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The determinants of Willingness-To-Pay for biodiversity on wine. A Choice Experiment in a wine tasting event

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Abstract

In the last few decades the growing interest in environmental sustainability issues has affected the wine industry. More and more wineries have claimed environmentally friendly orientations when producing and marketing wine, integrating sustainability into their production and communication strategies. Not only wine makers are concerned about environmental issues as the longevity of their activity is threatened by consequences such as climate change, soil depletion, chemical exposure and water and energy availability (Flores, 2017); from a marketing point of view the concept of sustainability represents a way to differentiate the product and it can be exploited to intercept certain segments of consumers (Sellers, 2016).

One of the most widely discussed issues in the public debate on sustainability and agricultural systems is biodiversity conservation, a concept that goes beyond a specific type of production system and refers to the protection of the variety of life in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem. The development of contemporary production systems has resulted in extensive land conversion and concomitant biodiversity loss (Sunderland, 2011) even in wine sector. However, to date there are no certifications regarding biodiversity in the global wine business (Sogari, et al., 2016; Vecchio, 2013), and it is largely unknown to what extent consumers would react to this type of certification or which consumer segments are

The present research is part of the LIFE VITISOM project, whose major aim is to introduce an innovative system to manage the organic fertilization of vineyard that allows homogenization and fosters soil biodiversity. This latter task will result in a label that certifies the conservation of biodiversity concerning wine production and the purpose of the present study is to explore adult wine drinkers' WTP for this label on wine bottles by means of a Choice Experiment (CE).

In particular, the experiment analyses two groups of consumers in two different situations: the first one participating at the experiment at a wine tasting event (Cantine Aperte) held by an Italian wine producer and the second one, the counterfactual sample, tested in lab setting.

Respondents of the first group are recruited at the entrance to the event and are asked to fill a short questionnaire at the end of the experiment. The comparison between the two samples is aimed at determining the impact of different settings on the WTP elicited through the CE.

Results reveal that most wine consumers are willing to pay a higher price for wines with a biodiversity label, identify differences among target groups with greater or lesser interest in the subject of biodiversity, and detect the influence of the environment where the experiment takes place.

Keywords : choice experiments, wine label, biodiversity