

Developing a Chinese lexicon for wine

By Dr Armando Corsi, Dr Justin Cohen and Professor Larry Lockshin
Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science, University of South Australia

Researchers from the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute for Marketing Science have collaborated with AWRI staff to collect data to create a lexicon of wine descriptors appropriate for use in the Chinese market, to educate drinkers there about Australian wine styles.

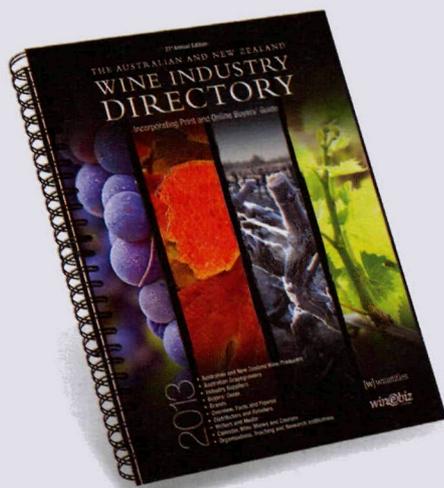
The Grape and Wine Research and Development Corporation (GWRDC) generously supports numerous research projects conducted by our team in the China market that aim to answer industry-driven questions related to shopper behaviour and consumer preference. The Chinese Lexicon Project introduced in this article is an important pillar in our ongoing research for the industry and is focussed specifically on this issue. The sensory experience of a wine is complex. Asking a novice wine drinker to describe the taste of a wine will usually

elicit general terminology like 'good', 'bad', 'sweet' or 'sour'. The expectation of more experienced drinkers and wine professionals is that a wine can be described using terms that specify particular fruits, vegetables, flowers, spices and even meats. This task is arduous for most. To ascertain the true sensory characterisation of a wine, one must rely on the convening of an 'expert panel', like the ones conducted by our colleagues at the Australian Wine Research Institute (AWRI), to develop the correct terminology to associate with each wine. The output of these

investigations or the commentary provided by a winemaker, expert reviewer or sommelier are often utilised by wine marketers, retailers and food and beverage providers to assist in the sale of wine in various forms of marketing communications and collateral materials.

Let us now consider an emerging and rapidly growing wine consumption market such as China. The description of wines that is complex for a Western audience is further muddled in the Chinese market for two reasons. The first reason is a lack of wine knowledge and experience. The second is a lack of

Are you listed?



THE AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND
WINE INDUSTRY
DIRECTORY
ONLINE

Don't miss out in 2014!
Gain maximum exposure with your free listing

Ensure the industry can find you and your company

- Other industry personnel – Winemakers, Viticulturists, Marketers, Managers...
- Wine show committees
- Wine buyers, distributors & retailers
- Print & Online coverage

The Directory is a POWERFUL MEDIUM because it stays on desks, by the phone, all year round!

LISTINGS CLOSE 13/12/13

Contact **Winetitles** on +618 8369 9500 or email wid@winetitles.com.au

[w] winetitles
PROVIDING SOLUTIONS TO THE WINE INDUSTRY

understanding of the sensory descriptors of wines based on Western terms. Certain food products common to a Western diet are alien in a Chinese diet and vice versa. One competitive advantage for Australian producers in a developing market such as China could be to communicate the taste of a wine to a Chinese consumer in a manner to which they are most receptive.

This research was designed in conjunction with our colleagues Leigh Francis and Patricia Williamson, from the AWRI. This made it possible to have expert opinion and research design from both a marketing and sensory standpoint. Wine Intelligence, a wine focussed consumer insights agency, and Anovax, a Chinese food marketing research agency, were retained for the execution of the data collection under the supervision of project team members. Technicians who were fluent in Mandarin and highly knowledgeable of the wine category conducted this research. This research is ongoing and preliminary insights only are presented here.

The first wave of data collection consisted of 12 focus groups across three cities in China – Chengdu, Guangzhou, and Shanghai – in March 2013. Respondents were recruited on the following demographics:

- between the ages of 25-45
- equal gender split
- minimum income of 10,000 RMB per month
- employed in a professional position for at least one year
- university degree required for respondents under 30.

Respondents were further screened on the following wine consumption criteria:

- have bought imported wine at least two to three times in the past six months

- typically spend between 150-400 RMB on a bottle of wine in retail
- do not purchase wines predominantly for gifting
- have consumed wine in an on-trade scenario two to three times in the past six months
- have consumed wine at home two to three times in the past six months
- open to consuming imported grape-based wine.

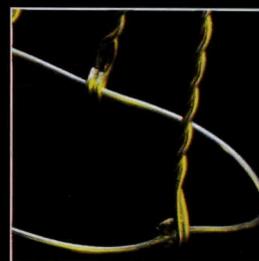
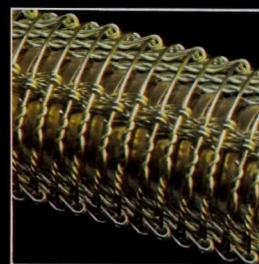
The groups were conducted in four lots to isolate respondents by gender and age group, as our data provider advised this would be most effective at eliciting feedback in the context of the Chinese culture. The groups were conducted in Mandarin and then translated into English for analytic purposes. Due to the complexity of the interviewing coupled with the tasting of wines to evoke taste descriptors, the groups were limited to four respondents at a time. This pilot phase resulted in 48 consumers interviewed across the three cities.

Each focus group was conducted in two stages. First, as a warm-up task, the moderator asked the participants to discuss the evolution of their wine consumption from recalling their first exposure to the category through to their current motivations to consume and perceptions of imported wines. Results of this component are not reported in this article for brevity. This was followed by a blind tasting of four wine styles: sparkling, white, red, and dessert. The tasting order of wine by style was fixed. However, wines were randomly assigned to each group among a pool of four wines per style. A total of 16 wines were trialled across the 12 focus groups. The wines were chosen during a bench tasting conducted by team members from the AWRI

The Pacifix Muselet



- Plain plaque
- Printed plaque
- Plaquelless
- Plain or coloured wire
- Fast delivery
- Precision component
- Australian made



Proudly made in Australia by
D.J. Young Pty Ltd

710 High Street Kew East VIC 3102

Telephone: +61 3 9859 4468

Fax +61 3 9819 7357

e-mail: sales@pacifix.com.au

www.pacifix.com.au

PacifiX



Figure 1. Generic and non-culture specific taste descriptors – classified by wine style. (Data visualisation courtesy of Wine Intelligence)

Table 1. The top 10 culturally-related flavour descriptors associated with wine – classification by wine style.

Sparkling Wines	Count %	White Wines	Count %
Pomelo	67	Kaffir lime	44
Kaffir lime	52	Pomelo	31
Jasmine tea leaves	23	Lemongrass	19
Guava	17	Guava	15
Jackfruit	17	Rambutan	15
Lemongrass	15	Starfruit	13
Cantaloupe	13	Jackfruit	10
Starfruit	10	Gingko nut	10
Rambutan	10	Jasmine tea leaves	8
Dragon fruit	8	Yellow melon	8
Red Wines	Count %	Dessert Wines	Count %
Yangmei	42	Longan	38
Dried Chinese hawthorn	33	Jackfruit	38
Dried Chinese red date	31	Pomelo	29
Fresh Wolfberry	27	Cantaloupe	23
Chinese black tea leaf	23	Mango	21
Dried wolfberry	23	Kaffir lime	21
Clove	21	Starfruit	19
Fresh Chinese date	19	Dragon fruit	15
Dried Chinese mushroom	8	Asian pear	15
Persimmon	6	Lemongrass	13

and the Ehrenberg-Bass Institute, who selected the most representative wine styles that Australia currently exports to China.

The first component of this sensory test was to ascertain the generic and non-culture specific lexicon that Chinese drinkers use to describe wine. The most common terminology applied was words such as 'smooth', 'fruity', 'sweet', 'mellow' and 'lengthy aftertaste'. Terms like 'fresh', 'soft', 'pure', 'good aroma' and 'full-bodied' were elicited, but less frequently.

Specific wine styles had more nuanced descriptions. Figure 1 illustrates the terms used by style and their relative size indicates their usage frequency.

Likeability and explanations of wine preference were recorded by wine and style. However, the sample size was too small to report these outputs. These results are further tested in a later phase of this research, but are beyond the scope of this article.

The main focus of this stage of the research was to develop relevant, culture-appropriate taste descriptors to be applied in the quantitative phase of this research project, which will be reported at a later date. Respondents were provided with a grid of Chinese-specific terms to choose from as they sought to identify the flavour profile of each wine tasted. There were two grids utilised: one more appropriate for white, sparkling and sweet wines and the other more appropriate for red wines. The analysis revealed that fruit flavour descriptors were selected more frequently than vegetable flavour descriptors. Flavours such as 'kaffir lime' and 'pomelo', are dominant for both white and sparkling wines. Fruits such as 'yangmei', 'dried Chinese hawthorns', 'dried Chinese red dates' and 'fresh wolfberry' are most suited for red wine description. Fruits such as 'longan' and 'jackfruit' are the most prevalent descriptors when tasting dessert wines. Table 1 contains a detailed listing of the terms elicited by wine style.

The culture-specific lexicon developed is the Chinese equivalent of the standard Western descriptors used to describe the sensory profile of wine. These terms are the first to be elicited specifically from Chinese wine consumers to describe Australian wines. In the next stage of the research we recruited larger, more statistically significant samples of Chinese wine consumers to compare the use of these Chinese terms with traditional Western terms for the same set of wines. The results of this larger study are now under analysis.

We note that no previous study has scientifically validated if: these terms are appropriate equivalents; the Chinese are able to better utilise this format to describe a wine; and from a marketing perspective, if the usage of such a lexicon increases preference, willingness to pay or purchase behaviour in the context of different consumption occasions. Providing the answers to these questions could be transformative for the Australian wine industry. The results will improve the way wines are communicated to Chinese consumers across all channels. The outcomes will be useful for back labels and marketing communications by producers, help wine distributors better support the brands they represent, assist food and beverage outlets in their wine lists, and help both regular and online retailers describe Australian wines more appropriately to Chinese consumers. A detailed final report of the results of the entire Chinese Lexicon Project will be disseminated to the industry by the GWRDC at a later date. An article describing these results will be published in this journal at that time.

Copyright of Wine & Viticulture Journal is the property of Winetitles Pty Ltd and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.