourself away in the reviews. When you write, you can't hide who you are".

When the writers became the readers the most striking thing about their behaviour was that they related best to those reviews where they could identify with the reviewer and where the wine knowledge being presented was not out of reach of their own. Perhaps the best example of this was Participant A actively pursuing the reviews of C, because she liked the reviewing style. She appreciated the frank, open and funny approach.

#### **16.5.3.2. Interaction with the Reviewer**

In Phase Three, with the addition of a personal review, the internal assessment takes on a richer dynamic quality where the debate includes the viewpoint of another person. In some interviews this behaviour was so strong that the reader occasionally entered into a one way conversation with the writer, asking questions of the screen, vocally accepting advice and challenging perspectives.

The effect of this "interaction" was remarkable. In the most striking of cases one reader who has consistently positioned himself as disliking Pinotage and trendy labels opted for a wine that was both Pinotage and trendily marketed. He did this because the advocate writer had "convinced" him it was "different". There were other examples where the pre-conceived ideas about wine styles, varieties and packaging were successfully challenged by writers with an alternative perspective coupled with the information from the visual representation of that wine.

#### **16.5.3.3. Linguistic Style Assumptions and Constraint**

Another important aspect about this interaction was that if the language and apparent wine knowledge in the reviewer was significantly different from that of the reader, the reader tended to disengage. Use of terms and phrases that the reader could not interpret interrupted their

understanding and enabled them to move on. When the experience between reader and writer was apparently similar the parties engaged and sometimes "listened" to each other.

Perhaps the best example of this is a review written in a very simplistic and direct style. This review belied the actual wine experience of the writer, participant **M**. Those in the group with a low level of understanding of wine terminology delighted in the review. Those higher up the ladder tended to dismiss it. The reverse was also true. When the language had a high technical content, those with the knowledge to understand it took it on board, those without looked baffled and clicked elsewhere.

#### **16.5.3.4. Valued Communication Types**

A detailed review of each participant confirmed that there were two *types* of communication that they valued:

- 1. Frank, open, relevant information** that could be either **factual or subjective**, and which they could understand and evaluate.

Unlike standard wine reviews the reviews in this exercise were written using a "personal voice". Whatever information was presented in them was placed there because the writer thought it pertinent to their point of view about the wine; something they wished to put across. As participant **H** said "There's nothing like a subjective review — because it's in their voice".

- 2.** It is important not to underestimate the impact of the general positioning of the participants. They were all consumers without an agenda. They were being honest about their reactions and were saying what they thought — good and bad. Wine writers suffer from a need to appear objective about the product and inoffensive to the wine producers. These consumers had no such constraint and the result was a broader acceptance of (if not agreement with) each others views.
- 3. Enthusiasm or disappointment** — in short an **emotional**, kinaesthetic (and preferably humorous) response.

What emerged very clearly was that the readers value direct communication of emotion, for enthusiasm or disappointment about the wine. This phenomenon most clearly emerged where the reviewer had adopted a metaphor or story line to explain their reaction to a wine.

There were many occasions during the interviews when the readers found themselves smiling or laughing at what had been written whether it was in great praise or condemnation of the wine. From a Neuro Linguistic Programming perspective the reader used these narratives to successfully experience a kinaesthetic/emotional reaction in themselves, which assisted them to assess the prospect of drinking the wine.

There are a few reviews which stood out in this regard and whilst the reader may not have necessarily accepted the position of the writer, they were left in no doubt as to their opinion. These narratives usually addressed the overall experience of the wine, typically as a social event. They treated the consumption not as an analytical exercise but as a potential pleasure, and the readers found this entertaining and valuable.

Lastly, as a related finding, some participants became intrigued by reviews and ratings that displayed mysteries or differing points of view from their own perspective. The intrigue it cased in them was a powerful motivator to buy the wine in order to get first hand experience of it and solve the mystery. Participant **H** was particularly driven by evidence that she saw as "interesting" and in the end both her choices were decided on in order to pursue the emotion behind the intrigue.

### 16.5.3.5. Utility and Influence of Reviews — Summary

In analysing what use people made of the reviews the research focused on what use they made of the frank, open, relevant, factual and subjective material and what use they made of the emotional communication.

What emerged was that in ten out of the eleven interviews the participants had a use and were swayed by *both types* of communication. They were typically selective about what they chose to include in their own decision, but it was not unusual for a participant to decide on a wine based on a particular piece of information coupled with an emotional response that they had received either from the writer or from the associated visual representation of the wine.

The slight exception was participant G, with probably the least wine knowledge. She very definitely has the need to get excited about a wine, but she made little use of the reviews to do this. Instead she chose to rely on the visual cues of the picture and the branding on the bottle. When she was firmly in favour of a wine from these perspectives she used the review as a confirmation strategy, just checking that there were no major issues flagged to contend with.

### 16.5.4. Utility and Influence of Profiles — Result Low / Medium use

There were three distinct reactions to the profiles presented. Six of the participants made either no use of the profiles at all, or they checked one to examine its utility and decided they had no use for it. The reasons this group put forward ranged from a deep mistrust of what people put into these kind of profiles (participant A), to a preference for using the pictures as the best advice (participant K). In the same spirit, one person (participant U) said that with all the other information available they were unnecessary and potentially confusing.

The more positive response from three of the group was still relatively reserved. These participants (C, D, and H) accessed the information to establish common values, likes and dislikes in the field of wine. Their agenda as explained by D, was to establish if a person could be used as a "proxy" for choosing wine. Participant D thought that P was likely to be a good proxy but in the end he did not follow his recommendation.

In terms of their success only C found someone who she was sufficiently comfortable with to use as a proxy (participant A) and that opinion had been formed more on the basis of the style and content of A's reviews.

The last group comprised of F and R. Both these two were happy to delve into the profiles as a way of expanding their knowledge of the reviewer when the review had been pleasing or demonstrated shared values about wine. R speaking of F said that "it was important to know a little more about a person, before taking his advice". However, take his advice she did. She liked F from his review of wine J. This led her to his profile, and that led her to his other review, wine A, which she had previously rejected out of hand. In the end she chose wine A on the strength of his review and because she felt an affinity with his approach. "I like this guy!" she said.

What was interesting was that F did precisely the same with the information from R. He enjoyed her reviews and this was backed up by her profile and in the end he almost chose a wine based on her recommendation and their obviously shared attitudes about wine. It was clear from what he said as he moved around the site that he was building up a profile in his own head about each reviewer as he read their reviews. For example he said "This guy knows reds!" about D. He only delved further when he enjoyed their writing style and he was happy to do so.

In summary the profile was used to find the preferences and values, particularly about wine, from the participants. People were attracted to people who were like them. "I like people who are like me" was said by C after reading a reviewing of wine G by participant A. On the basis of the impression she had constructed *in her head* about A, C chose to follow her advice and ignore the wine. C never read A's online profile. This scenario was not untypical, and it appears that the tone and language

adopted in the reviews was a more powerful driver of the perceptions of the participants about their peers.

#### **16.5.5. Utility of Other Information — Low**

##### **16.5.5.1. Information Provided**

The other information available to the participants was the brand which was clearly visible plus the following facts about the wine which could be asked for if required.

- A — Blend
- B — Region
- C — % Alcohol
- D — Wine maker
- E — Platter Star rating
- F — Awards
- G — Platter written review
- H — Price
- I — Where available
- J — Wine makers taste note
- K — Viticulture notes
- L — Wine processing notes

##### **16.5.5.2. Information Used**

The element of other information used or commented on most predominantly by the participants was the branding displayed on the bottle. This is not surprising as the image was there as part of the review page and can be clearly seen.

There were people within the participant group (G, S and K) who relied heavily on their appreciation of the label. Other used it as a quality or a style check, using their own model of the world to interpret what they saw. Many people commented on wine D (shown in Fig 5.5.1) because they were either strongly put off by it or attracted by it. What did become evident was that people were trying to discount the influence of the branding and concentrate on the information in the pictures and the reviews. Some succeeded; others still brought it in as a factor. It was certainly diminished in its influence.

Of the other information that was available the price was sought by people only on an occasional basis. It was used as a cross check when they felt the choice was marginal, and would only be pursued if the price was attractive. The second most popular additional piece of information was the blend, requested three times. This was asked for by R as part of her decision process and by G and U out of curiosity *after* they had made their choices. The only other piece of additional information requested was from C who wanted to confirm the winemaker of wine G.

In summary the traditional marketing material fared poorly in the eyes of this consumer group. Most of it was never even asked for, and predictably the branding still featured as an indication of quality, although people were capable of ignoring their feelings about the branding to try the wine based on the other information (participant D on wine **B**).

#### **16.5.6. Exercise 2 Key Result — The Enhanced Decision Strategy**

The decision strategies in Phase One of this programme were developed by the consumers to deal with a situation in which they were making a choice in isolation using the available information, typically in a bottle store with a rack of wines in front of them. In such a circumstance they had to rely on their own experience of wine coupled with their internal rules for interpreting brand and marketing information. In such circumstances purchasing a new wine, without actually tasting it first, involved an element of nerve.

The experiments of this third phase have tried to address this uncertainty by equipping the consumer with a range of information from a source they have previously not used — their fellow consumers. It is true that Phase Two demonstrated the effectiveness of taking advice from a friend or acquaintance. Having established in this phase that frank and open communication coupled with enthusiasm is highly valued, it is easy to see why friends and acquaintances are a good source. This third phase asks whether the same can be achieved with people who are unknown to the consumer.

The answer is a definite yes. Of the twenty two selections made by the participants, 68% of those selections were for wines where the decider definitely did not know or was unaware of who their advisor was. 27% of choices were for wines the decider already knew and wanted more of. The final 5% were decisions where the person was choosing a new wine where the advisor was known to them.

The high percentage of new wines chosen (73% of the time) demonstrates that the information available was sufficient to give people the confidence to be adventurous. They all had wines available to them that they were familiar with and had tasted, but with one exception, C, who knew 6 of the ten wines, they all chose an unfamiliar wine.

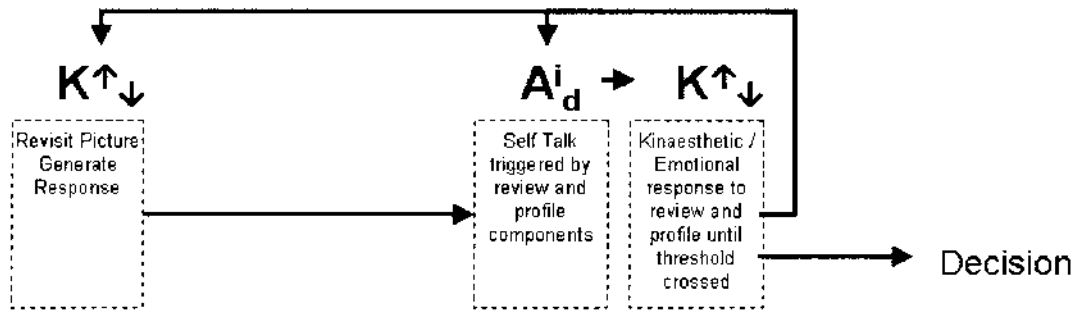
What emerged in all their behaviours was a strategy with the following components:

1. Re-examine the picture in either the fully expanded or the thumbnail form to identify the wine they were looking at and recreate or recall the gustatory and kinaesthetic / emotional reaction they had had to the picture in Exercise 1.
2. Decide if they already had enough of an opinion about the wine to either buy it or reject it. Participant G was prepared to decide for two wines on pictures alone, participant K completely ignored the reviews of four wines in Exercise 2 because he did not find the pictures appealing. Participant U did a similar thing, deliberately excluding wines she either knew, or which had low star ratings, or was not attracted to. Participant S ignored two wines in Exercise 2 based entirely on the dark backgrounds.
3. Consult the reviews and seek information which they value and wish to use. Complete a "self talk" internal dialogue with each item of information they selected. The result of this dialogue (in some cases with the reviewer) was a modified gustatory construct or a change to their kinaesthetic / emotional reaction to the wine — either positive or negative.
4. Should their kinaesthetic/emotional feeling about the wine exceed their personal threshold for buying a wine they would decide positively. If their feeling falls below their reject threshold, they stopped seeking information on the wine and moved on.

When it came to the final task of selecting two wines from those they had accepted, the participants sorted and ranked their choices using their personal meta-programs. These are "personality-based" mechanisms for sorting between otherwise acceptable alternatives (James and Woodsmall 1988). In this way the deciding factors used by people were: anticipated taste; novelty or predictability; mystery/intrigue or familiarity; the desire to be surprised or not; the enthusiasm of the review; and the preference to have more of something they knew they would really like (risk aversion or risk seeking).

### **Figure 30: Enhanced Decision Strategy**

## Part 2 – Enhanced Decision Strategy



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