

International Wine Contest Bucharest (IWCB) – Promotional Tool for Wine and Vine

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Abstract

The International Wine Contest Bucharest is a contest which achieved all the established objectives, regarding the number of samples gathered for evaluation, assessment by a competent and credible jury, compliance with the international procedures, optimum technical conditions, effective communication, high level of consumer acceptance, becoming a bivalent factor in the wine world, transmitting information to and from the product, engaging consumers and producers alike.

The paper aims to identify the changes in wine contest in 2013 compared to 2011 and 2012, in those regarding the number and types of samples, the specialists invited in the jury and their perceptions on Romanian wines. In pursuing this, data regarding the samples of the 2011, 2012 and 2013 contests have been compared. The main results show that International Wine Contest held in Bucharest changed slightly from 2011 to 2013. Thus, the number of samples increased and more foreign jury specialists participated. Meanwhile, samples white-red wines and samples of all over the Romanian wine regions remained balanced.

Keywords: Wine Contest, Wine Promotion, Differentiation Tool, Panelists, Wine Samples.

Introduction

Romania is an important market for wine consumption and at the same time it is a country with a millenary viticulture, winemaking being one of the historical Romanians occupations. In the past two decades, in order to adapt to new consumer demands, replanting the aged vineyards, improving the grape assortment and applying new technologies in the wineries led to an unprecedented performance in terms of quality of Romanian wines.

However, the commercial competition into which wines produced in Romania are involved takes into account not only the intrinsic quality, but also acorporal elements, such as brand, notoriety etc. These elements are better defined on imported wines targeting Romanian consumer, making the competition with these wine uneven. It is natural that, for these reasons, Romanian seek validation of the quality of their wines in competitions, to be able afterwards to create notoriety and a positive image for the product. Contests of this kind rely on the evaluation of product organoleptic characteristics by using a team of trained experts. Depending on the rules of each competition some prizes and distinctions are awarded and the festivities, the hierarchies created and types of awards capture the wines consumer's attention.

Generally, competitions based on evaluation by specialists validate the collective mentality about valuable products. It is understood by this, that an important target in product promotion - credibility - is achieved. Moreover, a realistic analysis and interpretation of the competition results becomes an essential factor in production guidance.

The large number of competitions worldwide supports this claim. Judging the samples "in blind" eliminates external factor such as advertising messages which, usually, alter the reality of quality perception and, therefore, consumers can trust more the results of this kind of judgment.

Romania is already a big market, in an increasing trend, therefore, the evaluation of wines by taking into account the marketing mix is a natural development. This international contest organized in Romania, gathers samples already existing on the market or on offer, targeting this market, which allows that the results gain particular relevance, due to the fact that establishes—hierarchies in a well-defined territory for wines being into a commercial competition.

The paper analyzes and presents the main results of the International Wine Contest held in Bucharest in 2011, 2012, and 2013, where wines from all over the world compete themselves, under the rules of international judges. In Romania, the international wine contest, organized by The Romanian Association of Authorized Taster and The National Office of Vine and Wine Products under the auspices of The International Organization of Vine and Wine is held in Bucharest, every year. Participants from all Romanian wine regions and other countries submit their best products to competition with the aim to get medals which will indicate to consumers the highest quality as awarded by competent juries.

Because the paper presents the results of the wine competing samples from different regions, an overview of the Romanian wine market is briefly analysed. In Romania, there are seven wine regions: Transylvania, Moldavia, Muntenia and Oltenia, Banat, Crisana and Maramures, Dobrogea, and Danube terraces. Numerous varieties of grapes, domestic and foreign, are found in each region, resulting in many kinds of wine: Feteasca Alba, Feteasca Regala, Riesling Italian, Aligoté, Pinot Gris, Muscat Ottonel, Tamaioasa Romaneasca, Grasa de Cotnari, Chardonnay and Sauvignon for white wines, and Merlot, Feteasca Neagra, Babeasca Neagra, Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Cadarca, Burgund Mare and Busuioaca de Bohotin for red wines (Turek, 2009). This wide assortment gets consumers into difficulty when choosing wine.

Thus, the topic is relevant because wine, compared to other food products, is difficult to promote and differentiate (Manole, 2011), because of the wide range of varieties and brands and of differences, within the same variety, due to area and year, hence, the difficulty for producers to differentiate wines and for consumers to make appropriate choices. Wine producers work on differentiation, trying to identify those elements that differentiate their products from similar ones of the competitors. Getting awards and medals at wine contests indicating a distinction to consumers is such a means of achieving differentiation, because it can make products stand out and attract consumers' attention (Paduraru, 2012).

The need of this research stems on the fact that consumers are more demanding, wine market is changing and new producers enter the market with high quality wines and low prices (producers from South Africa, Chili, New Zealand). The results of the research may contribute to revealing the benefits of wine contests and to identifying the need of setting up new promotional instruments.

Objectives: The aim of this paper is to identify changes in International Wine contest in 2013 compared to 2011 and 2012, to demonstrate that a good knowledge of the mechanisms of competition, a good interpretation of the results, can cause changes both in public perception, but also in the strategies of producers. The notoriety obtained by medal awarded wines, help them stand out more easily on the market, making competitions valuable tools for promoting quality wines. Last but not least, capturing media attention on an objective process of evaluation by foreign panelists for the Romanian wines added more credibility to an already appreciated contest, leading to a more efficient promotion of wine sector in general.

Materials and methods

This study is based on the results of the International Wine Contest Bucharest gathered during 2011, 2012 and 2013 editions. Being held under the aegis of the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV), the OIV competitions rules were imposed and applied. Statistics obtained from the IWCB data analysis are showing the present Romanian wine market situation and commercial performances, creating a direct link between participation in competitions and consumer preference for purchasing wines validated by professionals. Comparative analysis of data reported in the wine contest is used.

In addition, contests' results are validated by tasting panels, composed by specialists. IWCB is organized in accordance to international wine competitions rules developed by the International Organization of Vine and Wine, and the assessment is performed by an international panel of judges, whose members are known by their experience and professionalism. In conformity to OIV Regulation, each tasting panel is composed of five (5) members, of which at least three (3) representing foreign countries and the other two (2) representing the organizing country. Each panelist operates under the authority of a president who belongs, in principle, to the organizing country. Scoring wines is made according to OIV evaluation sheets filled in by each panelist, and the final average is calculated as the average of the marks obtained after the extremes are being eliminated or by applying the Grubbs algorithm. In the last case, the elimination was done only for marks being at a larger positive or negative distance than 5 points.

Results:

Comparative Data Regarding Iwcb Contest Results Of 2011, 2012 Si 2013 Editions

The importance of the International Wine Contest Bucharest is confirmed by the increased number of samples submitted from one year to another. The number of samples registered into the International Wine Competition Bucharest increased from 314 samples in 2011 to 541 participating samples in 2013. It should be noted that not only the still wines segment increased, but also the sparkling wine segment increased proportionally.

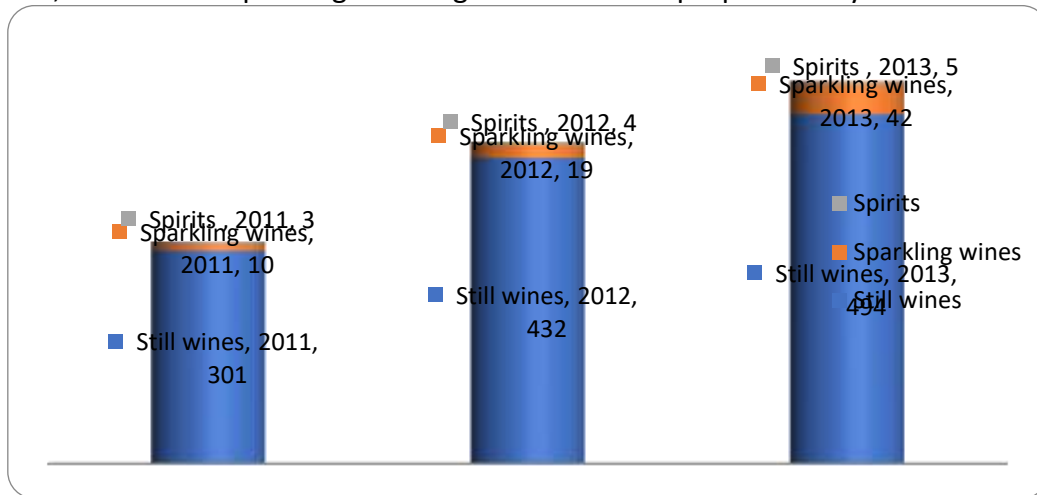


Figure 1. Evolution of samples registered (2011-2013)

Source: Authors' own processing based upon IWCB information

An almost perfect balance between red and white wines is maintained, rose wines failing to exceed the the threshold of 7% of total wines registered.

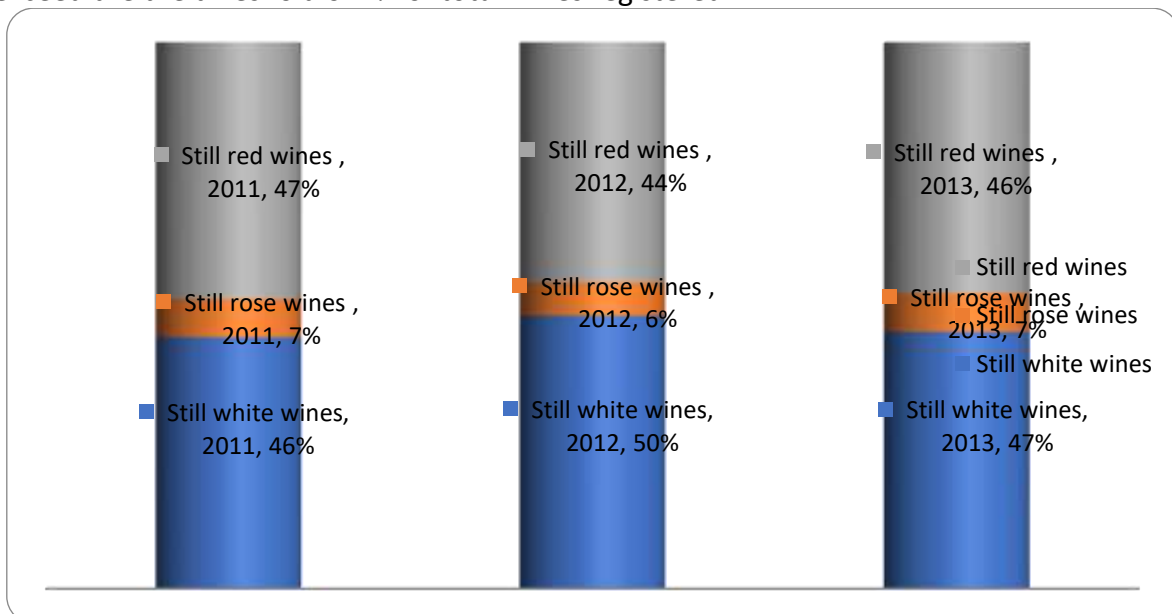


Figure 2. Ratios of types still wines submitted into the Contest in the period of 2011-2013

Source: Authors' own processing based upon IWCB information

A sign of maturity of the Romanian market is seen in the fact that the percentage of the still wines registered in the competition was the highest among the wine categories classified in accordance to the sugar level.

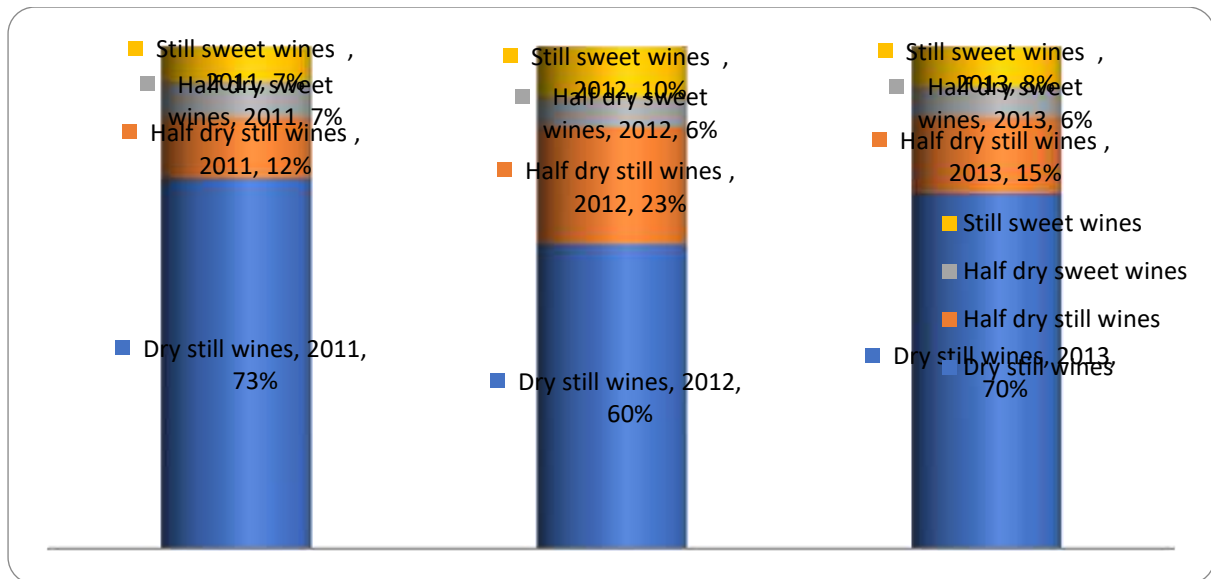


Figure 3. Romanian Still wine categories registered during the contests of 2011-2013, in percentage

Source: Authors’ own processing based upon IWCB information

Regarding the origin of Romanian wines, an increase was observed in the participation of producers in all areas, with the exception of the regions of Moldova Hills and Banat Hills.

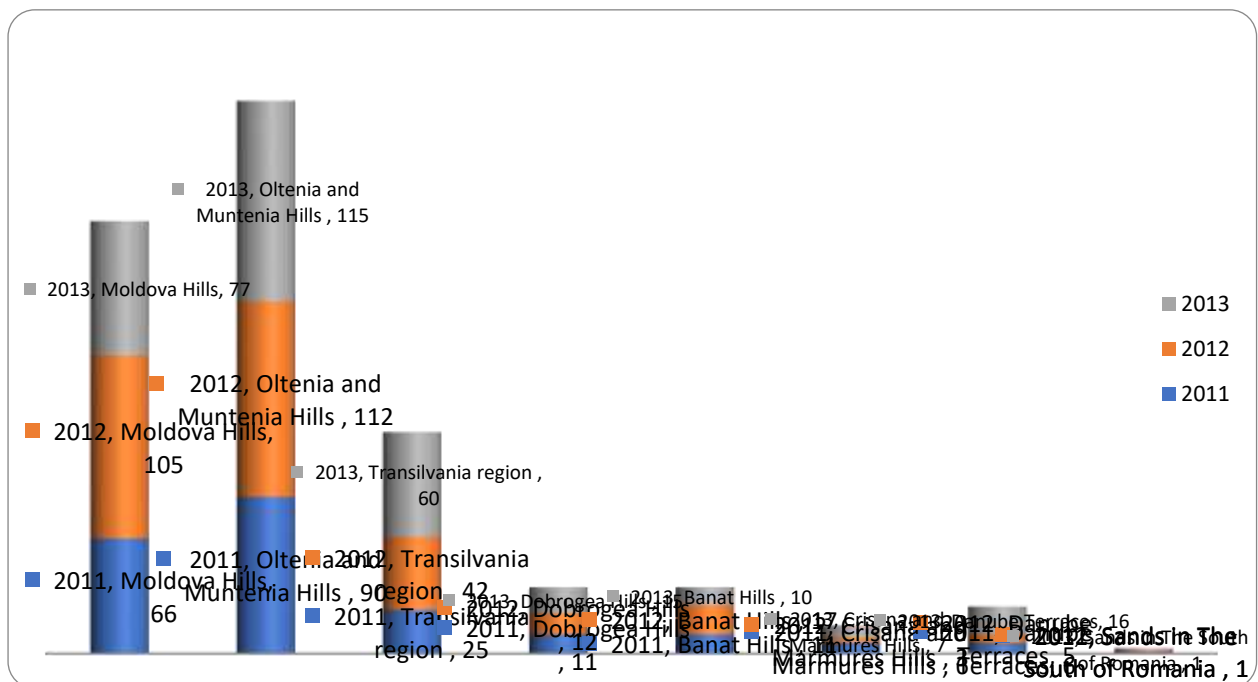


Figure 4. Romanian Still wines submitted by wine region (2011-2013)

Source: Authors’ own processing based upon IWCB information

Further, we considered interesting to study the types of participating Romanian wines by origin of the grape variety (autochthonous or international variety). Thus, the wines were included in the following categories:

- R – varietal wine made of grapes of a Romanian variety
- I - varietal wine made of grapes of an international variety

- CR – blend wine of Romanian varieties
- CI - blend wine of international varieties
- CRI – blend wine made of grapes of Romanian and international varieties

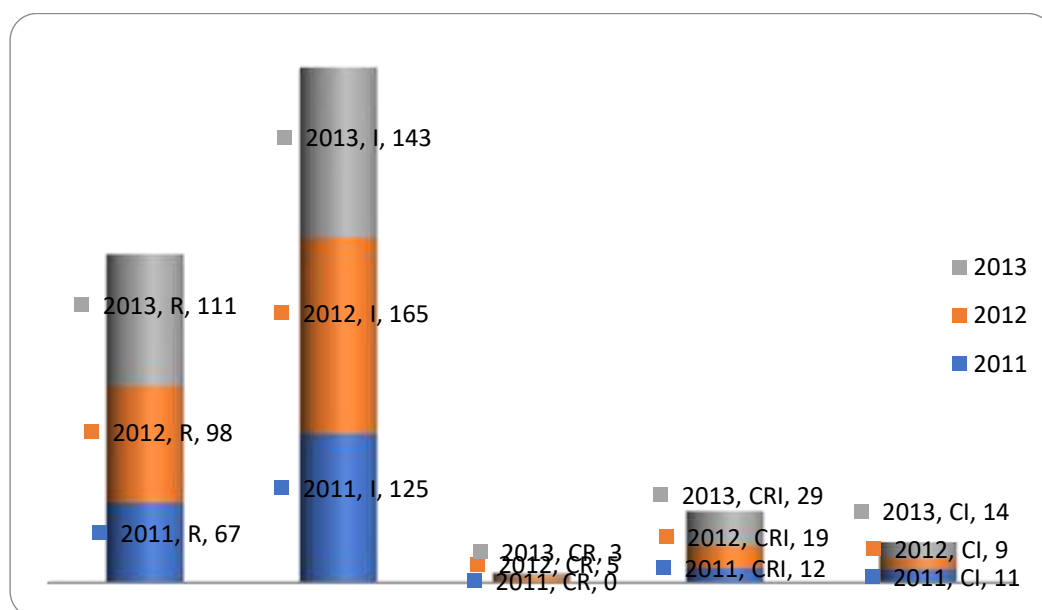


Figure 5. Romanian Still Wines registered in the contest and included in categories classified by variety content (2011-2012-2013)

Source: Authors' processing based upon IWCB information

The preferences displayed by the Romanian consumers reshaped the offer and led to a decrease in the varietal wines made only from an international variety (I) and to the increase of wines of Romanian varieties (R) or their blends with international varieties (CRI).

Panel Members Perception On Iwcb 2013

IWCB is organized in accordance to international wine competitions rules developed by the International Organization of Vine and Wine, and the assessment is performed by an international panel of judges, whose members are known by their experience and professionalism.

In conformity to OIV Regulation, each tasting panel is composed of five (5) members, of which at least three (3) representing foreign countries and the other two (2) representing the organizing country. Each panelist operates under the authority of a president who belongs, in principle, to the organizing country. Scoring wines is made according to OIV evaluation sheets filled in by each panelist, and the final average is calculated as the average of the marks obtained after the extremes are being eliminated or by applying the Grubbs algorithm. In the last case, the elimination was done only for marks being at a larger positive or negative distance than 5 points.

Amongst the 541 samples submitted to IWCB 2013, 274 samples recorded at least one extreme needed to be discharged (51% of cases), while 267 samples required no elimination (49%). Within the 274 samples for which at least one mark was removed from the calculation, the cases were, as follows:

- for 214 samples the minimum mark needed to be eliminated representing 48% of total (eliminations)

- for 146 samples the maximum mark needed to be eliminated representing 33% of total (eliminations)
- for 86 samples both the minimum and the maximum mark needed to be eliminated in representing 19% of total eliminations).

■ Negative eliminations



Figura 6. Percentages of wines for which the score was established after eliminating the extreme marks

Source: Authors' processing based upon IWCB information

By analyzing the evaluation of samples for which the scores were calculated after an extreme or both extremes elimination we obtained the results presented in Table 1. As it can be seen, for the 120 samples of Romanian wines for which the minimum score needed to be removed, the excluded mark belonged to a foreign panelist in 79.2% of the cases.

Table 1.

Analysis of cases of minimum and/or maximum evaluation marks needed to be removed from the final calculation in accordance to the origin of the panelists and of the wines

Romanian wine samples

Panelists	The elimination of maximum		The elimination of minimum	
	Cases	%	Cases	%
Romanian panelists	41	41.7	25	20.8
Foreign panelists	45	52.3	95	79.2
Cases of extreme mark elimination	86	100	120	100

Source: Authors' own processing based upon IWCB information

By analyzing average score obtained by Romanian Wines classified by grape variety origin (the above mentioned abbreviations R, I, CR, CI and CRI) it can be observed that overall the Romanian varietal wines received the lowest ratings.

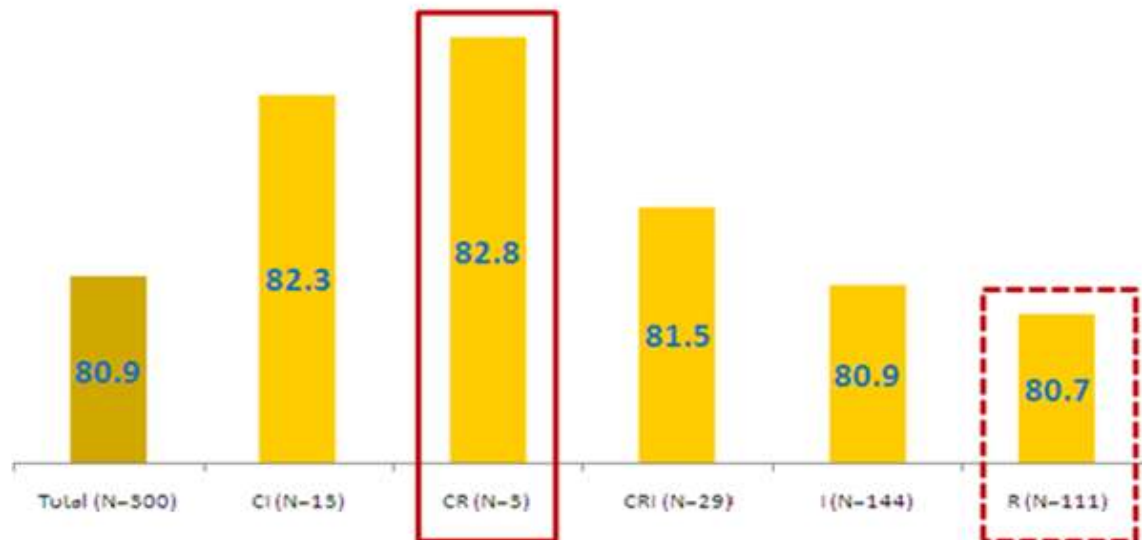


Figure 7. The average score of Romanian Still wines in accordance to grape variety composition (R – varietal wine made of grapes of a Romanian variety, I -varietal wine made of grapes of an international variety, CR – blend wine of Romanian varieties, CI -blend wine of international varieties and CRI – blend wine made of grapes of Romanian and international varieties) In the brackets the number of samples included in each category can be found.

Source: Authors' own processing based upon IWCB information

This fact shows that Romanian varieties are still poorly understood by foreign panelist and that this problem derives from the style of wine. This conclusion is also supported by the fact that the other categories, in which international varieties were present, received better marks and achieved slightly higher average scores. An exception to this observation is the category of the Romanian variety blends, which reached the highest average score, but this is not necessary relevant, since in this category we only have 5 wines (Fig. 7).

Conclusion: International Wine Contest held in Bucharest changed slightly from 2011 to 2013. Thus, the number of samples increased and more foreign jury specialists participated. Meanwhile, samples white-red wines and samples of all over the Romanian wine regions remained balanced. As regards the perceptions of foreign panelists, Romanian wines tend to be undervaluated compared to international varieties. This conclusion is supported by the fact that the samples in which international varieties were present have been awarded by foreign specialists with better marks and achieved slightly higher average scores. Wine contests are useful and play a relatively important role within the wider framework of promoting wines. In order to simplify purchasing decisions, consumers include the products into categories, globally taking into account the style, the producing company, the notoriety, the label and the general impact. This purchasing heuristic is developed by the consumer with or without the help of marketing operators, although the latter put a lot of effort into the attempt of directing the process according to their own interests. Meanwhile, a reliable contest represents solide benchmarks for consumers in their choices.

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