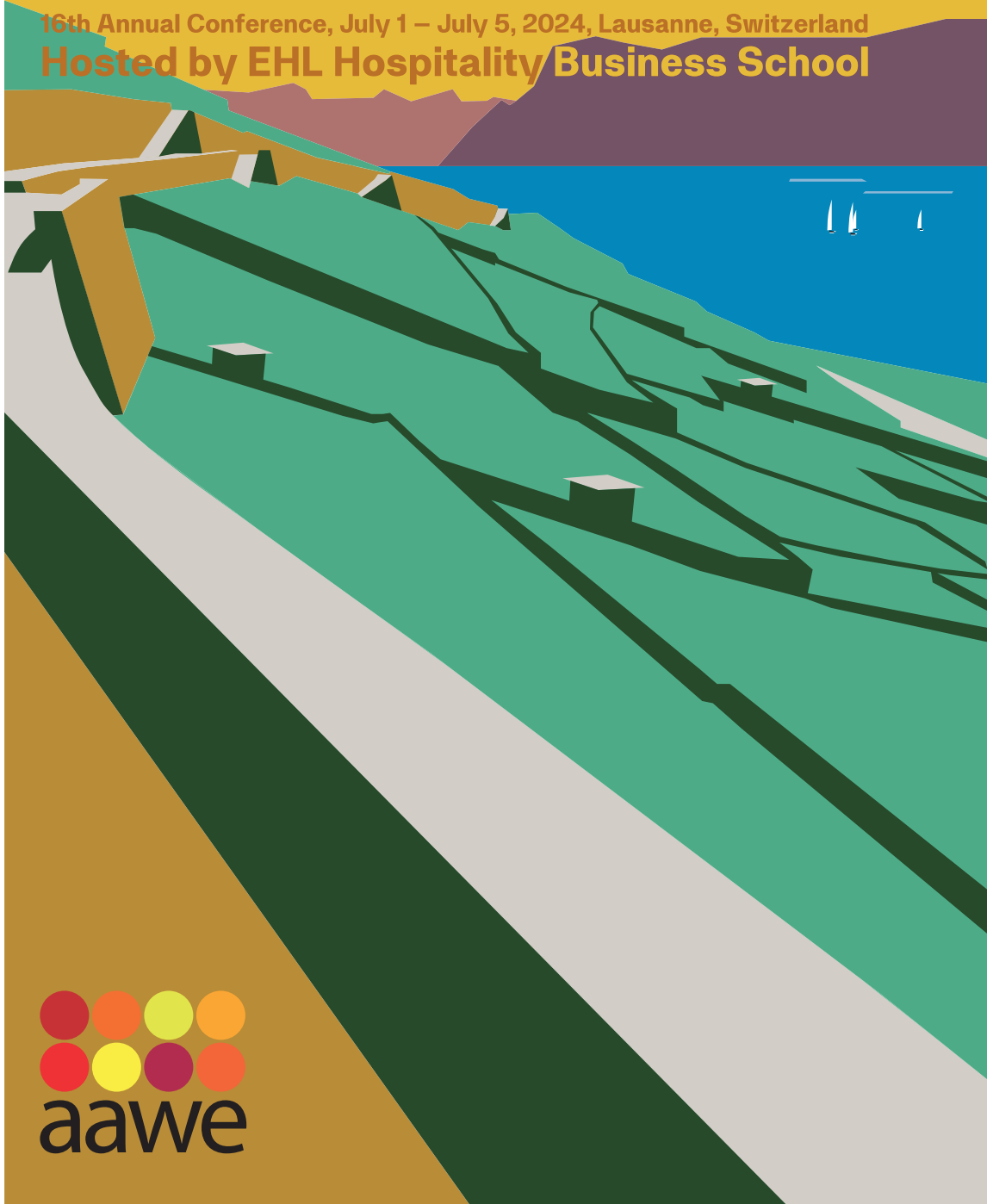


American Association of Wine Economists

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Lausanne 2024 Abstract Submission

Title

The effects of defining a wine natural on taste, preference and price

I want to submit an abstract for:

Conference Presentation

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Keywords

Wine, Experiment, Taste, Natural, Label

Research Question

Test if calling a wine natural, a non-conventional label, alters the perception of the wine, in terms of perceived quality and willingness to pay, despite the wine was tasted.

Methods

We exploit an experimental design in a wine-tasting experience. Subjects were randomly assigned to three conditions that differed in how the wine was presented.

Results

Even when subjects can taste the wine, they are influenced by the label given to the bottle, however, adding additional explanation seems to vanish the label effect.

Abstract

Naturality is a vague concept that evokes a whole world and imaginary, behind which there is not a unique definition or philosophy. However, that term is becoming popular in the wine market. Understanding if such appellation affects consumers' perceptions, preferences and willingness to pay, represents the aim of our work. We test the effect that labels and information have on the evaluation of the wine after the subjects experience it. Clarifying if what consumers like or dislike is the natural taste, the natural attribute or the natural qualities provides fundamental information to understand future trends and gives insights to policies aimed at regulating the use of such a term.

We exploit an experimental design in a wine-tasting experience. Subjects were randomly assigned to three conditions that differed in how the wine was presented. In the baseline condition, the wine was presented with just its grape variety and the year of production. In the natural treatment, besides the baseline information, the wine was said to be a natural wine and labelled as natural. In the information treatment, subjects were also provided with a definition of natural. One “natural” wine was tasted in all three conditions.

The experimental sessions of the tasting took place in Asti, Piedmont, Italy and in Genoa, Liguria, Italy. 142 subjects were recruited among the students at the university venue of Uni-Astiss and 111 at the University of Genoa, therefore most of them belong to Gen Z. The same questionnaire was administered to subjects randomly allocated to taste the wine in one of the three conditions. This included the first part with the sensorial analysis and evaluation of wine quality. In the second part, the willingness to pay for the wine and the perception of the product in terms of environmental, health and social impacts were elicited. Finally, the last part included demographics, experience with wine, habits relative to alcoholics, food and physical activity.

The design of the experiment allows us to elicit if and how emphasizing the “naturalness” of the wine tasted, just by using the natural term or adding on some more precise information, can alter consumers’ perception of the product and if the effects differ by treatment. While using the term natural alone just evokes an imaginary, adding information on the production techniques reminds the physical characteristics of such a wine, potentially impacting the subjects differently. Our design benefits from the strength of evaluating the effect of the treatments on wine attributes perceived and wine quality reported after tasting the product.

A preliminary analysis reveals that while calling a wine natural provides benefits in terms of higher quality perceived and willingness to pay for the wine, however adding information on what natural means in the wine setting vanishes these benefits. While the present sample is composed of subjects that belong to Gen Z, who are of interest as they represent a preview of future drinking habits, the project can be replicated to study older subjects, therefore including millennials who are more sensible to the call of the wild.

Consent

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