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# How Context and National Identity Shape Perceptions of Canned Wine Consumers in Europe

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Canned wine offers a convenient, portable, and sustainable alternative to glass bottles, yet it faces significant consumer resistance. Two recent studies explored how consumers are perceived when drinking canned wine in outdoor leisure settings. A cross-cultural analysis involving Italy, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom reveals that judgments are strongly shaped by national identity. Consumers of canned wine in traditional markets (Italy, Switzerland) are viewed negatively, while in the UK consumers are seen more positively, highlighting a clash between tradition and innovation.

## The Challenge of Alternative Wine Packaging

The wine industry is under increasing pressure to adopt more sustainable practices, with traditional glass bottles being a primary contributor to the sector's carbon footprint[1]. While alternatives like aluminium cans are lighter, infinitely recyclable, and more carbon-efficient, they struggle for acceptance[2,3]. A key reason is that packaging functions as a critical quality cue for wine[4,5]. Decades of tradition have equated heavy glass bottles with premium quality, creating a powerful prejudice against formats like cans, which are often stereotyped as containing an inferior product. These two studies by Depetris-Chauvin, Pinède and Rodrigues[6,7] investigate not the perception of the product itself, but the social judgment placed upon the person who consumes it.

## Cross-Cultural Perceptions Reveal Deep-Rooted Prejudices

The research employed a vignette methodology where over 1,300 participants from Italy, Switzerland, and the UK were asked to rate the personality of a person drinking canned wine in an outdoor setting (e.g., beach resort, ski station, outdoor party or desert safari). The results show starkly different perceptions across national lines, reflecting each country's relationship with wine. This aligns with broader research suggesting that cognitive factors, such as familiarity, and culture, play a critical role in wine perception and appreciation[8,9]. In traditional markets like Italy and Switzerland, where wine is deeply embedded in cultural rituals, the canned wine drinker was judged harshly (most averages statistically below the neutral point 4 in Table 1). Participants associated them with negative traits, perceiving them as "undisciplined," "not environmentally friendly," "vulgar," and having a "low education level." These judgments align with a high "wine-related cultural identity", where deviation from established norms is viewed unfavourably. Experience with the product was also extremely low in these countries (4.6 % in Italy, 10.7 % in Switzerland), reinforcing the negative stereotypes.

In contrast, the UK market is more innovation-driven and less bound by tradition. British respondents held a significantly more favourable view, associating the canned wine drinker with positive traits like being "imaginative," "extroverted," and "satisfied" (most averages statistically above 4 in Table 1). This positive perception correlates with higher consumer experience (48.3 % of UK respondents had tried canned wine) and a cultural openness to novelty in the wine category.

## The Nuance of Context and Demographics in a Traditional Market

Zooming in on the Swiss sample (795 respondents), the research found that even within a single traditional market, perceptions are not monolithic. Overall, judgments were negative across all four outdoor leisure scenarios tested (Figure 1). However, the context mattered: the beach resort scenario prompted the most negative assessments, where consumers were rated lowest on traits like "health consciousness" and "environmental friendliness" even after controlling for demographic characteristics.

Furthermore, a significant demographic divide was observed. Younger respondents and expatriates living in Switzerland showed significantly less prejudices compared to older and more traditional Swiss

**TABLE 1.** Perceived personal attributes of the canned wine drinker across countries.

| Personality trait | Italy | Switzerland | United Kingdom |
|---|---|---|---|
| Undisciplined - Disciplined | 3.543*** | 3.500*** | 3.847 |
| Not health Conscious - Health Conscious | 3.243*** | 3.079*** | 3.779** |
| Not Environmentally Friendly - Environmentally Friendly | 3.489*** | 2.947*** | 4.491*** |
| Unimaginative - Imaginative | 4.048 | 3.771*** | 4.355*** |
| Unpopular - Popular | 3.314*** | 3.544*** | 4.516*** |
| Boring - Interesting | 3.670*** | 3.774*** | 4.686*** |
| Unemotional - Emotional | 3.738*** | 3.891** | 4.279*** |
| Vulgar- Elegant | 3.119*** | 2.968*** | 3.686*** |
| Ungracious - Gracious | 3.713*** | 3.800*** | 3.881 |
| Dissatisfied - Satisfied | 3.700*** | 4.152*** | 4.449*** |
| Introverted - Extroverted | 4.195** | 4.509*** | 4.974*** |
| Unconscious - Conscious | 3.540*** | 3.933 | 4.635*** |
| Low Education Level - High Education Level | 3.784*** | 3.374*** | 4.135 |
| Poor - Rich | 3.327*** | 3.627*** | 4.042 |
| Ugly - Beautiful | 3.563*** | 3.811*** | 4.305*** |
| Bad - Good | 3.898 | 3.811*** | 4.305*** |


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residents. This suggests a generational and cultural shift is underway, where convenience and new formats are gaining acceptance among specific consumer segments, even within a market largely resistant to change. Age, gender, and education were all significant factors influencing how the canned wine consumer was perceived. For instance, female respondents judged the consumer as more "Popular" but less "Health Conscious" and less "Environmentally Friendly" than men did. Higher educational attainment correlated with more negative judgments on traits like "Elegance" and "Conscientiousness," although these consumers were also seen as more "Extroverted." Interestingly, wine consumption habits also shaped views. Those who never drink wine perceived them as less "Health-Conscious," while frequent wine drinkers judged them as less "Elegant" and "Beautiful."

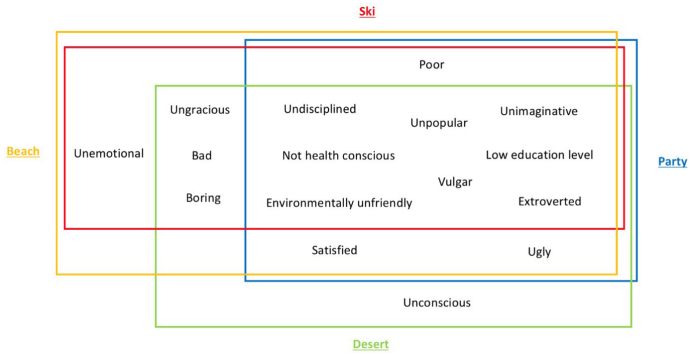



**FIGURE 1.** Perceived personal attributes of the canned wine drinker in Switzerland by context of consumption.

## Managerial Implications for Promoting Sustainable Packaging

The findings from these studies offer clear guidance for the wine industry (Figure 2). A "one-size-fits-all" marketing strategy for canned wine is destined to fail.

➡**In traditional markets (e.g., Italy, Switzerland):** The primary challenge is overcoming deep-seated negative stereotypes. Marketing efforts should focus on education, emphasizing the quality and sustainability benefits of cans. Campaigns must be culturally sensitive and should specifically target younger, more open-minded demographics who are less constrained by consumption rituals.

➡**In innovation-friendly markets (e.g., the UK):** The strategy should be to reinforce and build upon existing positive perceptions. Marketing can focus on the social, convenient, and trendy aspects of canned wine, solidifying its place in casual and outdoor consumption settings.

Ultimately, positioning canned wine for specific, less-ritualistic occasions like outdoor parties, picnics, and festivals appears to be the most effective path toward broader acceptance across all markets. This targeted approach can help dispel entrenched stereotypes and leverage the inherent benefits of canned wine, such as its convenience and sustainability, appealing to evolving consumer preferences. Recognizing cultural nuances is key to fostering wider adoption. ■




**FIGURE 2.** Managerial Implications for Promoting Sustainable Packaging.


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