Exploring consumer and wine expert views towards VERJUICE: a grape-based product made from viticultural waste

• Introduction

The wine sector has looked for sustainable alternatives to convert viticultural waste materials into ingredients/products with high-added value. One great example is to use thinned unripe grapes (traditionally left to rot) to make verjuice. As verjuice is not yet regulated, it varies widely in terms of grape picking time, varietal, production methods and target end-uses. In fact, this leads to the diversity in sensory profiles found in verjuice currently available in the market.

Aim: Initial exploration of New Zealand consumer preferences and consumer and global wine expert attitudes towards verjuice products.

• Materials & Methods

13 verjuice samples from different countries were presented to consumers (n=21, 17F & 4M)

- Identify key sensory attributes
- Explore uses & preferred packaging
- Understand desired label information

10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with wine & grape growers from different countries

- Understand business motivations
- Explore key decisions concerning verjuice production

• Conclusions

Opportunities for the wine industry aligning verjuice to different use case scenarios and sensory signatures were identified.

A disconnect between consumer and producer views was recognized in terms of sensory profile, versatility of uses, desired packaging and label information.

The use of thinned grapes represents a substantial commercial opportunity for wineries by converting waste material into verjuice, adding value to its sustainability credentials, especially for environmentally aware consumers.

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