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# **Champagne purchasing: The influence of kudos and sentimentality**

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## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – We investigated the engagement of Australian consumers when buying and drinking Champagne.

**Design/methodology** – We identified seven variables *a priori* that we expected would influence consumers' decisions and then used exploratory interviews to investigate how Champagne consumers were influenced by these. We interviewed Champagne marketers, sellers, educators, connoisseurs and aspirational consumers. Our interview protocol allowed respondents to identify other variables.

**Findings** – We identified two new variables that, *inter alia*, influence Australian consumers in their Champagne selection. These were the kudos that comes from the people they serve or give it to and their sentimentality about previous experiences of Champagne consumption. They two new variables are the focus of this paper.

**Research limitations/implications** – The exploratory nature of this research means larger studies are needed to confirm our preliminary findings, particularly in other, non Anglo-Saxon cultures.

**Practical implications** – Champagne houses could place greater emphasis on kudos and sentimentality in their marketing campaigns; additionally cultural issues could affect how the two factors operate in different markets.

**Originality/value** – Kudos and sentimentality have not been previously emphasised in the wine consumer behaviour literature.

**Keywords:** Champagne, kudos, sentimentality, purchase decision variables.

**Paper type:** Research paper

## Introduction

The origin of Champagne is an intrinsic part of its branding and the Champagne houses are ardent in their protection of it. Indeed, the controlling body in Champagne, the Comité Interprofessionnel du Vin de Champagne (CIVC) successfully used the system of Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée to stop Yves St. Laurent from marketing its 'Champagne' perfume in the 1990s (Hughes, 2006-2007). Internationally, Champagne branding also benefits from country of origin (COO) effect which is “the impact that perceptions about a country have on a person’s evaluation of that country’s products and or brands” (Nebenzahl *et al.*, 1997, p. 28). France is often associated with refined taste, sensory pleasure, elegance and sophistication (Leclerc *et al.*, 1994) and has an unrivalled association with luxury products (Wilson, 2005). In countries such as Australia where sparkling wine is produced locally, consumers recognise Champagne as a separate category (Charters, 2005) based on its country of origin or its 'Frenchness'.

However, the COO effect does not account for the selection of one bottle of Champagne over another, or for what links a consumer’s enjoyment to specific preferences. A bottle of non-vintage Moët et Chandon and a bottle of 1994 Louis Roederer Cristal both offer perfect French pedigrees, so what do consumers consider when they drink one rather than the other? COO effects interact with other purchase decision variables (Dinnie, 2004) and in the research reported here we identify two new attributes of Champagne that help explain consumers’ engagement with Champagne and inform an area that has received little academic attention to date (Charters, 2005).

The two attributes were identified as part of a larger study of purchase decision variables of Champagne consumers in Australia. Australia is an interesting market to investigate Champagne purchasing because it is the 9th largest national market for champagne (CIVC, 2010), although its population is much smaller than most other top-10 countries, and it has local production of sparkling wines. Champagne is considered a luxury product in Australia, which adds to the interest of this project (Charters, 2005). In 2009, Australians consumed over 3.6 million bottles, compared with 181 million bottles sold domestically in France (CIVC, 2010). The results of this study could be significant for the champagne industry (and producers of sparkling wine) as well as for our understanding of consumers' preferences with luxury products.

In the next section we define the attributes of champagne that influence purchase decisions, identified *a priori* from the wine marketing literature and the emerging Champagne literature. We then describe our methods before introducing the two new variables that we propose are significant for Champagne consumers: kudos and sentimentality. We link the multiple dimensions of kudos and sentimentality to other research which suggests they are influential in contexts beyond Champagne selection. We discuss the marketing implications of this study before our final section on limitations and future research.

## **Context**

Previous wine marketing research suggested seven variables that could influence the selection of Champagne. These were: (1) endorsements from friends, wine journalists or

sales assistants (Chaney, 2000; Schamel and Anderson, 2003); (2) the high price of Champagne, an important signal about product quality (Salolainen, 1993; Spawton, 1991); (3) promotional cues (advertising, sponsorship of events, packaging, discounts and add-ons) which influence consumers' decision to buy Champagne because promotional activities link to risk reducing strategies (Mitchell and Greated, 1989); (4) the situation, or when wine is to be consumed, which has been emphasised as a motivating influence on consumers' purchase decisions, whether for an "every day drink at home" or "celebration with esteemed hosts" (Lockshin et al., 2001). Because Champagne is a celebration wine (Charters, 2005), and is used to 'sacralise' an event (Pettigrew et al., 2001), we expected occasion to influence purchase decisions; (5) the aesthetics of Champagne - the senses of sight, taste and smell the consumer uses as cues to evaluate product specific attributes, including colour (Gluckman, 1990; Quester and Smart, 1998; Verdú Jover et al., 2004) and bubbles (Charters, 2005; Pettigrew et al., 2001); (6) the taste, including the wine's characteristics (e.g. dry, sweet,) and its suitability as a food accompaniment (Chaney, 2000; Gluckman, 1990; Keown and Casey, 1995) and; (7) the brand-name which can influence Champagne purchase decisions, as these represent the wine maker, wine style and the corporate identity of the product (Verdú Jover et al., 2004).

Several additional factors have also been identified as influential on consumers' engagement with Champagne. Sharp and Smith (1991) suggest that Champagne holds a position as the personification of the ideal sparkling wine. Using a means end chain approach Judica and Perkins (1992) defined the core values which consumers of bottled sparkling wine (including Champagne) sought to satisfy in their consumption. They concluded that accomplishment, self-esteem, and family life were fundamental values sought by wine consumers and they suggested that for high-involvement drinkers 'belonging' was also an important core value.

However, the apparently rational behaviour of consumers of Champagne is belied by the difficulty they have in actually evaluating the product. In one study Champagne drinkers, who consumed regularly, were asked to evaluate wine (both well-known and less well-known brands) just by tasting, just by seeing the bottle or by a combination of the two. Participants in the experiment could not distinguish between wines during a blind tasting, but when the label was shown to them made clear judgments about the wines (Lange et al., 2002). Nevertheless, other experiments have found that consumers do make distinctions on tasting champagne, and that their hedonic rating of wines may vary greatly from their perception of the product's quality based on image and market reputation (Gergaud and Vignes, 2008). Finally Charters (2005) noted that some consumers see Champagne as a separate product type and not a category of wine. Consumers are motivated to drink sparkling wine more for symbolic and less for hedonic reasons than is the case with wine in general (Charters, 2005).

This review of the prior research shows that our understanding of Champagne consumers' purchase decisions is formative and can be usefully extended. Given that few studies have investigated the preferences of Australian Champagne consumers (Charters, 2005), we decided a qualitative theory-building approach (Eisenhardt, 1989) would best contribute to theory around consumer engagement of Champagne purchasing. The following section describes our methods.

## **Methods**

The data collection presented here occurred in two phases. In phase one, the first author used in-depth interviews to explore the influence of the seven purchase decision variables

identified from the literature. This semi-structured approach allowed probing and clarification of ideas and gave informants the opportunity to talk about other influences which led to the identification of the two variables we focus on in this paper. In phase two we used structured interviews of a second group of consumers to verify the importance of the variables identified in the first phase. This second round effectively offered a member-check as a means of adding validity to the study (Wallendorf & Belk, 1989).

We chose a pre-prepared interview protocol in phase one to help limit inconsistency and omission. The interviews were transcribed and analysed using the tenets of grounded theory approach (after Glaser & Strauss, 1967 and Strauss & Corbin, 1990) which are particularly useful when, like Australian consumers' Champagne selection, there is little known about the topic and few theories exist to predict behaviour (Pettigrew, 2000). Data collection and analysis were linked and interacted continually (Janesick, 1994) and the interview protocol was adapted to explore emerging categories interpreted from the analysis of preceding transcripts.

In its purest form, grounded theory uses theoretical sampling in order to fill gaps in data until a point of saturation. In this study sampling was constrained by time which led to a more directed approach using purposeful criterion sampling (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Our criteria for first round informants were that they were Australian and had purchased Champagne or had expert knowledge of Champagne purchasing decisions. Ten interviews were completed in phase one: six Champagne professionals (one educator, two marketers and three retailers/sellers) and four consumers. Because fine wine like Champagne is most likely to be consumed by connoisseurs and aspirational drinkers (Beverland, 2004), who are often

considered to be high-involvement (Lockshin et al., 2001; Quester and Smart, 1998) we chose to interview two connoisseur consumers and two aspirational consumers.

Respondents were recruited via the snowballing method (Miles & Huberman, 1994) and although many were acquainted with the educator, they were otherwise unconnected to each other. This diversity allowed for independent and varied responses for a more meaningful interpretive study. An even number of men and women were interviewed to minimise gender bias, although industry discourse suggests that women make up the majority of Champagne drinkers. The interviews were all conducted in Brisbane, Australia and lasted between one and one and a half hours. The respondents are described in Table 1 below with the code names that we use in the results section.

TABLE ONE ABOUT HERE

The data were analysed using the first two phases of the constant comparative method. First, the data were coded into broad categories (themes) and data sections relating to each theme were copied from the transcript files into a theme file. The coding was cross-checked by the second author. These theme files contained all the meaningful material from interviews with only introductory material and asides excluded. Entries in the major theme document were compared and contrasted to interpret each theme.

After confirming and identifying variables of influence in the first phase, we used structured interviews of two connoisseurs and two aspirational drinkers to further investigate the importance of the variables in phase two. The interviewees were selected to allow for literal



and theoretical replication logic (Eisenhardt, 1989). We achieved literal replication of data between gender and between consumer types (connoisseurs and aspirational drinkers) and theoretical replication was achieved through comparisons across gender and across consumer types. Details about the respondents in phase two are shown in table two. In this round, respondents were asked to rate the importance of each variable on a Likert-type scale from not at all important to very important and then asked why they had rated the variable in that way to further understand the influence of it.

TABLE TWO ABOUT HERE

## **Findings**

Based on our interpretation of the data, Australian consumers incorporate numerous reasons in their Champagne selection decision, including the variables we identified *a priori*. Australian consumers also consider two other factors that are the focus of this paper: the kudos that comes from the people they serve or give it to and their sentimentality about previous consumption experiences. Although these two variables have been alluded to in previous research they have not, as far as we are aware, been explored in any depth. For example, although status issues are regularly linked to Champagne consumption there has been little examination of how that status operates for the consumers. A key goal of this paper is to provide insight into how these two variables operate.

## *Kudos*

Aspirational consumers often adopt products that are in limited supply to indicate status, or buy products to enhance their self-concept and impress others (Beverland, 2004). From the interviews, we identified a variable we call 'kudos', which is 'glory; fame; renown or praise' (Webster's, 1998). Table 3 provides quotes from our respondents that demonstrate each of the five sub-elements of kudos: prestige and luxury appeal; portrayal of success; seeking to impress; joy of knowledge; and, membership of the 'Champagne club'. Champagne consumers gain satisfaction from becoming knowledgeable about Champagne because it is a luxury product with associated esteem; as well as acquiring credit or acknowledgement from those to whom they serve it.

#### TABLE THREE ABOUT HERE

Champagne is associated with feelings of luxury, well-being and gracious living (Coates, 2001) and the sense of luxury is inextricably linked to the perceived prestige of the product (Silverstein and Fiske, 2003). Affirming Champagne's status as prestigious and luxurious, the Champagne educator said: "It's the most prestigious thing". Retailer B linked the esteem associated with Champagne to customers' confidence when giving it as a gift: "people feel ...secure that they're giving something that you know, people will go 'oh...wow!', there's that esteem".

Although no one disputed the prestige linked with Champagne, some respondents rejected the idea that prestige influenced their purchase decision. Aspirational consumer 1 said that although she was not influenced by prestige and luxury associations, she imagined many were: "Oh, absolutely... I mean I think there are lots of people who do, but I'm not I'm not

wedded to any of that clap trap.” In the second phase, three out of four respondents said they were not influenced by the prestige luxury or exclusivity of Champagne when choosing to buy.

We labelled the second dimension of kudos ‘portrayal of success’. The purchase and consumption of luxury products like Champagne has been linked to ostentatious displays of wealth (Dubois and Duquesne, 1993) and consumption of prestige brands is viewed as a signal of wealth and status and a relatively high price is seen to enhance perceived conspicuous value (Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Our data showed that wishing to impress others or project an image of success motivates some consumers.

One aspect of this portrayal of success was a display of self-importance or snobbery. Describing a visit to Champagne, connoisseur consumer 1 in study 1 demonstrated some snobbery by differentiating between the treatment he received on an expert tour and when travelling as an ‘ordinary member of the public’:

[I was] in Champagne – in Epernay – and I had been there previously as part of a - an elite group where they know who we are and they know that ah... they tend to give you a good time, and you’re being looked after by... the chief wine maker ... But on this occasion I was just an ordinary member of the public and I was impressed by the, professional standards of looking after just anyone who came in off the street (connoisseur consumer 1, study 1).

The idea of impressing others through the purchase and consumption of luxury goods is recognised as a way for consumers to convey status to their peers (Nueno and Quelch, 1998; Vigneron and Johnson, 1999). Although “snob factors” are unfashionable for consumers to admit (Gluckman, 1990), the need to enhance one’s image in the opinion of significant others

through the acquisition and use of products has been demonstrated (Bearden et al., 1989). Intuitively, Champagne consumers who seek to impress may be concerned by the opinions of others. All the respondents in study two denied that the influence of wanting to impress others or project an image of success influenced their choice of Champagne. The females implied they did not want to be seen as being out to impress others although the men recognised that impressing others with Champagne may occur. The male aspirational drinker acknowledged that impressing people was “inherent in the use of Champagne” but said “it’s more in the decision to serve French Champagne against alternatives”. The male connoisseur said he was not concerned about impressing others “because I don’t need to” but acknowledged he would choose carefully to select a Champagne that fitted:

And I - in that sense I suppose it is impressing ... so in that sense I suppose you could say I would be keen to impress ... I would certainly not be keen to disappoint (male connoisseur, study 2).

These comments suggest that kudos may operate in two ways. One, the cruder, is the desire to impress. This was noted by the professionals but was denied by most of the consumers suggesting that they are reluctant to admit that kudos is influential, perhaps because of social desirability. However, a second form of kudos, implied in the quotations above, appears related to not letting others down and ensuring they have a good time. Some of the respondents stressed that their purchase decisions were based more on “the contents of the bottle – not because of the name” (female connoisseur, study 2), implying a desire for the company to drink well rather than just be impressed.

Information plays an important role in consumer decision making and choice between alternative wines is a situation where the information search is a leisure pursuit in itself (Chaney, 2000). Some Champagne drinkers derive pleasure from knowing about Champagne

and its production methods. The ability to distinguish different vintages and house styles or having an understanding of how Champagne is different from sparkling wine, was a recurring theme. Connoisseurs and aspirational drinkers are by definition involved in the process of information search (Keown and Casey, 1995) as suggested by one of the retailers:

With your connoisseurs ... they're ... probably well read and ... well travelled and the aspirational ones are now, [they] may not be doing as much travelling ... but are doing the courses, are reading and are accessing information (Retailer B, study 1).

A Champagne marketer suggested that the information gathering may be a pre-requisite to justify the expenditure:

You have to have an understanding of how Champagne is actually made ... to understand why you're paying above \$50 for a product – not just because it's imported – but also ... the way that Champagne is made ... you could give a flute of Dom Pérignon to someone in the street and they might not really understand ... 'oh it's nice ... but what am I really drinking?'... Yeah, 'why would I pay \$250 for this bottle' ... Whereas these people understand it, they collect it, they understand the vintage variations, they know what the name is delivering (marketer A, study 1).

She also suggested that people might aspire to knowledge of Champagne because of its positioning as a luxury product: “it becomes therefore a luxury item that people do aspire to have in their repertoire”. A connoisseur spoke of how he enjoyed learning about Champagne:

Yeah, because it was interesting and because I liked it and ... it was a ... hobby ... It's a very ... interesting product. The way it's made – ah, the history behind it, I've now got to know some of the people who live and work and produce Champagne in France so that adds an element of interest (connoisseur consumer 1, study 1).

When asked why he would choose one brand of Champagne over another, this respondent related it to his “knowledge of the house and ... the product”, emphasising the importance that the joy and function of knowledge has for Champagne consumers. The other connoisseur consumer (2) also said he liked “the whole knowledge of Champagne”.

It appears that for many consumers the information search process is pleasurable and their desire to expand their knowledge of Champagne and assimilate products can motivate experimental purchases of different types of Champagne. The data suggests that this is a more likely scenario for the connoisseur than for the aspirational drinker, where the former acquires knowledge of Champagne as a ‘hobby’.

In phase two of the study, both connoisseurs confirmed they gained satisfaction from learning about Champagne and that this knowledge influenced their purchase decisions. The male connoisseur talked about the advantages of knowledge:

You might realise that there are products which are very high quality, but because they’re not so well known ... aren’t that expensive ... Plus the fact that you learn there are so many different types of Champagne that suit different situations ... with food (male connoisseur, study 2).

Another dimension of kudos was what marketer A called a “club mentality”. The consumption of beverages has been associated with a system of inclusion and exclusion and as a means of achieving social integration and communicating social status (Friedman, 1994). When asked about the concept, retailer B said it could be seen as delineation based on knowledge, “Yeah ... if you know a bit about the house that it’s come from, ... you know a little bit more than someone else”, suggesting there was kudos associated with the

purchaser's knowledge and membership of this knowledge club. The Champagne educator labelled Champagne lovers as her 'disciples', suggesting a strong sense of group membership. A connoisseur consumer (2) said he provides free lectures at his work, "spreading the gospel" to ensure that others are "bitten by the bug".

The existence of an 'in-group' for Champagne drinkers was highlighted by Champagne marketer B's concerns for those excluded. He was concerned that taking the 'Champagne Club' mentality too far would limit the appeal of Champagne:

I think to take that too far is the wrong thing. I want (House Y) to be exclusive but not elite ... we don't want people to think that they can't come and join the fun (marketer B, study 1).

Supporting the idea that some Champagne drinkers associate themselves with an in-group of those who appreciate Champagne, Pettigrew et al., (2001) suggested that individuals engage in consumption rituals to consolidate their links to the social world. The data suggests that being 'part of a club' influences Champagne purchasing behaviour. We did not investigate the influence of a club mentality in round two interviews (thinking it better suited to a series of measures).

### *Sentimentality*

Some Champagne consumers were influenced by the positive sentiments attached to previous Champagne consumption. The significance of wine in capturing memories has been noted in previous studies (Charters and Pettigrew, 2008), and was evident in the current research. We have labelled this variable 'sentimentality'. The idea was summed up by an aspirational

consumer (1) in study 1 who when asked what she liked best about Champagne said: “it’s ... the associations, I guess, of happy places and happy times”. This idea was confirmed in phase two with all the respondents mentioning happy memories of past Champagne consumption. The male aspirational drinker in study 2 talked linked positive associations with drinking Bollinger in Saudi Arabia: “it was the drink of choice ... that has an effect ... an association with a good time ... and a particular stage of life”. Table 4 provides quotes from our respondents that demonstrate sentimentality about past consumption and about visits to the Champagne region.

#### TABLE FOUR ABOUT HERE

As well as memories of past consumption, sentimentality was also linked with prior visits to Champagne which we have labelled memories of the region. This sub-theme was described by Champagne retailer (B): “there’s some sort of sentimentality ... or some sort of drive towards ‘oh I’ve been to that house in France’. Sentimentality about the region was also expressed by consumers. Connoisseurs (1) in study one, said: “when you go to Champagne houses and they’re very hospitable and very nice to you, it actually – that actually influences my decision to buy their Champagne more often”. This positive sentiment extended to deriving pleasure from gifting Champagne from a house he had visited:

If it’s someone that I’d actually like to give a good gift to, it would be from a house that I knew – it’s nice to be able to feel you’ve had some contact with the producers ... that makes me feel pleased to be giving a gift like that (Connoisseur consumer 1, study 1).

Sentimentality was an important consideration for both connoisseurs and aspirational drinkers in study 2, with all of them rating it as fairly important or very important when deciding



which Champagne to purchase. The importance of sentimentality as a purchase decision variable is supported by research that has found the use of affective (emotive) advertising has sought to capitalise on consumers' feelings of consumption sentimentality (Shiv and Fedorikhin, 1999), and that travelling abroad to wine-making areas can produce a 'carry-over effect' of the holiday euphoria which leads to happy memories of past consumption (Chaney, 2000). To date, sentimentality has not been emphasised as an important variable in wine marketing research.

### **Discussion and marketing implications**

The consideration of kudos and sentimentality by Australian consumers when they select Champagne extends current understanding of the factors taken into account in their purchase decisions of wine. Although the exploratory nature of this study means confirmatory research is required, these two variables are important at both a theoretical and a practical level. Whilst this study has focused on Champagne it is probable that these implications have a much wider relevance for other luxury products (Beverland, 2004) and maybe also for wine generally.

Champagne houses have been successful in projecting images of prestige, luxury and exclusivity which set them apart from sparkling wine and other alternatives and it would be trite to suggest that they need to change their approach. However, our data suggests that kudos is a consideration in the purchase of Champagne as are feelings of sentimentality for experienced Champagne drinkers. Champagne marketers have been well aware of the status and prestige of their product, and have used kudos-related attributes in marketing in the past.

Although kudos is significant, our respondents were concerned about appearing to be ‘snobs’. Thus, by making this factor more positive in the minds of consumers as opposed to something for which they feel guilty or ashamed, marketers may increase sales across all consumer groups; a focus on satisfying or delighting friends, rather than impressing them, would be useful. Kudos is also related to success, a concept that Champagne marketers have been effectively linking with Champagne for many years. Images of victorious sportsmen spraying Champagne from the winners’ podium are a well known example of this linkage. However, we suspect kudos is a more subtle attribute and related more to social recognition from one’s peer group rather than the community wide adulation that comes with winning a grand prix. Additionally, enjoyment of knowledge and membership of the “Champagne club” could also be seen to be related to kudos, but a much more subtle way of involving consumers, particularly connoisseurs who are the more frequent purchasers of Champagne.

If kudos is about the acclaim acquired from people with whom we have relationships, it is likely that there will be cultural differences in how kudos is enacted, and it may be that the idea is more relevant outside Australia. National cultures can be differentiated according to whether individuals within a society are independent/individualistic or interdependent/collectivistic (Beamer and Varner, 2008) which determines many of the rules of how relationships are formed and the obligations within relationships. Typically, preserving face, honour and public reputation are primary considerations in interactions in collectivistic cultures. We also expect that variations in how status differences are tolerated in cultures will influence kudos. In some cultures, differences in hierarchy are accepted amongst the members of that society and self aggrandisement is acceptable. Thus marketing to feelings of kudos could be particularly appropriate in collectivistic cultures like China and

other Confucian countries where people accrue face by making expensive purchases such as buying Champagne during a banquet, and ensuring the recipients know that it is a “treat”. In some hierarchical, individualistic cultures, like the U.S. and Britain where success is lauded, kudos may also be more appropriately used. The Australian respondents in our study denied that kudos motivated their purchases and we suspect that egalitarian countries like Australia, New Zealand, and those in Scandinavia are less suitable for promoting feelings of acclaim related to Champagne purchases.

There are also likely to be cross-border differences in how effective marketing to feelings of sentimentality is, based on consumers’ familiarity with consuming Champagne. Marketing to feelings of sentimentality is likely to be most effective in markets where Champagne consumption has a long history, or where wine is regularly used and has acquired long-term symbolic significance. Sentimentality may be particularly prevalent in countries close to France where it is common for people to holiday in France. By comparison, it is less likely that appealing to feelings of sentimentality will have a positive effect on demand for Champagne in newer markets like South East Asia and China.

### **Limitations and future research**

The interpretive perspective adopted in this study precludes transferability. We designed our research to explore and gain a better understanding of the variables that are important in Champagne consumers’ purchase decisions and we investigated this question in a single country with an Anglo-Saxon culture. The time limitations of the project meant sample size was limited and phase one interviews were not continued until theme redundancy as

recommended for the grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); however, the tentative conclusions for that stage were explicitly confirmed in stage two.

Interpretative research is often criticised for the inability to replicate the results because of the changing nature of the research content. The grounded theory approach in particular has been criticised for “glossing over” meanings of respondents’ answers (Charmaz, 2000). The changing circumstances of respondents makes it difficult to ensure the meaning of the respondent at the time was properly interpreted, however advocates of this approach argue that the interpretation is more like a painting than a photograph (Charmaz, 2000). The study is however replicable, and future examination of kudos and sentimentality in larger samples across different countries using both qualitative and quantitative techniques is required to assess the generalisability of these variables with other luxury goods and in other cultures.

Both the transcribing and coding were done by the first author which is a limitation to this study. Manual coding was used in this project and although some consider such approaches old-fashioned (Pope, Ziebland, and Mays, 2000), the approach yielded an intimate knowledge of the data. Reliability or trustworthiness of the interpretation may have been higher if a team of researchers were involved in interpretation and they had used qualitative research computer programs to interpret the data. Having different perspectives and an audit trail of thinking (Maclaran & Catterall, 2002) offered by computer aided interpretation which allows cross-check of their interpretations. Although two transcripts were coded by the second author for code-checking and to increase the trustworthiness of the coding (Miles and Huberman, 1994) the analysis was largely reliant on the interpretation of the first author. A key purpose of the second study, where different consumers were asked about the variables identified in study one, was to confirm that the interpretation of kudos and sentimentality was

properly understood in the first round. Another technique that was used to improve the trustworthiness of the interpretation was member-checks where the themes were presented to several participants to confirm the interpretation made sense to them.

Although our findings are based on a limited sample size, it is our hope that the constructs of kudos and sentimentality will be included in future investigations of consumer decision making of Champagne and other luxury goods. Future studies could investigate their nature and impact for Champagne drinkers in other cultures and with other luxury goods to reinforce the conclusions outlined in this paper.

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