

# **Factors Influencing Wine Consumption in Thailand and Marketing Strategies for Italian Wine Producers**

by

**Micaela Resuli**

MBA Student (International Program), Graduate School of Commerce,  
Burapha University, Chonburi, Thailand  
Tel: 0616450348, E-mail: micaela.resuli@hotmail.it

and

**Supasit Lertbuasin**

Graduate School of Commerce,  
Burapha University, Chonburi, Thailand  
Tel: 0816851222, E-mail: supasitlbs2010@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

This study identifies what factors influence wine consumption in Thailand and it helps developing a product portfolio thought exclusively for this type of market. The questionnaires developed for the survey launched in the country, have been used to study the relationships between the independent variables gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behavior and the dependent one wine consumption. The findings show that gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing and consumer behavior exert an actual influence on wine consumption in Thailand. The only factor not having any kind of influence on wine consumption Thailand is wine knowledge, which is very low as shown by the quantitative study. The product portfolio has been developed through the identification of wine preferences of Thai consumers and it includes red and still wines, characterized by a medium body and a 12% alcohol level. Although wine consumption levels and wine knowledge are low in the country, the results of the study show a positive inclination in consuming wine in the future, which represents a promising outcome for international wine producers exporting to the country, whose main aim would be that of “Educating” wine consumers in the country in order to increase wine consumption.

**Key words:** wine consumption, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge, consumer behavior.

## **1. Problems statement**

Investing abroad might constitute a profitable opportunity for companies seeking for success in emerging markets characterized by high growth potential. Thailand might be one of the various examples located in South-east Asia, since its GDP has been increasing by 3.33% on average during the last decade as stated in the data collected by the World Bank (World Bank national accounts data, 2016). Business opportunities have also multiplied thanks to the sustained deregulation and trade liberalization facilitated by the ASEAN community (Austria, 2013). But Li et alii (2010) explain also that growth and change in Asia have been influenced through the intense economic development experienced by China, whose Gross Domestic Product has been increasing

by 9.55% on average in the last ten years (World Bank national accounts data, 2016). This is the reason why investing in Thailand might be profitable but also facilitated by trade deregulation and economic growth faced by the country over the last decade.

One of the main markets experiencing a remarkable development in Asia has been the market of wine (Lee, 2009), nevertheless it might be defined as a mature and saturated market, which has been experiencing the changes in consumer behavior and in terms of volumes because of the global financial crisis (Contini et alii, 2015).

The opportunities offered by the wine market are highlighted also by others researchers, that have stated that wine consumption has increased significantly in the following Asian countries: China, Japan, Korea, Hong Kong and Thailand. The reason behind this increment is globalization (Lee, 2009). In addition to this, wine consumption increase is related to other factors like Asian consumer's preference for Western lifestyle and its image of healthy product. Moreover, the consumption of wine has reached these new customer segments because the wine is now sold at more affordable prices and allows also middle-classes of society to consume it.

According to a research conducted on Thai consumers that explains why wine consumption has increased in Thailand, Thai consumers associate wine drinking to Western culture and lifestyle. But it states also that the consumers in developing countries like Thailand are unfamiliar with wine and that their choice is mainly driven by brand recognition (Lee, 2009). This is the reason why introducing new types of wine might constitute a real challenge on the marketing point of view, due to scarce wine knowledge and cultural factors that will be later on analyzed in the study.

## **1.1 Research Question**

The research question that this study would like to answer is: how can exporting Italian wine to Thailand be successful?

The answer to the above mentioned question will be the result of the analysis of all the factors influencing wine consumption in Thailand and the guideline of the marketing plan focused on the strategies, which will be the means through which Italian wine exporters will be able to reach their potential customers.

However, the following paper is going to focus only the analysis of the factors influencing wine consumption in Thailand.

## **1.2 Research Objectives**

The following research has two main objectives:

1. To study the factors influencing wine consumption in Thailand.
2. The development of a product portfolio thought exclusively for Thai consumers.

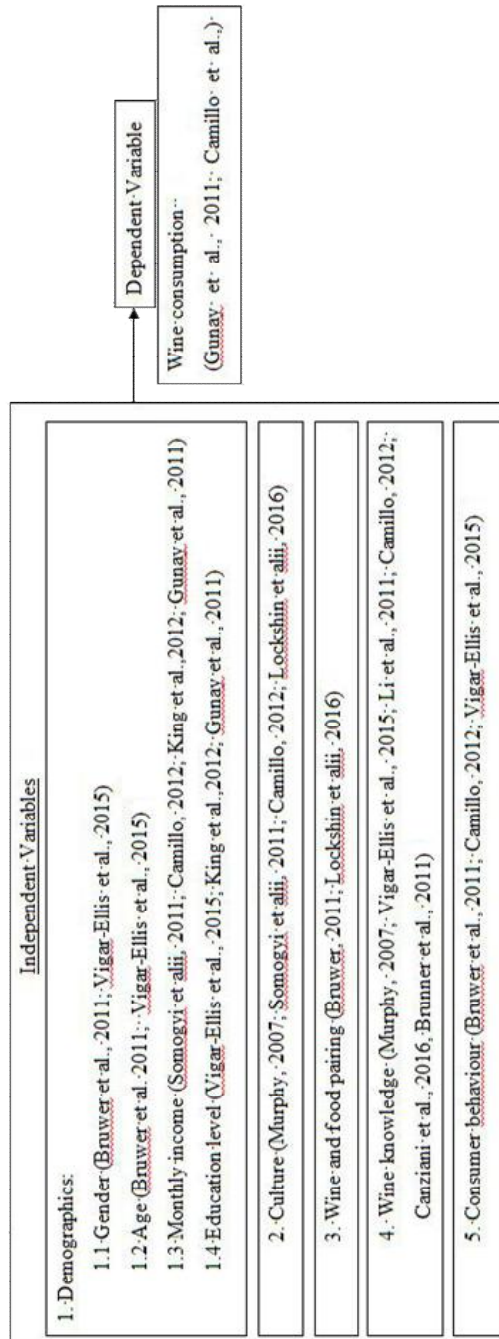
## **1.3 Hypothesis**

This research is based on the following hypothesis:

1. Gender influences wine consumption
2. Age influences wine consumption
3. Monthly income influences wine consumption
4. Education level influences wine consumption

5. Culture influences wine consumption
6. Wine and food pairing influences wine consumption
7. Wine knowledge influences wine consumption
8. Consumer behavior influences wine consumption

## 1.4 Conceptual Framework



## 1.5 Contribution to Knowledge

Identification and analysis of the factors influencing wine consumption in Thailand and development of a product portfolio matching Thai consumers' preferences.

## 1.6 Scope of the study

The following study analyses how the factors gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behaviour influence wine consumption in Thailand. In order to study this type of relationship, 412 questionnaires have been distributed and collected using Facebook and Line as the first means for reaching respondents and then by distributing them to master and PHD students at the Graduate school of commerce in Bangsaen and at Central Plaza shopping mall in Chonburi.

## 2. Literature Review

The literature review of this study consists of research papers, research articles and books regarding the following topics: economic growth in Asia, international wine consumption, Italian and other wines in international markets, Thai market of wine, its laws and distribution and related papers studying the influence of gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behaviour on wine consumption.

Economic growth of Asian countries has been the center of several studies and among them, there are those of Fang and Chang (2016) that state that Asia Pacific countries have greatly contributed to the global economic development, witnessed by the increasing level of GDP of all the nations in this geographic area. The Asia-Pacific nations play a significant role in global economy and their GDP influenced by human capital, physical capital, labor and energy use, constitutes 27.4% of the global Gross Domestic Product.

Also Pradhan et al. (2015) state that Asia has been experiencing a rapid economic growth in the last decades, which in this case can be explained by analyzing the relationship among two different variables: financial development and development of telecommunications infrastructure.

Williamson (2005) as well reaffirms that Asian countries' economy has been growing however; it has been also changing thanks to trade liberalization and sustained deregulation. According to him, Asian economic rapid growth has been strongly influenced by the economic development faced by China.

One of the main markets showing high growth potential in Asia is the wine market, which in Europe is facing saturation and decreasing demand. In fact Contini et al. (2015) mentions that the financial crisis has strongly influenced consumption rates in various product areas in Italy; but significant decreases have been registered mainly in food sector, where it has been assessed that sales of quality food have decreased in volume in favour of lower quality food. Over the last years the crisis has affected also wine consumption rate, which has been declining not only in Italy, but in all European countries too. However wine exports from European countries have increased significantly in the last period, because of the global wine market expansion.

Also Mora (2006) mentions that the markets of wine have been characterized by a change in volume and customer behaviour and this has led to a crisis that has affected the whole market. In

France for example Bordeaux vineyards have been suffering a decrease in sales and substantial loss due to a lack of adaptation and overproduction. Moreover Li et al. (2011) states that China has become one of the most appealing markets for wine in the last few years. The author remarks that a very significant increase in wine consumption, production and importation in China occurred in 2007 and 2008. The main reason behind is the rapid economic growth which has led to an increase in wealth within the country. Another effect of economic growth has been an increase in consumer expenditures, since Chinese consumers have become more demanding in terms of quality. This is the reason why a lot of wine enterprises, seeking for new opportunities, are willing to penetrate the Chinese market aiming at serving this new customer segments.

In addition Mariani et al. (2011) states that international wine market has been expanding in the last decade thanks to a great increase in wine consumption in Asia. The increase has been registered in terms of wine imported to Asian countries, but also in domestic production, as it has occurred in China. The Asian countries registering a significant increase in wine imports have been: Hong Kong, China, Taiwan, Singapore and South Korea. The main reason behind such a high increase in wine imports has been trade deregulation, which has facilitated international trade.

Even if the Italian market has been suffering wine decreasing demand, Carbone et al. (2010) consider wine as one of the most representative products for Italy in international markets, especially in the food and beverages sectors of Made in Italy.

Following France, in terms of earnings but not quantity, Italy is the second biggest exporter of wine in the world. The other main exporters on a global scale are Spain, Chile and Australia. Italian wine has a good reputation in importing countries, thanks to its quality, a factor that is strictly linked to production and taste.

In 2014 Italy exported 20.4 Million of hectolitres of wine with a value of 5.11\$ billion, and red wines in bottles have been exported in deeply larger amounts than white and sparkling wines.

Thailand instead represents an appealing market for wine, because consumption of alcoholic beverages has been increasing by 11% annually over the last ten years, while wine consumption has been growing by 5% yearly for the last few years. Consumers of alcoholic beverages in the country are seven million.

Wine consumers are aged between 25 and 55 and drink wine because it is a considered a sign of social status. The main importing countries of wine are France and Australia and in 2016, 15 million litres were imported into the country (Il mercato del vino in Thailandia, 2017).

However, importing wine to Thailand might constitute a challenge for wine producers around the world, because of heavy taxation imposed by the Excise department, which makes the price of wine products from Europe skyrocket to 400% of their actual value.

Since the wine market in Asia has been experiencing such a big development, various research studies have been conducted to understand what factors influence wine consumption there, in order to identify how the market has been evolving. For example, Murphy et al. (2007) has conducted a qualitative study focused on Chinese consumption, which aimed at understanding the frequency with which Chinese were willing to drink wine, the level of consumption, the location in which wine was consumed and the factors driving wine purchasing. The results show in fact that wine knowledge, income and culture are the main factors influencing wine consumption, in terms of quantity and frequency. In fact, the higher the wine knowledge the higher the amounts of wine

consumed. The same influence is exerted by income, where higher income levels lead to increased amounts of wine purchased.

Also Li et al. (2011) has conducted a research in China focused on finding out what are the main factors characterizing wine consumer behaviours. The results show that gender, wine knowledge, monthly income and social status influence the behaviour of consumers and wine consumption. According to the author, in order to increase wine consumption, it is necessary to “Educate” the customers through advertisements, lectures and free wine tasting panels.

Instead other studies conducted in wine consuming countries around the world, have shown that also education, wine and food pairing, age, gender and consumer behaviour in terms of prices and wine consumption place influence wine consumption. Moreover, the main strategies to implement for increasing wine demand would be using social networks as the means to reach consumers and communicate potential promotions and events the companies are involved in (Bruwer et al., 2011; Vigar-Ellis et al., 2015; Contini et al., 2011; Platania et al., 2016; Somogyi et al., 2011; Camillo, 2012; Forbes, 2012; Gunay et al., 2011).

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study consists of a quantitative research conducted through the launch of a survey. Since the population of this study is unknown, the sample size will be identified through the use of the following formula (Cochran, 1977):

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{1.96^2}{4(0.05)^2}$$

So the sample size of the study should consist of at least 385 participants to be surveyed. The participants have been selected by using a convenience sampling method. The questionnaire has been developed on google modules and then distributed on the internet, utilizing Facebook, Line as the means to reach the respondents. Another way for collecting the needed number of questionnaires has been distributing them at Central Plaza in Chonburi and at the Graduate school of commerce in Bangsaen. Regarding the criteria applied for selection, it is necessary to remind that only people, that have consumed wine at least once in their life have been selected for the research. Moreover, all the respondents must have Thai nationality.

#### 3.2 Data Collection Tools

The study has been conducted through the collection of 412 questionnaires. The questionnaire contains five different sections: the first section including respondents’ personal information about gender, geographical location, age, education level and average monthly income (Bruwer et al., 2011; Canziani et al., 2016; King et al., 2012). All the questions are nominal and ordinal scales.

The second section of the questionnaire consists of seventeen questions related to the factors influencing wine consumption (Bruwer et al., 2011; Canziani et al. 2016; Camillo, 2012; Lockshin et al., 2016; Murphy et al., 2007; Agnoli et al., 2011): culture, wine knowledge, wine and

food pairing and consumer behaviour. All the questions included in the section are structured on the basis of multiple-choice, multiple-answer scales which are nominal, ordinal scales and Likert scales.

While the third section of the questionnaire will include eight questions related to wine consumption, its frequency and the types of wine consumed (Agnoli et al., 2011; Li et al., 2011; Camillo, 2012; Gunay et al., 2011). This final section includes multiple-choice questions, therefore nominal, ordinal and Likert scales will constitute the final section of the questionnaire. All the gathered data have been analysed with the statistical program.

#### 4. Results

The results of the study have been interpreted on the basis of both descriptive and inferential statistics in order to present the overall picture of the data and then analyse the relationships between the dependent variable and the independent ones.

The total number of questionnaires collected is 412 consisting of 61.2% of female respondents and 38.8% of male respondents. Most of the respondents' geographical location is East and Center counting for 69.9% and 21.1% of the respondent respectively. Regarding the age of the respondents, 31.3% is aged between 25 and 31, 25.2% is 32 to 38 years old and only 28.1% of the respondents is older and 15.3% younger than 25.

Most of the respondents are highly educated, in fact 56.1% and 32% of the respondents have obtained their undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications respectively. While 41.3% of the respondents earns 10 000 to 29 999 THB per month, 23.1% of the respondents' monthly income is 30 000 to 49 999 THB, 27% earns more than 50 000 THB per month and only 8.7% gets less than 10 000 THB because of the young age, unemployment or low education level.

The results about culture show an overall mean of responses equal to 3 (neither agree nor disagree) and a mode of 4 (agree) showing that wine is considered by most of the respondents as a status symbol and an expression of wealth. Wine and food pairing results, show that wine is not always consumed during a meal and most of the respondents disagree to the statement "I like drinking wine while eating food", showing that this kind of activity is not highly appreciated by Thai consumers. This might be due to the fact that Thai consumers' knowledge about wine is very low, as shown by the results of the questionnaire, where 4.9 out of 10 is the average number of right responses given, per respondent. The survey shows also that wine is mostly consumed at restaurants by 61.7% of respondents, 20.6% at home and 16.3% at bars. In addition, the consumers claim to purchase wine mostly at the supermarket (51.9%) and at specialty wine shops (16%).

Most of the respondents claim also to be willing to pay a bottle of wine up to 1000 THB (22.3%) and up to 2000 THB (18.7%), so a price range going from 500 to 2000 THB would be the best for selling wine in Thailand.

The main channels through which wine consumers tend to get pieces of information about wine are word of mouth (47.6%), wine web sites (18.7%) and product reviews (17.7%).

The results about wine consumption show wine consumption frequency and preferences of Thai consumers: 62.4% of the respondents claim to consume wine once or twice a year and 27.2% once or twice a month and 77.9% state to consume less than two glasses in a week, remarking that wine consumption levels are still low in the country.



In addition, Thai consumers seem to prefer mainly red and still wines, since 78% of the respondents answered red and 80.8% still. Moreover, they prefer a medium body wine that does not have to be nor too dry, nor too sweet, characterized by an alcohol level inferior to 10% or between 10% to 14%, because 45.4% prefer a very low alcohol level and 45.4% a medium high one.

The results show also that the respondents are willing to consume wine in the future, in fact 80.1% of them claimed to be willing to consume wine in the future.

The data have also been used for the development of eight different models testing the relationship between the independent variables gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behavior and the dependent variable wine consumption, where the categorical variables have all been dummied for the analysis.

The first model has been developed through the use of discriminant analysis, whose results show that only age, education, monthly income and wine and food pairing are actually correlated with wine consumption frequency, however education seems to exert a stronger influence on wine consumption frequency than age, monthly income and wine and food pairing.

For the development of the second model discriminant analysis has been run again in order to show that only age and wine and food pairing influence weekly wine consumption in glasses. Also the third model has been developed through the use of discriminant analysis to test the relationship between gender, age, education, income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behavior and the dependent variable which is color of wine preferred. The results show that no variables are qualified for the analysis, meaning that none of the independent variables are statistically significant for the model. So the independent variables selected have no influence on the color of wine consumed. In fact, a big group of the respondents (76%) have claimed to prefer red wine over the white and rosé ones.

The fourth model has been created through the implementation of the logistic regression, because the dependent variable in this case is a dichotomous and categorical variable: type of wine preferred (still/sparkling).

The results show that the model isn't a good fit for the data, because the model shows no statistical significance with a p value of .120.

So it is possible to state that gender, age, education, income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behavior have no influence on the type of wine consumed.

Both the fifth and sixth models have been developed through the implementation of multiple linear regression. The fifth model tested the relationship between gender, age, education, income, culture, wine and food pairing, wine knowledge and consumer behavior and the taste of wine consumed. The results show that the model is a good fit for the data since the ANOVA table shows a p value of .000, which is significant.

However, if the statistical significance of each variable is tested individually only the variables gender, age, education, consumer behavior, culture and wine and food pairing result significant and the following regression equation has been developed:



$$Y = 5.094 - 0.219(\text{male dummy}) - 0.243(\text{age dummy } 25-31) - 0.463(\text{age dummy } 32-38) - 0.203(\text{age dummy } 39-45) - 0.313(\text{age dummy } 46-51) - 1.133(\text{age dummy } 52-58) - 0.797(\text{age dummy } 59-64) - 1.518(\text{age dummy } 65+) - 0.745(\text{dummy high school}) - 1.727(\text{dummy technical school}) - 1.101(\text{dummy undergraduate}) - 1.3078(\text{dummy postgraduate}) - 0.370(\text{dummy price } 500-1000\text{THB}) - 0.335(\text{dummy price } 1001-1500\text{THB}) - 0.539(\text{dummy price } 1501-2000\text{THB}) - 0.531(\text{dummy price } 2001-2500\text{THB}) - 0.460(\text{dummy price } 2501-3000) - 0.264(\text{dummy price more than } 3000\text{THB}) + 0.207(\text{culture}) - 0.200(\text{wine and food pairing})$$

The above equation shows how the independent variables are correlated with the dependent one, for example males show a preference for a dryer wine compared to women who would be more inclined in consuming sweeter wine, or as much as wine is paired with food, consumers will tend to prefer dryer wine instead of sweet one.

The multiple regression analysis shows that the sixth model containing all the independent variables and the body of wine preferred by Thai consumers as dependent variable, is a good fit for the data (p value is lower than .05). However, if every variable's significance is tested individually, the only significant variables are: gender, consumer behavior, culture and wine and food pairing. The equation containing only the significant independent variables is the following:

$$Y = 3.565 - 0.311(\text{dummy male}) - 0.491(\text{dummy price } 500-1000\text{THB}) - 0.549(\text{dummy price } 1001-1500\text{THB}) - 0.487(\text{dummy price } 1501-2000\text{THB}) - 0.286(\text{dummy price } 2001-2500\text{THB}) - 0.493(\text{dummy price } 2501-3000\text{THB}) - 0.650(\text{dummy price more than } 3000\text{THB}) + 0.288(\text{culture}) - 0.149(\text{wine and food pairing})$$

The equation shows how the increase of the independent variables influences a decrease or increase of the dependent variable. For example, male consumers seem to prefer a fuller body than female ones and as wine is paired with food, full body wines are preferred over light ones.

The seventh model instead developed through discriminant analysis has the alcohol level preferred as dependent variable. In fact, the results show that the only variables characterized by statistical significance are wine and food pairing and consumer behavior. So wine and food pairing and consumer behavior are actually correlated with the alcohol level preferred in a wine.

The eighth model instead tests the relationship between all the independent variables and the dependent one, which in this case is the inclination in consuming wine in the future. The results show that only education, consumer behavior, culture and wine and food pairing influence the inclination of consuming wine in the future, because they are the only variables with statistical significance. The following equation has been developed:

$$\text{Log}(p/1-p) = -33.708 + 1.720(\text{high school}) + 1.985(\text{technical school}) + 0.378(\text{undergraduate qualification}) + 0.343(\text{postgraduate qualification}) - 1.318(\text{restaurant}) + 0.363(\text{disco}) + 1.604(\text{home}) - 0.829(\text{culture}) - 1.239(\text{wine and food pairing})$$

The above equation shows that only education influences positively the inclination of consuming wine in the future, since culture, wine and food pairing and consumer behavior are negatively correlated with it.

## 5. Discussion

The results described by descriptive statistics show that Thai consumers prefer consuming red and still wine, characterized by a medium body, whose level of sweetness and dryness should not be too strong. But they show also that wine consumption levels are still low and that Thai consumers do not appreciate pairing wine with food. Moreover wine is considered a status symbol and an expression of wealth of the medium and high social classes of society. However, the respondents seem to be positively inclined in consuming wine in the future, which might be a promising result for international wine producers exporting products to the country.

Another important piece of information obtained through the questionnaire is related to the channels used by the consumers to get information about wine products, which are word of mouth, wine websites and product reviews. This kind of results makes wine producers understand how to better reach the potential consumers in the country.

The results obtained through inferential statistics instead show what factors influence wine consumption. All the independent variables resulted in being significant and having a correlation with the dependent variable wine consumption, in at least one of the eight models developed. The only independent variable that has never been defined as significant in all the models developed is wine knowledge. This means that according to the findings of this research wine consumption in Thailand is not influenced by wine knowledge, but it is instead influenced by gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing and consumer behavior.

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendation

### 6.1 Conclusion

The wine market of Thailand has growth potential and it appeals wine producers from all around the globe, because of its increasing wine demand.

The research findings show that wine knowledge of Thai consumers is low, the culture factor plays relevant role in influencing wine consumption, wine and food pairing is not appreciated by Thai consumers and that wine consumption levels are still low in the country. However 80% of the respondents show a positive inclination in consuming wine in the future, which constitutes a promising piece of information for wine producers exporting their products to the country. This is why wine producers should focus on the marketing strategies to implement in the country for attracting local customers positively inclined in consuming wine.

Several authors (Bruwer et al., 2011; Vigar-Ellis et al., 2015; Lockshin et al., 2016; Canziani et al., 2016; King et al. 2012; Gunay et al., 2011) claim that the best way for increasing wine demand in Asian countries would be “Educating” the consumers through conferences and wine tasting events using the social media as means for reaching potential consumers. So further research would be needed to identify the best strategies to implement for making wine products more appealing for Thai consumers and intensify the consumption.

## **6.2 Limitations of study**

The main limitation of the study has to be addressed to the sample of population used in the survey, since it might be considered too small for making assumptions that can be generalized in a big country like Thailand whose population consists of 65 Million people (World Bank national accounts data, 2016).

## **6.3 Recommendation**

### **6.3.1 Recommendation from this research**

The quantitative research conducted for this study has shown what factors have an actual influence on wine consumption in Thailand.

As already explained in previous sections of the study, gender, age, education, monthly income, culture, wine and food pairing and consumer behavior influence wine consumption in the country.

More specifically the questionnaire section related to wine consumption contains eight questions about wine consumption frequency, wines preferred and inclination in consuming wine in the future. Six models out of eight result in being significant, having six different dependent variables: wine consumption frequency, weekly wine consumption in glasses, the level of dryness and sweetness preferred in a wine, wine body preferred, alcohol level preferred and inclination in consuming wine in the future. So the findings of the quantitative research show that:

1. Age, education, monthly income and wine and food pairing influence wine consumption frequency.
2. Age and wine and food pairing influence weekly wine consumption in glasses. However age has a stronger influence on the dependent variable than wine and food pairing.
3. Gender, age, education, price willing to pay (consumer behavior), culture and wine and food pairing influence the taste of wine consumed.
4. Gender, age, price willing to pay (consumer behavior), wine and food pairing and culture influence the body of wine consumed.
5. The price willing to pay (consumer behavior) and wine and food pairing influence the alcohol level of wine consumed.
6. Education, wine consumption place (consumer behavior), culture and wine and food pairing influence the inclination in consuming wine in the future.

So the results reveal what factors to take under consideration when to market wine products to Thailand and when to identify the reasons behind the consumption choices of male, female, younger or older and highly educated consumers in the country.

### **6.3.2 Recommendation for the future research**

Looking at the research limitations it might be suggested for future research to enlarge the sample of study in order to make the findings of the research be considered more significant for the overall population. Moreover it might be useful to interview wine producers exporting to the country located also in other Italian regions, in order to have a larger amount of pieces of information regarding the strategies to implement in the country.

However it might be interesting for future research to include other factors in the research like the geographical location of the respondents in order to identify different consumption trends based on the location of the respondents. Also the consumer choice cues might constitute valid factors for the research, some of them might be brand, place of origin, price, packaging and label. This would help identify what factors consumers value the most before buying wine products.

In addition to this, future researchers might focus on the distributors as well, in fact interviewing Thai distributors as well as Italian distributors having subsidiaries in Thailand might be interesting in identifying the needs of Thai consumers and what strategies to implement in order to market wine products successfully in the country.

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