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“The Consumption of Italian Wine in China
from a Trans-cultural Point of View”

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Preface

From August 2014 to February 2015 I carried out a survey about Italian wine in China in Shanghai (*Shanghai Tongji Daxue* 上海同济大学). For this opportunity, I really need to thank the Venice International University (VIU).

I decided to focus my research on wine aspects after that I participated to a seminar called “Eating and Drinking from a Trans-cultural Point of View” that was held by Professor Frank Heidemann, a specialist in cultural and anthropological studies.

During my studies, I had the possibility to go to several main wine events (wine fairs and wine tastings such as “Hong Kong Wine & Spirits Fair” (*Xianggang guoji meijiuzhan* 香港国际美酒展), “Food and Hospitality China” (*Shanghai guoji shipin yinliao jicanyin shebei zhanlan hui* 上海国际食品饮料及餐饮设备展览会), “Vinitaly 2015” in Verona and “Expo 2015” in Milan) that allowed me to improve my knowledge about wine.

Nowadays China is becoming a big partner for Europe, particularly for Italy, for import-export of wine. Wine consumption in China means high social status and also power. Therefore, many Chinese businessmen started to buy and drinking wine for showing their wealth. However, wine consumption it is not a new phenomenon, since Chinese *connoisseurs* that drink wine only for pleasure are growing.

Therefore, I decided to present the influence of this alcoholic beverage in China from several points of view. I discussed the matter from an economic angle, but also from cultural connections and international relations. At the beginning, I presented an historical introduction of vine and wine, with the background of wine’s consumption in China and the economic openness to international markets. Then, I indicated the socio-cultural Chinese change of tastes and growing interest in Italian wine, and what the Chinese people think about it. Finally, I described different kinds of Chinese wine consumers.

This research has been carried out through my personal work on campus, but it has also been based on literature on Chinese wine tradition and history, consumer behavior and taste. Information on Italian wine export in China of the last decade were also taken into account.

I hope that this work can contribute to improving the understanding of the role that the wine plays in Chinese society and, in turn, how it is changing also thanks to the interaction with other countries promoted by wine commercialization.

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前言

2014年的八月到2015年二月，因为我赢得了威尼斯国际大学(VIU)去中国的全额奖学金，所以我得到了在上海同济大学免费学习的机会。对我来说，是非常宝贵的经历，在上海同济大学学习期间我做了关于葡萄酒的研究。选择葡萄酒作为我的研究课题，是因为在最近的10年里，意大利和中国在葡萄酒上有很多的贸易交流。人类的消费通常是受许多因素影响的,比如自己的宗教,政治,时尚观点, 以及商品的营销手段等。我想通过从多方面入手,来研究意大利的葡萄酒是如何在这十年中慢慢一步一步在中国成功的秘密。

我去过一些葡萄酒展会(意大利以及中国), 远的比如说“香港国际酒展”和“上海国际食品饮料及餐饮展览会”。最近的则是维罗纳的”2015意大利葡萄酒展”和米兰举行的世博。到目前为止，我采访过110名酒庄主和品酒师，并以面对面填写调查表的形式接触过214多个中国葡萄酒消费者。我的这篇论文就是这些调查之后的产物，非常的严谨。感谢这些珍贵的经历,让我发现葡萄酒对中国人越来越重要，葡萄酒已经慢慢融入到中国百姓的日常生活中。稍后,我将会为你们介绍中国葡萄酒消费者的4种概况。

如果把酒比喻为一种从古至今,伴随着人类发展进程的饮品。我觉得并不贴切。作为大自然对人类的馈赠,酒更像是人类的朋友:当我们有喜事想庆祝时,我们会想到酒。当我们遇到伤心事想忘却痛苦时,又是酒陪在我们的身旁。

经过和中国葡萄酒消费者的接触，我发现了中国人一些有趣的心理活动。比如，有些商人喜欢买国外的进口葡萄酒来招待客人以显示自己有钱，还有些公司白领喜欢用进口葡萄酒来显示自己的小资情怀。当然，也有对葡萄酒真正感兴趣的，想通过对各国葡萄酒的接触来提高自己的葡萄酒知识。在本文中，我会从经济和文化的角度入手，向大家介绍在中国的酒精行业的现状。

酒在中国被称为*jiu*，是各种各样的酒精饮品的总称，最有名的便是米或谷物酿造的蒸馏酒。酒在中国的历史一直追溯到4.600年前，我将在第一章提到它在中国的奇特的历史，以及它在世界上的发展历史。当然，主要的焦点将是中国葡萄酒发展. 从第一个酒厂”成渝先锋酒业有限公司”（张裕葡萄酿酒股份有限公司），到现在的以现代酿酒业技术酿造的大酒庄”中国长城葡萄酒有限公司”（长城葡萄酒有限公司）。我将论述从1978年邓小平的改革，直到2001年中国进入世界贸易组织（WTO），以及进入国际葡萄与葡萄酒组织（OIV）会后的进出口政治对红酒的影响。

第二章将论述一个事实，即中国社会的文化变革必须感谢中国的经济改革，感谢它让中国人能提高工资从而过上更富足的生活。在当下的中国，只是中高及特级阶层才可以享受意大利葡萄酒，但为什么会这样？为了更好地理解，我将做一个中国内地和香港葡萄酒消费者之间的对比。香港的葡萄酒爱好者是因为香港曾作为英国的殖民地，受其影响便很早开放的葡萄酒市场，这是一个基于历史背景下的特例。

这里我将重点放在“意大利制造”酒的广告，我通过五个最主要的中国葡萄酒杂志进行分析发现。这些杂志把意大利葡萄酒和健康，自然，奢华，西方的生活方式相连接。最后，再通过中国侍酒师和葡萄酒专家撰写文章。

第三章是建立在中国葡萄酒的经济。另外，这部分有对中国红酒市场在多媒体营销（比如微信）的简要经济分析，以及对于网络促销葡萄酒的重要影响。

第四章是建立在我所做研究的基础之上，我将对中国葡萄酒消费者的问卷调查，对酒庄主人和品酒专家面对面的采访呈现出来。在这之后，我会讲述四个中国葡萄酒消费者的简介，并且定义中国和意大利葡萄酒消费者的相同点与不同点。

我的研究方法基于在学校的个人工作，但也综合了中国葡萄酒的传统与历史，消费者行为与品位，以及针对过去十年意大利葡萄酒对中国的出口商网络研究。我研究的主要来源有参考意大利语，英语和中文的。我发现Ceresa教授，Heidemann教授的资料以及意大利中国使馆的新闻工作社（“Italia in Cina”），还有Agrarian University of Florence的葡萄酒酿造学小组有很大程度的帮助。

总而言之，我会针对葡萄酒在中国的消费以及经济对国际市场的开放程度，描述葡萄酒的历史简介。然后我会介绍葡萄酒品味在中国的转变，还有日渐增长的对意大利葡萄酒的兴趣，以及中国消费者的理念。最后，我会描述不同类型的中国葡萄酒消费者，并且总结关于这方面的文化知识。

INTRODUCTION

Concerning wine consumption, this beverage should be considered as one of the most important since it has been always present among several heritages (i.e. ancient Greeks, Romans, etc.). Wine is deeply entrenched in the history of humans and their daily life: it is not just a beverage to drink while eating, it is also a product of the linked synergy between men and nature. Wine is appreciated for tasting or enjoying, for celebrating or forgetting.

In China, wine plays other important roles: it helps to show a new status of westernization in Chinese life as well as a new interest of a growing educated wine drinker's class. Therefore, I decided to carry out a research about how these aspects influenced Chinese wine consumers and why Italian wine (that occupies the second place regarding the export of bottled, sparkling and cask wine in China) has had success among Chinese people in the last decade. On this basis, in order to understand why Chinese people love Italian wine, a survey has been carried out that considers the following questions:

1. Are Chinese people interested in wine because they love our food and our culture, or it is just a mere way of showing off of their new *modus vivendi*?
2. Who are the typical Chinese wine consumers?
3. How big is the influence of Italian wine's advertisement and marketing promotion campaign?

In order to answer these questions, 324 interviews were collected: 214 from Chinese wine consumers and 110 from winery owners and wine experts during several worldwide events (i.e. "Wine 100 - 2014 Fair" in Shanghai; "International Workshop: Wine and China" in Montepulciano, Siena).

This survey gives the possibility to define four profiles of Chinese wine consumers and to improve the understanding of how, in the recent years, wine is becoming more and more important among Chinese people.

Based on these premises, this work has been divided into four chapters with the aim to focus on the different role played by wine.

Chapter 1 will be focused on the history of wine in China. In this context, in China wine is called *jiu*酒 and can be related to a wide range of alcoholic beverages such as rice wine (*huangjiu*黄酒) and other wines from cereals or distilled spirits (*baijiu*白酒 and *maotai*茅台). Grape wine, *putaojiu*葡萄酒, present in China since 9.000BCE, had a peculiar history. The chapter, however, will go from the first traces of vine and viticulture to the spreading of wine in the world, accompanied by myths and legends. The main focus will be vine and wine in China from the first winery, the Chengyu Pioneer Wine Co. (*Zhangyu putao niangjiu gufen youxian gongsi*张裕葡萄酿

酒股份有限公司), to the modern oenology industry that has its power in great winery like the China Great Wall Wine Co. Ltd. (*Changcheng putaojiu youxian gongsi* 长城葡萄酒有限公司). Moreover, the policies of import-export after the Deng Xiaoping reform of 1978 until the entrance into the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 2001, and the problem of the entrance into the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV) will be also examined.

Chapter 2 will be mainly based on the anthropological aspects. Chinese society is passing through a socio-cultural change due to new standard of life thanks to higher wages and economic reforms. Just middle-high and privileged classes are able to buy a bottle of Italian wine: if by one hand they buy it for increasing their status, from the other they are much more interested in wine and food pairing. Then, a paragraph on status symbol and a focus on Hong Kong' wine drinkers were pointed out because Hong Kong represents a unique situation for its past history as a British colony and for its early openness to wine market among Chinese wine lovers. Furthermore, investigations about "Made in Italy" wine advertisements were analysed. More specifically, the connection between wine and health, nature, luxury, western life and the classic Italian imagery on "*Bella Vita*" were assessed.

Chapter 3 will be mainly based on Chinese wine market, import-export data and foreign wine business. In this section there is a brief economic analysis of Chinese wine market with a focus on social media marketing such as WeChat (*Weixin* 微信), and the huge importance of promotion through the web with the on-line wine sale.

Chapter 4 has been based on the research conducted from the end of December 2013, until my return from Shanghai in 2015. To better understand the new perception of grape wine in China, the production trends, the consumer attitude, the trade and the marketing perspectives of the grape in China, several wine events were visited.

Moreover, results from the questionnaire to Chinese wine consumers as well as interviews with winery owners and wine experts were presented. Results from the on-line survey to the students and professors of Tongji University (i.e. www.surveymonkey.com/s/L2TNXQS), has been added. Furthermore, four different Chinese wine consumer profiles based on research by Graham Holter, the editor of *The Wine Merchant Magazine*, has been included. Finally, the main similarities and differences among Chinese and Italian wine consumers were defined.

CHAPTER 1

Abstract

This dissertation will briefly discuss the history of vine and wine. Then, explanations about wine in China, import-export policies after the Deng Xiaoping reform of 1c78 (“Open Door Policy”)¹, international partnerships and the problem for entering to the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV)² will be further discussed.

¹Open Door Policy (*kaifang zhengce* 开放政策): economic reforms that accelerated the market economy; the Commune system was dismantled and China open gradually to foreign trade. Four Modernizations on agriculture, industry, science and technology were the goals of Deng Xiaoping.

²OIV: “*intergovernmental organization of a scientific and technical nature of recognized competence for its work concerning vines, wine, wine-based beverages, table grapes, raisins and other vine-based products*” (www.oiv.int/oiv/info/enpresentation).

1.1. The History of Viticulture and Wine

First traces of vine started from 100,000 years ago. This data was obtained by historians that confirmed the area of Caucasus and Mesopotamia as point of departure of the viticulture³. Viticulture was diffused through the Mediterranean basin. The importance of vine and wine is very high, considering that worldwide there are more than 7.5 million hectares cultivated with grape wine and that the wine production is around 288 million of hectoliters per year (about 34 billion bottles⁴). Nonetheless, viticulture and the wine consumption are not a universal phenomenon but correspond to strict areas in temperate zones (90°-40° parallel).

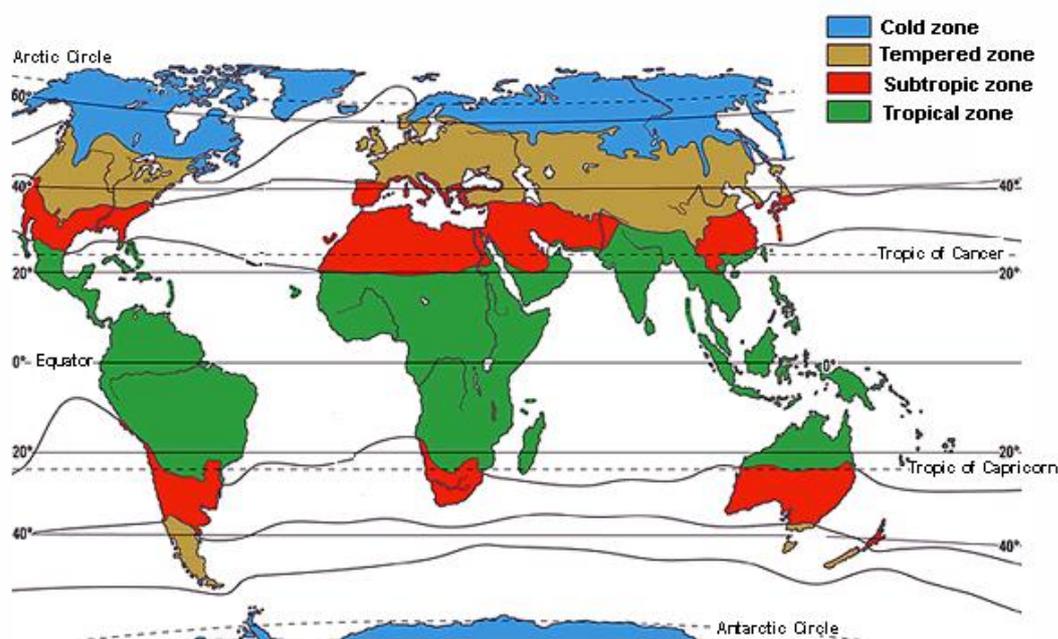


Fig. 1 - Temperate zones (source: www.jadesgeographyhub.co.uk)

The history of wine is closely related to the history of viticulture, with evidence that humans cultivated wild grapes to make wine as far back as the Neolithic period. The most accredited theory demonstrates that some of the earliest domestication of *Vitis vinifera*⁵ occurred in the modern countries area of Georgia and Armenia⁶. Winemaking spread south from there, with wines being produced in Egypt and Phoenicia (3.000 BCE), from Greece to Italy, Sicily, and North Africa

³Mattii, G.B. (1995) “*La Viticoltura*” Firenze, Università degli Studi di Firenze, p.3.

⁴Flamini, C. (March 2015) special edition for the International Wine Fair “Vinitaly 2015”, in “Il Corriere Vinicolo”, p.5.

⁵*Vitisvinifera*: the common grape vine, it originated about 99% of actual wine production (the wild vine is called *Sylvestris* and the domesticated one is called *Sativa*).

⁶Harrington, S. P. M. (March/April 2004) “*Books: Roots of the Vine*”, Archeological Institute of America, v.57, n.2.

(2.000-1.000 BCE), from Spain to Portugal, the South of France and probably Russia (500 BCE). Finally, vine arrives in northern Europe, England⁷.

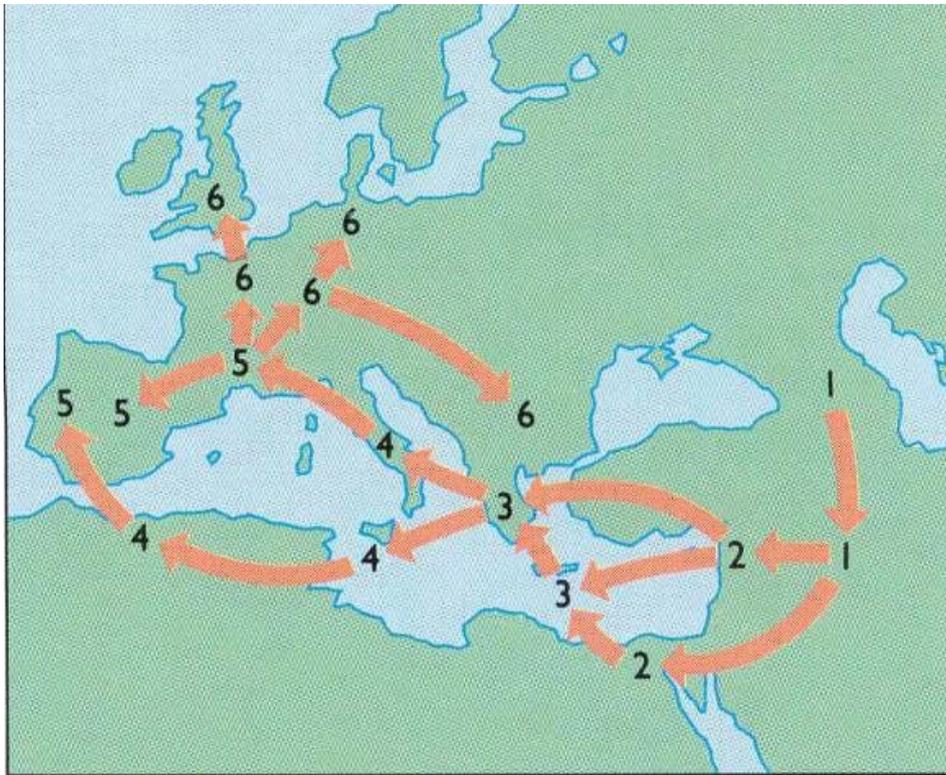


Fig.2, Vine in Europe (source: Mattii G.B. (1995) “La Viticoltura” p.25)

No other plants had such adaptability to the wide variety of climates and latitudes in which humans introduced vine. It is one of the most flexible and changeable domestic plants known to mankind. One can derive a completely different wine from different regions, climates, temperatures, positions, soils, and grapes.

The word “wine” was a general term to indicate an alcoholic liquid produced from fermented sugar: all kind of fruits, berries, cereals (and also honey) were used as a base for wine production⁸. The wine from grapes became the most popular over centuries. The theory of the journalist and philosopher Jean François Revel, illustrates that grape wine was a far superior fruit than the other fermented beverages because of three important characteristics: the extreme variety of taste according to different kinds of grapes, different geographical zones and climate where the vine grows; its capability of ageing, modifying, and domestication; its propriety of preserving in different conditions such as long travels⁹.

⁷ Mattii, G.B. (1995) “La Viticoltura”, Università degli Studi di Firenze, p.25.

⁸I Saggi del Gambero Rosso, (2004) “Il Libro del Vino – manuale teorico e pratico”, Gambero Rosso, p.10.

⁹Revel, J. F. (1979), “3000 anni a tavola”, Milano, Rizzoli, pp.100-101.

Nonetheless, it is impossible to define precisely the right place and the right time in which wine was made for the first time. Many archaeologists accept the presence of grape seeds as the proof of wine production. An accredited bio-molecular archaeologist, Patrick McGovern, follows the same path that the domestication of the wine grape and winemaking may have originated in what is now Georgia (6000BCE) and Caucasus (5000BCE) because of the earliest archaeological evidence found¹⁰. During this phase, the advanced cultures that lived in the area of modern Europe and Middle East passed from a nomad life to a sedentary life. They also developed technologies thanks to their copper tools instead of the stone ones, and thanks to the first ceramic tools production.

As a matter of fact, on account of this period, it is the Georgian earthenware vessel called “*kvevri*” that seems to have been used as a wine jar¹¹. Furthermore, the first winery was found in a south Caucasus cave called Areni-1: dated about 4100BCE, the site contained a wine press and fermentation vats, jars and cups¹². The seeds were from the same type of grapes *Vitis vinifera* still used to make wine today. The wine-making facility was surrounded by graves and the wine may have been intended for ceremonial use¹³.



Fig.3 – 4. Georgian kvevri (source:www.qvevriproject.org); Areni-1 Cave (source: National Geographic)

Wine played an important role also in ancient Egyptian ceremonial life and especially afterlife (see Chapter 1.2). A thriving royal winemaking industry was established in the Nile Delta following the introduction of grape cultivation from the Levant to Egypt around 3000 BCE. It is

¹⁰McGovern, P. (2003) “*Ancient Wine: The Search for the Origins of Viniculture*”, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

¹¹For further information see the website: www.qvevriproject.org

¹²Owen, J. (12 January 2011) “*Earliest Known Winery Found in Armenian Cave*” in “National Geographic News” (<http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2011/01/110111-oldest-wine-press-making-winery-armenia-science-ucla/>).

¹³For further information see the website: www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-12158341

with the Phoenicians that, between 1550 and 300 BCE, distributing wine, wine grapes, and winemaking technology started to have a crucial role throughout the Mediterranean regions¹⁴. Phoenicians use of amphora for transporting wine was widely adopted. For the development of the wine industries in Rome and Greece, Phoenician propagation of several ancestral varieties of the *Vitis vinifera* species of wine grapes was important¹⁵. Phoenicians and Carthaginians had to face the competition for their Mediterranean commercial presence with Etruscans, and especially with Greeks.



Fig.5- 6. Egyptian wine jars, 6th-4th BCE; Phoenician wine amphora, 1000 BCE (source: Enciclopedia Treccani)

The influence of ancient Greece on wine is significant. Their wine was widely known and exported throughout the Mediterranean, as amphora with Greek styling and art have been found throughout the area. Among Greeks wine was a symbol for social distinction instead of a religious element. However, it is under the Romans that wine became an integral part of daily consumption for all social classes, with differences of quality and price¹⁶.

To go on in the history of viticulture, during the second phase of the spread of the vine, called the Formative Period from 1 BC to 1 AD, viticulture became gradually important from a technical point of view and from an economic perspective, especially under the Etruscans. From

¹⁴Phillips, R. (2000) "A Short History of Wine", Harper Collins, p.37.

¹⁵Phillips, R. (2000) *Ibidem*.

¹⁶I Saggi del Gambero Rosso, (2004) *Idem*, pp. 13-14.

this civilization derived the name *vinum*, not from the Greek but from the Etruscan *oinos*. Then the Romans inherited and completed the Etruscans civilization also with the art of viticulture: many grape varieties and cultivation techniques were known. About this prosperity phase, many great masterpieces were written such as Cato the Elder' "*De Agricultura*", Marcus Terentius Varro' "*Res Rusticae*", Publius Vergilius Maro' "*Georgicon*", Lucius Moderatus Columella' "*De Re Rustica*"¹⁷.

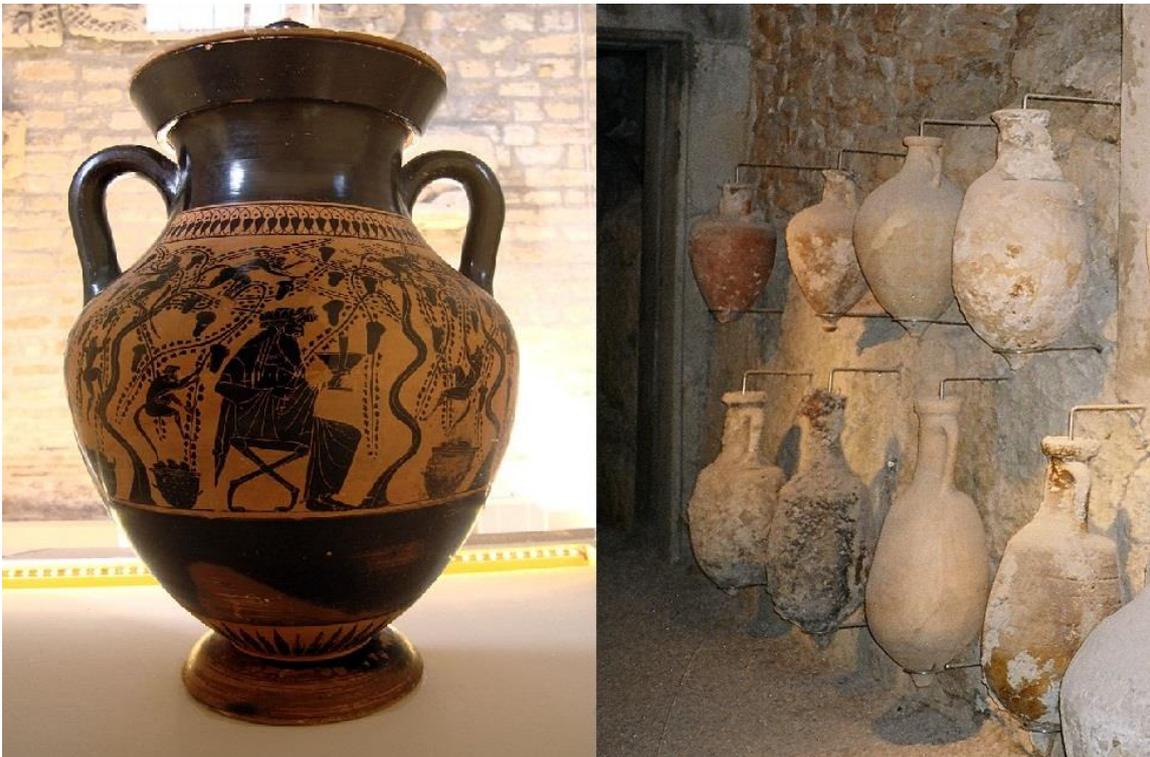


Fig.7- 8. Greek amphora,6thBCE (source: Museum of Cluny); Roman Spello amphora, 1BCE (source: National Geographic)

1.2. Legends on Wine

The history of wine runs parallel with the one of humanity and crosses with myths and legends. For instance, many populations contended the gift of the vine from God (i.e. Egyptian with Osiris, the Italic with Saturn, the Greek with Dionysus, and the Latin with Bacchus). During the Prehistory the phenomenon of fermentation was seen as a mystery determined by unknown forces, and then the Egyptians and the Greeks gave them divine authorship instead of human one¹⁸.

Wine had a crucial role for the mythological representation, especially for the Egyptians who saw it as a symbol for the passage from life to death for its red color that is a reminder of blood. Egyptians linked the wine not just with Osiris that was killed by his brother Seth and was

¹⁷Mattii, G.B. (1995) "*La Viticoltura*", Università degli Studi di Firenze, p.37.

¹⁸Mattii, G.B. (1995) *Idem*, p.13.

resuscitated by his sister Isis, but it is also linked with the obscure and bloodthirsty figure of Hathor, a feminine divinity that was placated with wine that she believed to be blood¹⁹ .

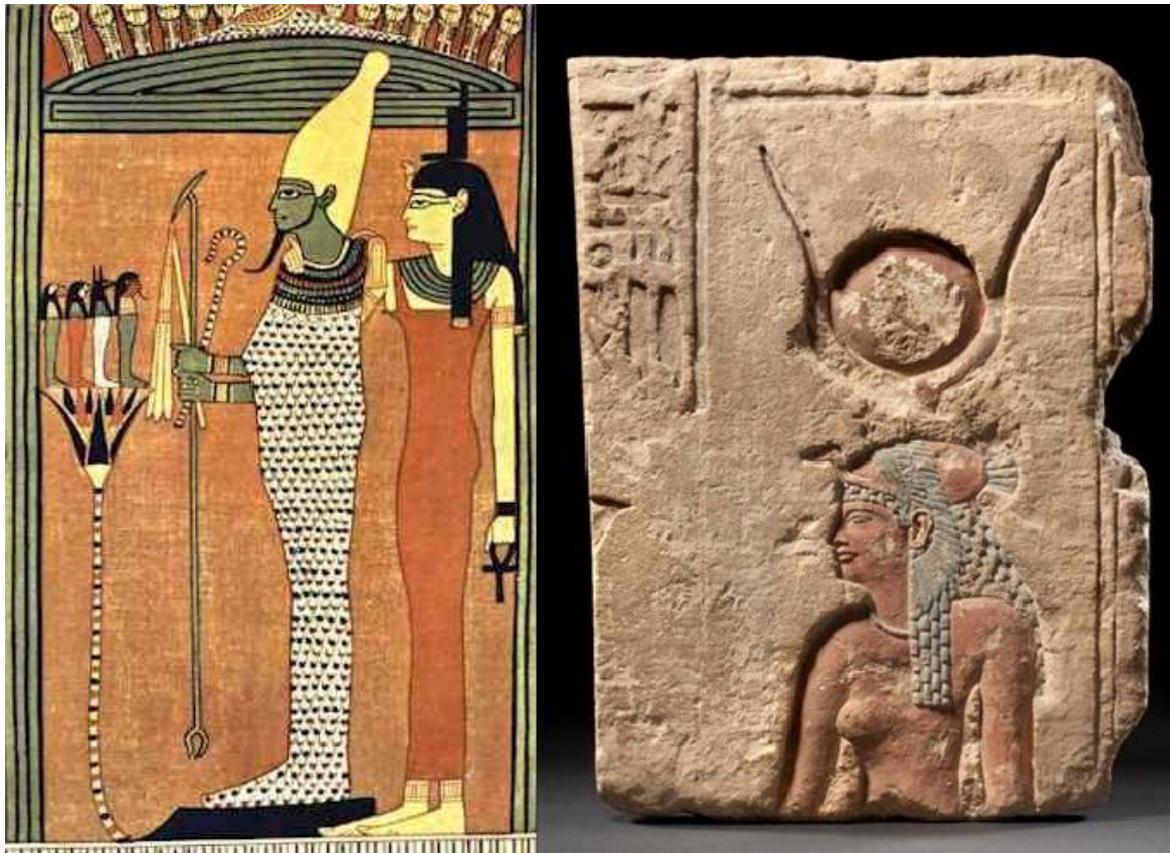


Fig.9- 10. Osiris and Isis(source:www.fruitofthenile.com); Hathor (source: Dutch National Museum)

The Greeks and in particular the Spartans used to drink huge quantity of wine before going to the battle, to encourage themselves to be brave²⁰. In Greek mythology, Dionysus was seen as the god of the grape harvest, winemaking and wine, of ritual madness, fertility, theatre and religious ecstasy.

With the Etruscan the name was changed in *Voltumnus* which became an absolute divinity and the protector of vine²¹. For the Latin the God Dionysus turned into Bacchus, and the wine started to become the principle ingredients of sacrifices.

¹⁹Phillips, R. (2000) *Idem*, p.37.

²⁰ For further information, see the website: www.thessalianews.gr

²¹Mattii, G.B. (1995) *Idem*, p.17.



Fig.11- 12. Dionysus, 2nd century (source: Louvre Museum); Bacchus, 1596 (source: Galleria degli Uffizi)

An important myth about wine is the one of the Mesopotamian king Gilgamesh, presented in the “*Epic of Gilgamesh*”, a Babylonian document considered the first great work of literature. The wine is the central theme of the tenth tablet in which Gilgamesh travels in search of immortality and enters in the reign of the Sun. A magic vineyard guarded by a wise feminine divinity called Siduri, whose wine provided immortality²².

Another legend is related to the pursuit of happiness, that of Jamshid, a Persian king who banished a lady of his harem. The woman wanted to commit suicide and she drank a jar containing the remnants of the grapes that were deemed undrinkable. After drinking the fermented wine, she found her spirits lifted and she reported her discovery to the king. Jamshid loved the new drink, accepted the woman back, and he also decreed that all grapes grown in Persepolis would be devoted to winemaking²³.

For the Jewish people, the vine was considered a messianic tree with supposition to be also the Paradise Tree.

²² For further information, see the website: <http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/gilgamesh/>

²³Pellecchia, T. (2006) “*Wine: The 8,000-Year-Old Story of the Wine Trade*”, Running Press, pp. XI–XII.

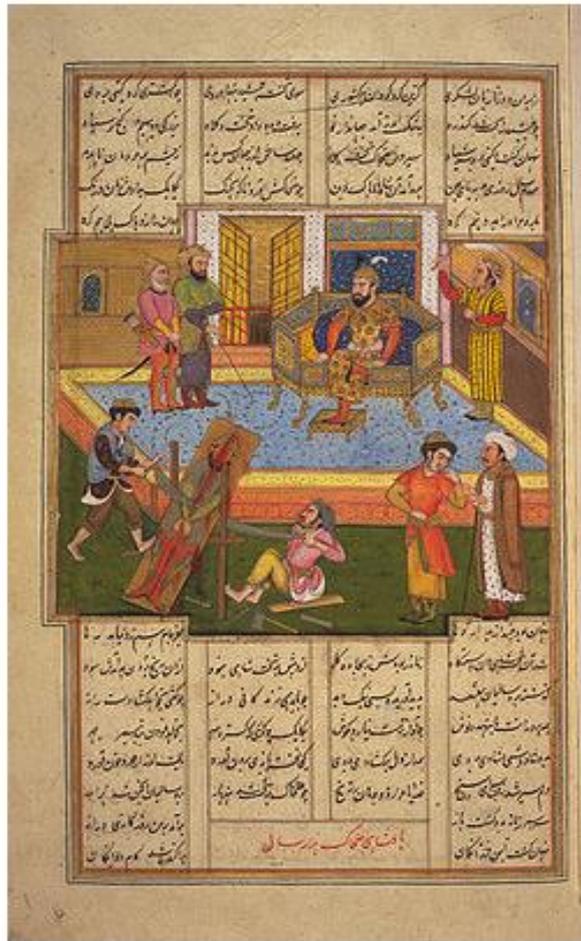


Fig.13- 14. Gilgamesh, 1876 (source: "The Chaldean account of Genesis"); Jamshid, Persian painting (source: Wikipedia)

There are numerous citations of wine and vine inside the Holy Bible, where the word *yayin* (grape juice fermented) occurs in the Old Testament 140 times, while in the Koran it is condemned as evil work. In a passage from John's Gospel, Jesus said "I am the true vine and my Father is the vine-dresser... I am the vine; you are the vine-branch"²⁴. In the ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis, after the Great Flood, Noah's ark runs aground mount Ararat, and after all the animals disembarked, the cosmic order was set up through the vine' plantation: "And Noah began to be a farmer, and he planted a vineyard, and he took of the wine of it and was overcome by drink"²⁵. The story of Noah presents interesting points, first of all the fact that Mount Ararat is the highest peak of the Small Caucasus chain, in the modern Turkey and Armenia areas. From this point of view, the Bible confirmed the thesis of the Caucasian origin of wine.

²⁴ "Sacra Bibbia" (1965) Vecchio Testamento, S.Giovanni, Edizioni Paoline, p.1147.

²⁵ "Sacra Bibbia" (1965) Genesi, IX, Edizioni Paoline, p.21.

1.3. The Past: Wine in China

The vine cultivation of *Vitis vinifera* (*putaoteng gengzhong* 葡萄藤耕种) and wine production (*putaojiu niangzao* 葡萄酒酿造) in China has a long history too. Many archaeologists affirmed that on the latest discoveries, the first wine residue was found in a container based in the province of Henan (*Henan* 河南) and is 9,000 years old²⁶. Another important point emerged from the same report, that grapes were mixed with rice to produce fermented beverages in the 7th century BCE, which seems to be the precursors of rice wine.

In the past, if grapes were used in wine recipes, they were from a wild grape species native to China not imported from western Asia: nowadays, there are between 40 and 50 different wild grape species in China²⁷.

The European grape was introduced into China in the second century BCE, with other imports resulting from the Silk Road²⁸. In particular, Zhang Qian²⁹'s exploration of the modern area of Xinjiang (*Xinjiang* 新疆), reached the Hellenistic successor states of Alexander's empire. These had brought viticulture into Central Asia and trade permitted the first wine produced from *Vitis vinifera* grapes to be introduced to China³⁰.

In fact, the first historical document that testifies the presence of grape wine in China it is constituted by Sima Qian³¹ "*Records of Grand Historian*" (*Shiji* 史记) during the Han Dynasty. In chapter 63 about Dawan (*Dawan Zhuan* 大宛传) it is reported that the general Zhang Qian, under the order of the Han Emperor Wu (*Han Wudi* 汉武帝), was sent to open trade relations between China and the Western regions: during the diplomatic mission, he discovered that close to Dawan grape wine was produced and that rich people used to store it up³². Dawan was an ancient state of central Asia located into Fergana valley. It is presumed that Western Han Dynasty introduced grape

²⁶ McGovern, P. E., et al. (30 September 2003) "*Fermented beverages of pre- and proto-historic China. Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*", The National Academy of Sciences.

²⁷ McGovern, P. E., et al. (2003) *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Temple, R. (1986) "*The Genius of China: 3.000 Years of Science, Discovery and Invention*", New York, Simon & Schuster, p.101.

²⁹ Zhang Qian 张骞 (200-114BCE): imperial envoy to the world outside China during the Western Han Dynasty (202BCE-9CE). He was a renowned diplomat and explorer who pioneered the opening of the famous Silk Road. He introduced many elements of China's advanced culture and technology, including sericulture, weaving, smelting, papermaking, and agriculture. From the Western regions he brought back foreign music and dance, and specialties such as grapes, pomegranates, watermelon, and walnuts (www.chinaculture.org).

³⁰ Temple, R. (1986) *Ibidem*.

³¹ Sima Qian 司马迁 (145/135-86BCE): historian of the Han Dynasty, considered the father of Chinese historiography.

³² Sun, J. (2012) in "China Wine On-Line" – "*La storia della vite e del vino in Cina*" pp.1-4 (<http://www.winechina.com/italia-cina/vc2.html>).

cultivation and wine making techniques from the boundaries states, and that from that period onwards, they represented the original wine background in China.

Although wine production methods were introduced in China for the first time during Han Dynasty, in those times Chinese people only knew the basic methodology, and it is just under Tang (618-907CE) and Yuan (1271-1368CE) Dynasties that the wine technology was developed, especially in the Xinjiang and Taiyuan (*Taiyuan*太原) areas³³.

Wine remained mostly imperial fare before and it was imported again when trade with the West was restored under the Tang Dynasty: wine became a public and cultural heritage and was frequently quoted in numerous literary works, such as the poem of Wang Han³⁴ about Liangzhou (*Liangzhou ci*凉州词), in which the soldier did not want to ride their horses after drinking great grape wine from lighting crystal cup (i.e. *putao meijiu yeguang bei*葡萄美酒夜光杯)³⁵. Under Yuan Dynasty it was ordered that wine could be used only during religious ceremonies and rituals, and became gradually a beverage of consumption for the *gentry* just under the Song Dynasty³⁶.

In the past, Chinese wine drinking vessels were used to taste the wine and were divided into a wide array of shapes, sizes and materials. The earliest wine utensils were pottery wine sets, popular during the Painted Pottery Culture Period of the Neolithic Age (*Xinshiqi shidai*新石器时代), especially during the Longshan Culture (*Longshan wenhua*龙山文化). Longshan vessels do not exhibit much, if any, surface embellishment except for raised ridges and incised lines. A distinctive spouted pitcher from this culture, called *gui*鬶, deserves special attention. It has been found to be made from red, grey, or white clays and maybe it represents the earliest instance of such a clay being used for ceramics. The form of the vessel, especially its aligned spout and handle, favoured a pouring function, presumably for liquid contents warmed in the bulbous legs³⁷. This function and also the shape anticipate several bronze pouring vessels of the early Bronze Age (*Tongqi shidai*铜器时代).

³³Sun, J. (2012) *Ibidem*.

³⁴Wang Han王翰: lacking of biographical details of birth and death; he was a Tang poet included into the anthology “*Three Hundred Tang Poems*” (*Tangshi sanbai shou*唐诗三百首) compiled by Sun Zhu (孙洙) around 1736.

³⁵For further information, see the website:

www.uus8.org/fm/LiangZhouCiPuTaoMeiJiuYeGuangBei_WangHan%28FangMing%29.html

³⁶Temple, R. (1986) *Ibidem*.

³⁷Thorp, R. L.; Vinograd R. E. (2001) “*Chinese Art & Culture*” Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers pp.44-46.



Fig.15- 16. Gui pitcher, Longshan culture, 3rd millennium BCE (source: Thorp & Vinograd (2001) “Chinese Art and Culture” p.45); Fig.16 Pouring cup jue爵, Erlitou Culture or Early Shang c.2000-1500BCE (source: www.china.org.cn)

Then came the bronze wine sets that started in the Xia Dynasty (c.2000-1600?BCE) and became prevalent in the Shang (c.1500-c.1050BCE) and Zhou Dynasties(c.1050-256BCE)³⁸. Their different shape and changing appearance demonstrate the several stages of history and industry during the first Three Dynasties. A continuous record of experimentation and elaboration can be traced from the Erlitou Culture through the Western Zhou. From a small, thin, and simple types of vessels to large, thickly cast, complex, and floridly decorated ones³⁹.

³⁸Shee, D.; Vota, S. (2014) “当红葡萄酒 Remarkable Wine” Beijing, Shijie Zhishi Chubanshe, pp.22-23.

³⁹Thorp, R. L.; Vinograd R. E. (2001), *Idem*, pp.71-72.



Fig.17- 18. Wine warmer *jia*, Shang period 1600-1400BCE (source:Thorp & Vinograd (2001) “Chinese Art & Culture” p.72); Wine container *pou*, Shang period 1400-1200BC (source: Thorp & Vinograd (2001) “Chinese Art & Culture” pp.73).

Usually, the higher the quality, the more dignified or important the owner. As well as basic designs, there were those that were quite elaborate and which were a symbol of social status. Some of these wine sets were modelled on the shapes of animals which reflected people’s wish for beautiful things and luck, and also the praying to divinities and auspicious animals for protection. Such sets include tiger, goat, ox and elephant-shaped utensils, which demonstrates the high standards of manufacturing skills that had been attained at the time.



Fig.19- 20. Bronze wine drinking vessels, Shang and Zhou Dynasties (source: www.cultural-china.com)

Going on through the dynasties, the first empires Qin (221-206BCE) and Han (202BCE-220CE) were enjoying economic recovery and growing prosperity⁴⁰. This richness was reflected in luxury art items and also lacquered, metalwork, and jade drinking wine sets, which are evidence of the artistic skills employed in their production.

From the period of division (220-581) until Sui Dynasty (581-617), there is no peculiar wine drinking vessel or set. Starting again with Tang Dynasty (618-907) production, the design of porcelain vessels surpassed any that had gone before and they were much smaller and more delicate⁴¹. This material continued to be used until the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). The bowls and stoups with their blue and white flower patterns were quite an art: the blue-and-white porcelain wine sets had the highest artistic value, and were painted with landscape, flowers, birds, human figures and stories, giving a sense of beauty and cultural taste to the drinkers in the drinking process. Jade wine sets are an indication of ancient people's social positions⁴².

In ancient China, wine sets were also part of the ceremonial system: there was a stringent hierarchy system, under which people of different statuses and positions were supposed to use different wine sets. All types of Chinese wine sets serve as a mirror of ancient Chinese culture⁴³.

⁴⁰Thorp, R. L.; Vinograd R. E. (2001), *Idem*, p.119.

⁴¹Thorp, R. L.; Vinograd R. E. (2001) *Idem*, p.185.

⁴²Shee, D.; Vota, S. (2014), *Ibidem*.

⁴³Shee, D.; Vota, S. (2014), *Ibidem*.



Fig.21- 22. Wine vessel zhong, Former Han, 2nd century BCE (source:www.hnmuseum.com); Onyx Rhyton, Sasanian or Sogdian, 6th-7th century CE (source: Thorp & Vinograd (2001) "Chinese Art & Culture" p.222).

1.4. Modern Oenology Industry in China

China is well known for being a consumer of tea (*cha*茶), distillate from cereals (*fajiao liangshi jiu*发酵粮食酒), wine rice (*huangjiu*黄酒) and beer (*pjiu*啤酒), instead of wine (*putaojiu*葡萄酒). In the last decade, thanks to the economic growth and the socio-cultural changes in the country, wine has been strongly imposing itself⁴⁴.

To the contrary, there is the recent development of a modern oenology industry in China, starting with the General Zhang Bishi⁴⁵ an overseas Chinese who lived under the last phase of the Qing Dynasty. He introduced Western techniques and vines into Shandong (*Shandong*山东) province, in Yantai (*Yantai*烟台) from 1892 on. Since then the oenology field in China became increasingly important⁴⁶.

After Yantai followed other famous wineries in Beijing (Oenology Institute before, then convent winery in 1910), Qingdao (*Fuchang yanghang*富昌洋行 in 1914), Qingxu (*Qingxu lujiu*清徐露酒 in 1921), and Tonghua (*Tonghua putaojiu youxian gongsi*通化葡萄酒有限公司 in 1938).

⁴⁴Antonaros, A. (2000) "La grande storia del vino", Edizioni Pendragon, p.70.

⁴⁵Zhang Bishi张弼士 (1841-1916): important diplomat and founder of Changyu Pioneer Wine Co. Ltd., China oldest and largest winery. One year before his death, he won the first China' international prize with his wines.

⁴⁶Wang, Q.; Zhao, R. (30 May 2012) "Wine Pioneer Changyu has storied history, bright future", in "China Daily" (http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/cndy/2012-05/30/content_15418743.htm).

Unfortunately, the numerous fights during the Warlord Era (*Junfa shidai*军阀时代), the foreign invasions, and the corrupt state bureaucracy, put the Chinese wine production on its survival limits.

Thanks to the economic reform of 1978, interest in wine and oenology grew with an increase in local wine production and diffusion of imported foreign wine. Although wine has been overshadowed for a long time by the so-called yellow wine (*huangjiu*黄酒) and the distilled spirits (*baijiu*白酒 and *maotai*茅台), wine consumption has grown and China is now numbered among the top ten global markets for wine.

One of the most accurate reforms was the well-known “Open Door Policy” (*kāifang zhengce* 开放政策) which provides the experimentation of a free market economy within Special Economic Zones (*jīngjì techū*经济特区)⁴⁷, that benefits international commerce and especially mixed joint ventures (*hezī qīyè* 合资企业).

In 2001 with the entrance into World Trade Organization (*Shijie maoyi zǔzhī*世界贸易组织), there was a peak for the local and foreign oenology industries in China⁴⁸. However, the country is not yet part of the International Organization of Vine and Wine (OIV) but is working to make it happen. For instance, in 1987 the prefecture of Yantai was elected by OIV the “International City of Wine” (*Yāntai guoji chengshi*烟台国际城市)⁴⁹ and was addressed as an Observer State; in 2012 the autonomous region of Ningxia Hui (宁夏回) had the same special treatment⁵⁰.

Initially, most of China's wine products were exported abroad due to the low income of the local population, but starting from the end of 2000, the economic growth provided sufficient income to support the domestic market. Moreover, the globalization process of the last decade has brought China on the international economic scene, and therefore, its winemaking industry.

The first foreign wine imported into China was French as the second joint-venture enterprise (*Zhōngfǎ hezī qīyè* 中法合资企业): the Dynasty Wine Ltd. (*Zhōngfǎ heying Wang chao putaojiǔ yǒuxiǎn gōngsī* 中法合营王朝葡萄酒有限公司), which was created thanks to the common aim of the Chinese government, the French group Rémy Martin and the International Trade Technology Investigation Organization (INTTRA) of Hong Kong⁵¹.

⁴⁷Weber, M. (2001) “*Il miracolo cinese*”, Bologna, Il Mulino, p.37.

⁴⁸Zanier, V. “*Il sistema economico*”, in Abbiati, M. (2006) “*Propizio è intraprendere imprese: aspetti economici e socioculturali del mercato cinese*”, Venezia, Cafoscarina, p.92.

⁴⁹Lu, A. “*La Riviera delle vigne cinesi*” in “La Cina Pictorial” (www.rmhb.com.cn/chpic/htdocs/rmhb/itlia/200712/7-1.htm)

⁵⁰For further information, see the website: www.oiv.int/oiv/info/ithelanshan

⁵¹Annual Report Company Profile, “*Dynasty Fine Wines Group Limited*” (<http://www.dynasty-wines.com/en/pdf/04annualreport.pdf>)

Three other big companies dominate domestic production: the mentioned above Changyu Pioneer Wine Co. (*Zhāngyú putao niangjiǔ gǔfēn yǒuxiǎn gōngsī* 张裕葡萄酒股份有限公司)⁵², the China Great Wall Wine Co. Ltd. (*Chāngchéng putāojiǔ yǒuxiǎn gōngsī* 长城葡萄酒有限公司)⁵³, and the Beijing Dragon Seal Wine Co. (*Beijing lóng huì niangjiǔ yǒuxiǎn gōngsī* 北京龙徽酿酒有限公司)⁵⁴.

The Great Wall winery has been based in Hebei since 1983 and it is one of the most famous Chinese wine brands. It is characterized by seven different kinds of wine that represent about 50% of China's wine production. The Dragon Seal winery is also a Sino and French joint-venture founded in 1987, with 1.200 hectares of vineyards with different kinds of imported and local grape varieties. The company uses modern wine producing equipment imported from France, Germany and Italy.



Fig.23 Changyu, Dynasty, Great Wall, and Dragon Seal' wine bottle (source: their official website).

Nowadays, China is the 4th country for global vineyard area extension and the 8th country for wine-production⁵⁵.

⁵²Chayu Pioneer Wine Co. official website: www.changyu.com.cn/

⁵³China Great Wall Wine Co. Ltd. official website: www.greatwallwine.com.cn/

⁵⁴Beijing Dragon Seal Wine Co. official website: www.dragonseal.com.cn/

⁵⁵Flamini, C. (Special Edition March 2015) "*Il Corriere Vinicolo*", pp.5-7.

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
1 Spain	1.166.347	1.149.894	1.137.963	1.077.535	972.085	951.693
2 France	849.385	849.001	823.799	788.953	758.366	755.181
3 Italy	764.798	726.985	734.845	686.407	663.905	646.845
4 China	446.000	433.000	474.791	518.000	560.000	570.000

Tab. 2 Global vineyard area hectares' extension (source: Special Edition, (March 2015) "Il Corriere Vinicolo" p.5).

	2003	2005	2007	2009	2011	2013
1 Italy	44.848	53.188	47.981	49.965	44.698	53.625
2 Spain	46.638	39.542	39.832	38.325	37.199	52.460
3 France	47.519	50.325	46.547	47.347	51.067	42.372
4 USA	22.281	27.134	24.168	26.798	25.909	31.780
5 Argentina	13.225	15.222	15.046	12.135	15.473	12.629
6 Australia	10.594	14.428	9.785	11.826	11.178	12.310
7 Chile	6.408	7.351	7.918	9.818	9.466	12.107
8 China	3.400	4.300	6.700	7.100	11.600	11.400

Tab. 3 Global wine production (source: Special Edition, (March 2015) "Il Corriere Vinicolo", p.5).

China, represent a wide market for imported wine. The economic growth in the last decade, however, has been so high that it has provided a boost interesting commercial opportunities for foreign commerce. Italian wine exports to China are mainly represented by bottled wine and then by wine on tap and sparkling wine. Despite Chile and Spain being the biggest wine investor in China, Italian wine is still a very good product (see Chapter 3.1.).

CHAPTER 2

Abstract

This chapter will treat the interactions between wine and the socio-cultural Chinese change, and the concept of wine as a powerful status symbol. In particular, the Chinese perception of Italian wine will be investigated, in order to understand how Chinese wine consumers consider Italian wines. This latter aspect was investigated through the advertisement reported on five main Chinese wine magazine. Finally, the changes in Chinese palate will be assessed.

2.1. Socio-cultural Chinese change

In the last decades China became one of the most important world economic powers. Such a condition led to changes in traditional behavior that also involved food and habits. Nowadays Chinese people can easily buy any kind of products because the standard of life has increased⁵⁶. Many scholars underlined that this phenomenon is strictly linked with the Westernization. The Chinese are chasing after the Western model as a perfect and happy way of life. China represents the first country in the world for high demand and consumption of luxury items, and wine is definitely on the top⁵⁷.

Food and drink are strictly related to class cultures and identities, to national economy and lifestyles⁵⁸. The relationship between food, beverages and identity is a complex one. According to Peter Scholliers, a researcher on consumer culture and behaviour, people usually tend to identify other countries with food and beverages: for example, the British are called the “potato people”, the Italian are called the “macaroni eaters”, and the Spanish are called the “sangria drinkers”. If food and drinks can operate as factors in the process of identification of a group or an entire nation, so food and beverages have to be analyzed within a broader set of values such as religion, age or occupation. Identity is “*a person’s own definition in terms of group membership, which entails intergroup behaviour, or the identification of a person with the norms, ideals and manners of a group*”⁵⁹.

Identity is constructed through differences with others, it gives sense to the existence and orders the world, forges norms and values. Identity “*contributes to how individuals and groups perceive and construct society, how they give meaning, and how they (re)act, think, vote, socialise, buy, rejoice, perceive, work, eat, judge, relax,*”⁶⁰ and drink. Economic, social, cultural and political situations matter in creating our own identity.

In China, the last decades of the 19th century and the foundation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) (*Zhonghua renmin gong he guo* 中华人民共和国) represented a phase of important change which opened the access to modernity⁶¹. Before 1949, the social change was fast and traumatic, especially in urban areas close to the coast which were more under foreign influence and

⁵⁶Italian Trade Commission (2013) “*Market Report Food and Wine – Il mercato cinese dei prodotti agroalimentari e del vino*”, p. 6.

⁵⁷D’Aimmo, P. (26 September 2011) “*Cina, nuovi ricchi assetati di vino e di lusso*” in “International Business Times” (www.it.ibtimes.com/articles/24455/20110926/cina-nuovi-ricchi-assetati-di-vino-di-lusso.htm).

⁵⁸Ashley, B., et al., (2004) “*Food and Cultural Studies*”, London, Routledge, p. 59.

⁵⁹Scholliers, P. (2001) “*Food, Drink and Identity*”, Berg, pp.3-23.

⁶⁰Scholliers, P. (2001), *Ibidem*.

⁶¹De Giorgi, L. “*La società cinese tra l’ultima parte del XIX secolo e il 1949*” in Samarani, G.; Scarpari, M., (2009) “*La Cina. Vol. III. Verso la modernità*”, Torino, Einaudi Ed., pp.507-545.

modernization. On the contrary, in rural areas and inner provinces, the perception of change was slower. Such conditions showed the main fracture among urban and rural society, which was seen as an important element throughout the whole 20th century in China's history. Nonetheless, until the mid-20th century China did not experience great economical changes and was still a rural based country with 90% of the population living off agriculture. During the end of the 20th century the crisis of traditional orders, the influence of Western civilization and foreign imperialism, and the new modern national state contributed to many changes in China. More specifically, these elements led to changes in the main political class, the emergence of a new social class, and the diffusion of modern values and institutions.

During the first decades of the PRC, relations between China and other countries were sparse. China, after 1949, changed from “*a weak and divided country, prey to western and Japanese imperialism, Christian missionaries and orientalist curiosity, to a communist regime shut off from the world except for its actual or potential allies in the communist or developing world*”⁶². During that time, the regime closed down most trade relations with foreigners, the world's media had little access to developments in China and Chinese people were still under strict control.

More and more tourists, students, business people, media workers and researchers have taken the opportunity to visit China or to include China in their range of operations. From the replacement of Taiwan at the United Nation in 1971, the PRC transformation proceeds at ever-increasing pace⁶³. China started to play an important role in terms of global economy, which is linked to the globalization of Chinese society to a considerable degree.

The contrast between the traditional Chinese society and the modern one was an aspect studied by Levy in sociology and Levenson in history during the 1950s and 1960s. According to their main thoughts on this subject, traditional China was a highly developed agrarian society, with strong political structure in the hand of the Emperor and a well-organized bureaucracy, the economy was based on family farming and handicrafts and the cultural system was all around literacy and scholarship with a mixture of complex tradition and philosophy. The main factors which undermined traditional China, were mainly the intrusion of the already modernizing West⁶⁴.

There had been a series of attempts at modernization before: first by the last imperial rulers, then by the Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek (*Jiang Jieshi* 蒋介石) from 1927, and finally by the Chinese Communists after 1949. War and civil war opened China up to uncontrollable and unpredictable external influences, and the success of the Chinese Communists in establishing a

⁶²Stockman, N. (2000) “*Understanding Chinese Society*”, Polity Press, pp.1-21.

⁶³Stockman, N. (2000), *Ibidem*.

⁶⁴Levenson, J. R. (1958-1965) “*Confucian China and Its Modern Fate: A Trilogy*”, California, University Of California Press.

stable regime initiated a new, modernizing drive⁶⁵. Nonetheless, the Chinese society at the death of the Chairman Mao Zedong 毛泽东 remained relatively backward and un-modernized, the transition to modernity still incomplete⁶⁶.

Since 1978, when a major programme of economic reform was set in motion, the dominant vision of socialism has been that of market socialism, in which production was still in the hands of the central state or local governments, and market mechanisms of prices and wages increasingly used to stimulate efficiency and growth. The aim of post-Mao leadership was that of “socialist modernization” with a pragmatic appropriation of the techniques of more advanced societies, including those of capitalism⁶⁷.

In fact, Zhou Enlai 周恩来 first formulated in 1964 the programme of the “Four Modernizations” to strengthen the fields of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology in China, but this not become central to state policy until the reformers gained control after 1978. Since that time, China has become increasingly incorporated into the international capitalist economy. Foreign direct investment was encouraged, first of all thanks to the creation of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) at Shenzhen 深圳, Zhulai 主来, Shantou 汕头 and Xiamen 厦门, with Hainan island (*Hainan dao*海南岛). This reincorporation of China into the world capitalist economy, leads to implications such as the class conflict, but also to the commodification of everyday life⁶⁸.

The opening up of China economically in the 1980s led to a crisis of cultural identity. The population was in search of alternative ideologies during the 1980s and the 1990s and many Chinese began to look beyond definitions of “Chinese identity” which was limited to citizens of PRC and to think about how Chinese nationalism was to be related to “*the people of Hong Kong or Taiwan or to the many people of ethnic Chinese origin living elsewhere in the world*”⁶⁹. Especially in the early 1980s there was considerable interest in the idea that Chinese culture was holding the country back from modernity and development. Through the redefinition of regional cultures, and ethnicity in these last decades, Chinese society could form its own new identity within modernity.

Nowadays, China represents the only major communist society left, because even if with the year 1989 which was marked as a signal to the end of communism, China is still governed by a communist party, and its economic resources are still predominantly state or collectively owned⁷⁰.

⁶⁵Levy, M. J. (1966) “*Modernization and The Structure of Societies – A Setting for International Affairs*”, New Jersey, Prince University Press.

⁶⁶Rozman, G. (1981) “*The Modernization of China*”, New York, The Free Press.

⁶⁷Stockman, N. (2000), *Ibidem*.

⁶⁸Stockman, N. (2000), *Ibidem*.

⁶⁹Harrison, H. (2001) “*Inventing the Nation, China*” London, Arnold Publishers, pp.251-263.

⁷⁰Stockman, N. (2000), *Idem*, pp.22-30.

Chinese society went through major social changes in the 20th century: the military overthrow of one regime and the installation of a new one committed to drastic reconstruction of social institutions and of structures of power and inequality. For instance, the changes to gender relations, the urban-rural relations with the following process of urbanization, the educational movement with its openness to study overseas, and the creation of sino-foreign joint ventures, all leads to a socio-cultural and economic development. To the other side, the political context with its censorship still represents a problem, especially for communication and identity.

The Chinese society can be understood within its complex interplay between social continuity and social change, its global context, and its future. Firstly, post-revolutionary developments have begun to result in increased social complexity, for example the loss of urban-rural divisions. Secondly, the “Open Door Policy” has shifted China from isolation to incorporation and intensified both external influence on China and its influence on the world. Finally, the 21st century is still witnessing the socio-cultural Chinese change and only time will tell what it might hold⁷¹.

2.2. Wine as Status Symbol

Nowadays, drinking wine is becoming fashionable, and, even if there is a strong division among Chinese wine lovers and wine experts, most of them consume wine in order to attest their status symbol. Drinking is essentially a “*social act, performed in a recognized social context*”⁷².

The close bond between eating, drinking, talking and sociability is to be stressed. And conscious preferences for food items depend on “*an implicit and preliminary definition of what is edible and what is inedible that differs from culture to culture and from one era to another, and on the interdicts, linked to beliefs, which prevent the consumption*”⁷³. Consuming food and drinks together, may no doubt activate and tighten internal solidarity, but it happens because “*commensality first allows the limits of the group to be redrawn, its internal hierarchies to be restored and if necessary to be refined*”⁷⁴.

Commensality can be divided into the habitual and the remarkable. The exceptional commensality is close to wine consumption in China: it is not reduced to the nuclear family or the close and usual circle of colleagues, but it stretches out to the extended family and the body of

⁷¹Stockman, N. (2000), *Idem*, pp.30-31.

⁷²Douglas, M. (2010) “*Constructive Drinking – Perspectives on Drinking From Anthropology*”, Routledge, pp.3-13.

⁷³Grignon, C. “*Commensality and Social Morphology: An Essay of Typology*” in Scholliers, P. (2001) “*Food, Drink and Identity*”, Berg, pp.156-162.

⁷⁴Grignon, C. (2001), *Ibidem*.

friends and acquaintances. It can be linked with the high or stressed times of the annual calendar or the life cycle, for example from New Year's day to celebratory meals for marriages. Exceptional commensality also corresponds to life at work and to the professional career, to celebrate success and working agreements. In conclusion, the manifestations of commensality that we are familiar with, usually seem pleasant and friendly, but the functions of commensality continue to be primordial and somewhat primitive in its definition of identity, which can be finally described as *“the feeling of fitting in with both a social and a mental category”*⁷⁵.

In China, this category is represented mainly by medium-high and privileged class of wine consumers. Foreign wine is easy to find in China, the consumer has many possibilities to buy it but not everyone can afford it⁷⁶. Usually, it is consumed during business lunches because it is becoming a status symbol of richness and generosity. On this kind of occasions, it is attested that the boss pays for everybody and insists on having the most expensive bottle of wine on the menu, especially if a foreigner is present. Nonetheless, the boss very rarely knows something about the wine he chooses: neither the taste, nor the quality is important for him or her, just the price because through the expensive product he or she has the chance to gain fame and respect from colleagues⁷⁷.

Is it worth underlining that, just a specific and privileged range of people are having the liquid assets to buy wine in China. Therefore wine, expensive and foreign one in particular, allow people to show high status of life, and it usually becomes a symbol of luxury.



Fig.24 Chinese woman drinking wine (source: Linkiesta)

⁷⁵Grignon, C. (2001), *Ibidem*.

⁷⁶Ceresa, M. *“Life is holiday. Nuovi consumi e nuovi piaceri nella Cina urbana”* in Abbiati, M. (2006) *“Propizio e intraprendere imprese: aspetti economici e socioculturali del mercato cinese”*, Venezia, Cafoscarina, p.63.

⁷⁷Branigan, T. (22 August 2011) *“The Rise of Binge Drinking in China”*, in *“The Guardian”*

(<http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/aug/22/rise-of-binge-drinking-china>).

Chinese wine consumers are becoming increasingly curious and sophisticated, and are always attracted by the “Made in Italy” brand because of its status symbol implications⁷⁸. For this reason, during Vinitaly 2015⁷⁹, the largest wine and spirits fair in the world, the conference “Wine Education in Hong Kong: the Challenges of Food & Wine Pairing and Wine Descriptions” underlined the role of “formation” and “marketing clearness”. Corinne Mui, a wine educator, explained that Chinese people are revealing themselves for becoming “*more sophisticated in food and wine pairings, and they are showing big potentialities for Italian wine so marketing strategies, investments in wine culture and education are the right answers for Chinese market*”⁸⁰. This is also Francesco Ye’s answer, a wine manager, who affirmed that “*Chinese people are very curios and willing to taste something different. “Made in Italy” is a fashionable status symbol which already started to pay back the first wine companies that believed in Chinese market*”⁸¹.

During the international workshop “Wine and China– The Cultural Heritage of Chinese and Western Wines” held in Montepulciano (15 March 2014, Siena), the concept of wine as status symbol into Chinese society was crucial. Regarding the wine production and its social impact in China, Professor Qiu Zeqi, social stratification and policy researcher, talked about the perception of western wine within a sociological analysis. His theory is based on the fact that it does not matter what people eat or drink but just the person matters. In China, according to his research, there are 176 million drinkers and among them 90% are male consumers and most of them live in rural areas (69,4%)⁸². The Chinese drinkers are people aged between 20 and 40 with a lower education level. This kind of drinker usually prefers liquor (60%), rice wine (20%) and beer (10%), and consumes around one bottle of alcohol each week⁸³. Few women, according to Professor Qiu, drink at home because nowadays they control it, so men usually prefer to drink outside, for example at a work banquet, which is seen as a social activity with friends (10%) and institutions (90%)⁸⁴. During these kind of institutional events, it is normal to be exposed to the so-called “extreme test”, in which you have to drink huge quantities of alcoholic beverages to let your boss understand that you are reliable and you can create your connection (*guanxi*关系). Chinese people also drink during family or personal events such as birthdays, marriages, and funerals. Professor Qiu went on to underline that

⁷⁸Ceschi, A. (2015) “*Cinesi curiosi e sofisticati sedotti dal brand Made in Italy*” in “Wine Meridian”, n.3, p.2 (<http://www.winemeridian.com/upload/documenti/11/daily3.pdf>).

⁷⁹For further information, see the website: www.vinitaly.it

⁸⁰Ceschi, A. (2015), *Ibidem*.

⁸¹“Cronache di Gusto Magazine”, Special Edition for Vinitaly 2015, pp.6-7.

⁸²Qiu Zeqi, (2014) “*Perception of Western Wine in China. A sociological analysis*”, Beijing, Beijing University Press, pp.1-15.

⁸³Qiu Zeqi (2014), *Ibidem*.

⁸⁴Qiu Zeqi (2014), *Ibidem*.

different social classes have different drinking habits, especially in regard of strength, flavor and brewing. In particular, while lower ranks look at the cost and the brewing and prefer beer, grape wine is favored by middle and high classes that usually refer to the brand and to the flavor. This is defined as “identifying taste”, which can prove someone’s regional and social stratification and homogeneity⁸⁵. People tend to buy a certain product if they identify themselves with it and especially with the imagery it represents to them and to others.

The role of food as a signifier and identity builder is to be underlined. It is strictly linked to the practice of “identification”, which is more than just sharing the common characteristics of a group or an ideal because it is a never-ending process of construction, eating and drinking are utterly crucial. Sentiment of belonging via food or drink, does not only include the act of classification and consumption, but also “*the preparation, the organisation, the taboos, the company, the location, the pleasure, the time, the language, the symbols, the representation, the form, the meaning and the art of eating and drinking*”⁸⁶.

The close relationship between identification and food/drink can be found in numerous sociological, anthropological, ethnographical, geographical, philosophical and gender studies. Food and drink is seen as “*strong markers of social boundaries*”, and the class inequality is described in terms of calories, cost and expenditures⁸⁷. The cultural implications appeared in relation to sociable drinking or luxury food⁸⁸.

Furthermore, the complex link between food, beverages and identity appears: this is not a matter of simple identification, but it is a complicated, dialectical process of adaptation, rejection and interpretation. Such confrontations are tightly linked to economic, social and ideological factors which we can also find in Chinese society’ new taste for foreign wine that mainly contribute to their developing of a new status symbol.

⁸⁵Logue, A. W., (2004) “*The Psychology of Eating and Drinking – Chapter 8: You Are What You Eat and Drink*”, Third Edition, Brunner-Routledge, pp.127-144.

⁸⁶Scholliers, P. (2001) “*Food, Drink and Identity*”, Berg, pp.23-24.

⁸⁷Lentz, C. (1999) “*Changing Food Habits*”, Routledge.

⁸⁸Scholliers, P. (2001), *Ibidem*.



Fig.25 Chinese couple choosing their favourite wine (source: (n°18, Autumn 2014) cover “Gilbert & Gaillard”).

2.2.1 Focus Hong Kong

Hong Kong (*Xianggang* 香港) has a different concept about wine and the developing of taste compared to mainland China. In Hong Kong buying an expensive bottle of wine is also a matter of growing interest and taste. The past history of Honk Kong contributes obviously to the Westernization of life style, and also to a quick interest in western wines⁸⁹. In comparison with mainland China, Hong Kong has a different role in wine market. During 2014, Hong Kong was the 7th main channel for importing bottled wine and the 9th for sparkling⁹⁰.

Bottled	Th. Liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
5 China	288.084	1.364.588	4,74
6 Japan	181.738	1.063.595	5,85
7 Hong Kong	49.759	1.019.937	20,50

Tab. 4 World top bottled wine import countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

Sparkling	Th. liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
7 Canada	11.952	127.073	10,63
8 China	13.872	82.432	5,94
9 Hong Kong	2.376	63.493	26,72

Tab. 5 World top sparkling wine import countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

⁸⁹For further information, see the website: www.basiclaw.gov.hk/en/basiclawtext/chapter_4.html#section_4

⁹⁰Flamini, C. (Year 3, March 2015) Wine By Numbers, “January-December 2014”, pp.1-18.

Regarding exports to Hong Kong in detail, Italy has the 7th position for bottled wine and the 4th for sparkling one.

	Liters		Thousand HKD		HKD/liter	
	2014	% change	2014	% change	2014	% change
1 France	13.667.744	-8,1	2.510.542	-7,5	183,68	0,7
2 UK	1.568.419	18,5	1.682.752	0,7	1.072,90	-15,0
3 China	4.149.413	106,3	1.028.145	306,4	247,78	97,0
4 Australia	7.890.393	1,7	701.755	18,7	88,94	16,7
5 USA	6.559.195	13,5	529.249	-28,1	80,69	-36,6
6 Switzerland	65.576	-10,8	255.722	-20,8	3.899,63	-11,2
7 Italy	2.437.398	-4,1	231.029	22,9	94,79	16,8

Tab. 6 Hong Kong top bottled wine export countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

Sparkling	Liters		Thousand HKD		HKD/liter	
	2014	% change	2014	% change	2014	% change
1 Singapore	610.041	7,8	252.925	6,3	414,60	-1,4
2 France	633.959	-2,1	144.798	9,3	228,40	11,6
3 Belgium	64.906	31,5	24.599	34,9	378,99	2,6
4 Italy	326.224	-2,1	17.476	-1,7	53,57	0,4

Tab. 7 Hong Kong top sparkling wine export countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

Amid the growing demand for wine in Asia, Hong Kong plays a key role, especially as a wine trading and distribution centre for mainland China. Since February 2008, the government removed all duty-related customs and administrative controls for wine, to help the development of wine business⁹¹.

Currently, Hong Kong represents the only place in the world that has an agreement with the mainland Chinese government: this agreement allows wine import to go to China under CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Agreement), a tariff-free treatment starting from 1 January 2006⁹².

When entering the mainland, non-Hong Kong made wine is subject to tariff rates of up to 20%. From January-March 2014 Hong Kong' re-export to the Chinese mainland grows up to +27.3% according to a Commerce and Economic Development Bureau survey⁹³.

The general trade measures affecting wine export from Hong Kong regards only the wine standards and the wine labelling, which must be in English and also in Chinese, but currently there

⁹¹For further information, see the website: www.hktdc.com/Research

⁹²For further information, see the website: www.tid.gov.hk/english/cepa/tradegoods/files/mainland_2014.pdf

⁹³*Ibidem*.

is no grading system or wine classification in China. To facilitate the wine commerce, Hong Kong government has signed co-operation agreements with 13 major wine-producing countries and also with Italy to strengthen promotional activities in areas. These activities include wine-related trade, investment and tourism as wine promotion through seminars, wine tastings, receptions and food pairings. For instance, the first Master on Wine was launched in Hong Kong partnered with a French institution⁹⁴.

2.3. “Made in Italy” Wine Advertisement

Italian wine has an important role among Chinese wine consumers because it is linked with “Made in Italy” products which are associated with tradition, quality and luxury. In order to approach the wine Chinese market and obtain more information on Chinese consumers of Italian wine, it is needed a better understand of the Chinese way of thinking and their way of life is needed. While in Italy the majority of people can buy a bottle of wine, in China it is more difficult. Wine is becoming a status symbol, especially for its amazing high sale price. When foreign wines arrive in China, their price is doubled. The more expensive it is, the more desirable it is to the eye of the Chinese consumer. What create this desire must be analyzed. The Westernization process for instance, and all the huge advertisement campaigns around that.

The imagery which exists around Italian wine is to be studied, to gain a better understanding of how our “Made in Italy” product is seen. In this perspective, five main Chinese wine magazines were analyzed: “*Wine in China*”⁹⁵, “*Cru – Passion for Wine and Life*”⁹⁶, “*Drink Magazine*”⁹⁷, “*Winepress*”⁹⁸, and “*Wine Times Hong Kong*”⁹⁹.

Their way of presenting Italian wine is different, nonetheless all of them follow one main feature that is linked with the subconscious message of luxury and Westernization. Historical castles, fabulous dishes, huge villas, ancient vineyards and wine cellars, elegant restaurants and hotels, golden items, all come along with the imagery of drinking a great glass of Italian wine. This kind of imagery is presented in the pages of those wine magazines to attract the potential Chinese clients that, by buying Italian wine, allow themselves also to buy a piece of luxury and Westernization they wish to have.

⁹⁴For further information, see the website: www.hkuspace.hku.hk

⁹⁵For further information, see the website: www.wineinchina.com.cn

⁹⁶For further information, see the website: www.cru-magazine.com

⁹⁷For further information, see the website: www.drinkmagazine.asia

⁹⁸For further information, see the website: www.thewinepressmagazine.com

⁹⁹For further information, see the website: www.winetimeshk.com

Extracts of these main Chinese magazines, where the Italian wines are presented through pictures of their region of provenience, geography and landscape, luxury objects, and food pairing, all according to Chinese aesthetic taste, follow.



Fig.26- 27. Tuscan castle and landscape (source:(05-06.2014) “WinePress”p.42); Wine and terroir (source:(2014 sep) “Cru – Passion for Wine & Life” p.7).

Geography is becoming important to collocate wine and the amazing Italian landscapes and “terroires” contribute to improving the quality of the promotional advertisement campaign. Our old cellars and ancient wineries are well-known in Chinese wine magazines. Tradition, soil and nature, big wine names with their quality brands are also proposing a cultural view of Italian wine.

According to Professor Zeffiro Ciuffoletti, historian researcher, wine is seen as a part of cultural heritage. His speech during the Montepulciano workshop started underlining that it is “impossible to isolate the wine product from its cultural context”¹⁰⁰. Throughout a history that spans multiple millennia, wine has played a part that goes well beyond that of a mere alimentary product: quality of soil, climate, exposure, tradition, legend, culture of the land worker and wine maker, culture of the vendor are important components.

Even the local landscape, art, history and poetry, along with local cuisine, hospitality and economy are parts of wine. Professor Ciuffoletti remarked that for several millennia, “wine has presided over gatherings, meetings, ceremonies. Wine has sealed pacts, strengthened friendships

¹⁰⁰Ciuffoletti, Z. “Il vino italiano come bene culturale”. Speech translated by Giulia Marini during the Montepulciano Workshop (15 April 2014).

and caused enmity when betrayed”¹⁰¹. All of these definitions of wine add value to our product which is at risk of becoming a mere alimentary product in part due to the standardizing of production. Professor Ciuffoletti said that the profile of Italian wine in the world could instead be one of “civility, that imbues the wine with history, a model for relations, a centuries-old graciousness, that aids connections with other cultures and yet asserts its own identity and quality”¹⁰². His suggestions are to push on quality and culture to promote Italian wine, and in the meanwhile, also on communication and marketing strategy.

For a better promotion, “self-criticism” is essential because Italy has too many little wine companies and in China they do not have the influence of big brands so stronger investment against dispersed wine promotion are required. Italian wine has many interesting points to be promoted in China, such as the connection with Italian fashion and food, and also other Italian luxury products such as Ferrari or Maserati, which are well-known to Chinese people¹⁰³.

In addition, it is important to pass through the message of wine as a cultural product, which has to be presented as a “sophisticated” item to develop status symbol among Chinese wine lovers, with a sense of proportion, of limit and of “etiquette”.



Fig.28- 29. Italian landscape, wine, wine cellars (source:(2014 sep) “Cru”p.10); Expensive wine Solaia from Antinori family (source:(07-08.2014) Cover “WinePress”).

¹⁰¹Ciuffoletti, Z. *Ibidem*.

¹⁰²Ciuffoletti, Z. *Ibidem*.

¹⁰³Ciuffoletti, Z. *Ibidem*.

During the same event in Montepulciano, Professor Massimo Vedovelli, dean at Siena University for Foreigners, also underlined the importance of labelling and packaging. The labelling of wine has cultural implications such as language, culture and territory which cannot be divided from the final product itself, and he said that the territory *“is not only a geographical but also historical, social and linguistic reality and defines the features of Italian identity in the global world. The cultural forms that create an identity in the territories are pictures, colours, symbols and words: semiotic forms, then, that exceed their material value and define themselves as true cultural products. Among them, one of the more specific cultural form is the wine”*¹⁰⁴.

History and background of the wine are like identity bonds to strengthen. Labelling can presents cultural facts, legends, myths, poetry, philosophy and also literature. Writing a label, Professor Vedovelli added, there should be important terms not to forget, for example “ancient”, “tradition”, “secular”, especially for Italian wines. Lexical characteristics as technical vocabulary should be mixed with colloquial terms.

The link between the social message and also the contemporary message is to be underlined: the wine, intended as a cultural product, speaks to us regarding Professor Vedovelli, through the words of the labels of the bottles. The words, images and colours that constitute the clothing of the bottles of wines, according to Professor Vedovelli, are *“signs that evoke the traditions and stories, myths sometimes, with the intent to build in the acquirer of wine a cultural identity that transcends the simple taste sensory fulfilment of the defining moment of tasting”*¹⁰⁵.

¹⁰⁴Vedovelli, M. *“Etichettatura del vino e messaggi culturali”*. Speech translated by Giulia Marini during the Montepulciano Workshop (15 April 2014).

¹⁰⁵Vedovelli, M. *Ibidem*.



Fig.30- 31. Different labels and packaging (source: (03-03.2014) “Winepress” p.54); Peculiar detail on Prosecco label (source: (2014 September) “Cru – Passion for Wine & Life”, p.9).

Moreover, the importance of wine and food pairing is to be underlined. Food pairing is essential to better appreciate Italian wines: “WinePress” selected a special Chinese cuisine dish for each Italian wine presented, for instance, with Meleto Castle’ Chianti Classico it is suggested *Beijing kaoya*北京烤鸭, the popular Beijing duck or pork meat. The high elevated tannin and sour taste of Chianti wine, usually formed by Sangiovese grapes, which is to be denoted for its tannin quality, are well balanced with the sweet taste of duck meat and the fat pork meat. Frescobaldi’ Pinot Noir is paired with chicken, potatoes and mushrooms because of the balance among vegetables, white meat and the strong alcoholic taste of Pinot Noir.

Pairing Italian wines with Chinese dishes is the suggestion of many expert such as Stevie Kim, managing director of Vinality International, which promotes Italian wine worldwide, especially in Asia¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰⁶ For further information, see the website: www.expo.rai.it/stevie-kim-vinality-cina-vino/



Fig.32 Italian wine and Chinese food pairing (source: (05-06.2014) "WinePress" pp. 31-34).

The presentation of Chinese food is essential to having a key lecture for the wine consumption as well. The success of the promotion hides in the right balance of presenting a Western product, the wine, within its Chinese background: the food, the tradition, the Chinese symbol or just happy Chinese people smiling and holding a great Italian glass of wine.

Another message that magazines testified is that of wine as a healthy product. According to Professor Guo Wuling, who works at the Wine Culture and Industry Institute of Yibin University, and was present at the Montepulciano workshop as well, wine was used to treat illness also in ancient China. In the past in China, to Professor Wuling, wine was like "a medicine which could put off ageing signs and was good for the health"¹⁰⁷. Chinese medical wine was an alcoholic drink produced by soaking herbs, reptiles and mammals in rice wine or grain alcohol. It was widely used as treatment for external injuries by physicians of all dynasties, added Professor Wuling, for its antiseptic properties, and its effect on improving blood circulation and relaxing muscles and joints. Nowadays, it is still used for medical purpose, especially "snake wine" (*she jiu* 蛇酒), which is the

¹⁰⁷Guo Wuling "Wine and Spirits in the Chinese Tradition". Speech translated by Giulia Marini during the Montepulciano Workshop (15 April 2014).

most popular one. Jars of snake wine are displayed and sold in many Chinese pharmacies¹⁰⁸. The snakes for making snake wine are the most venomous. The alcohol can denature the venom, break down the proteins in the poison and retain the essence of the venom. Drinking snake wine helps to nourish the kidneys, generate blood, dispel cold and treat rheumatism, among other uses¹⁰⁹.

Wine and health promotion campaign is also a Chinese government measure for incrementing wine habits instead of more dangerous spirits consumption. Chinese people tend to toast for cultural reason saying *ganbei* 干杯, which means to down the glass. If Chinese people could toast with wine, instead of with far more high percentage alcoholic beverages, it would be better for their health¹¹⁰.

In the figures below, the people wear fashionable clothes and items, their hair is freshly cut, their smiles are bright and their look is healthy. It is the new Chinese class that aspires to be westernized, elegant, classy but with a proud Chinese hint.



Fig.33- 34. Fashion and healthy Chinese wine lovers (source: (03-04.2014) “WinePress” p.88); Stylish Chinese sommelier (source:(07-08.2014) “WinePress” p.57).

One magazine’s analysis is strictly technical (“Wine in China”), and presents many oenology terms of difficult levels. It is very detailed in its information about wine’ awards

¹⁰⁸Guo Wuling, *Ibidem*.

¹⁰⁹For further information, see the website: www.chinahighlights.com/travelguide/chinese-medicine/medical-wine.htm

¹¹⁰Guo Wuling, *Ibidem*.

selections, with lists of the price, the country of origin, the winery, but especially it adds the palate sensation and describes the fragrances. This demonstrates that there is a growing audience of Chinese wine beginners as well as Chinese wine specialists and experts.

32

金奖 GOLD AWARD

Apostoles Palo Cortado VORS
使徒-帕洛·柯勒达多 VORS 雪莉酒

- 西班牙——雪莉产区 (赫雷斯) (Jerez-xérès-Sherry)
- NV
- 87%帕罗米诺 (Palomino)
- 13%佩德罗-希梅内斯 (Pedro Ximénez)
- 20% vol.
- 1988
- 西原酒庄 (上海) 有限公司
- 冈萨雷-比亚斯 (Gonzalez Byass)

96分

酒香浓郁、复杂、有层次，有干果、李子等气息；酒体厚实，结构清晰，酸度适欢，持久，回味悠长。




冈萨雷-比亚斯 (Gonzalez Byass)

西班牙冈萨雷-比亚斯家族酒庄创立于1855年。如今家族事业经营已传承至第五代。此家族为葡萄酒倾注了毕生心血。事业版图也并枝散叶，分别在西班牙六大葡萄酒产区都有了酒庄和酿酒厂。“一路走来，始终如一”，是这个家族的坚持以及其追求的尖端。冈萨雷-比亚斯酒庄，长年以荣获无数。仅以2010年与2012年为例：2010年荣获国际葡萄酒及烈酒大赛 (WSC Trophy 2010) “年度最具声望酒庄” 以及 “年度最佳西班牙酒庄” 两项奖。2012年，酒庄现任总裁 Mauricio Gonzalez Gordon 先生被任命为大赛主席。冈萨雷-比亚斯已经受公认为西班牙第一酒庄。2015年9月获得 Wine Advocate 的历史性高分。种种荣誉使冈萨雷-比亚斯家族酒庄所出品的葡萄酒，无愧作为西班牙品质在国际水平上争锋的代表。

Oppidum Marche Rosso
罗马城堡干红葡萄酒

- 意大利——马尔凯 (Marche)
- 2007
- 蒙特普齐亚诺 (Montepulciano)
- 15% vol
- 788
- 北京城市庄国际葡萄酒文化有限公司
- Societa Agricola Ciu Ciu

95分

酒液呈深紫红色；具有令人愉悦的红色水果气息，如草莓、樱桃，还有一些奶油、香草的粉木香；口感较柔顺，口腔中有草莓和黑巧克力的味道，酒体强劲、有结构，单宁丰富、较成熟，颇具陈年潜力。




Societa Agricola Ciu Ciu

Ciu Ciu 有机葡萄酒位于意大利中部重要的产区马尔凯大区的南普里达镇 (Offida)。普里达镇是古老历史悠久的村庄。葡萄酒座落于山丘群中，距海面约300米。来自高山的水源和微风使得土地充满矿物质。充足的阳光均等地洒遍种植于山丘上的葡萄树。这种独特的环境非常适合优质的葡萄培育。Ciu Ciu 有机葡萄酒于1970年成立，由初期10公顷发展至150公顷。葡萄酒坚持“100%天然有机种植”的天然原则，采用人工采摘，确保最佳品质的原材料。酿造上仍坚持传统的酿酒方法，配合现代科技呈现最佳品质的结合。

Fig.35 Complex and detailed wine list(source: (issue 80, 2013) “Wine in China” p.32).

To contextualize Italian wine, and to associate it with our main features and positive characteristics, are the winning points to be remarked. Bringing Chinese clients to favorite Italian wines can be done through the press, as well as the Internet and new social media like WeChat (see Chapter 3.2.).

2.4 The Chinese Palate

According to a group of researchers of cultural studies, we can affirm that what we drink and how we drink relates to class cultures and identities¹¹¹. Exploring how the beverage we drink could influence us, is not simply an expression of individual tastes but has a wider basis in class culture and lifestyle. Tastes are not only a reflection of our identity, but also work to construct our cultural identity. We may be what we eat and drink, but what we eat and drink also produce who we are¹¹².

During the wine fair “Vinitaly 2015”, three complimentary seminars of its “Talk Business Series” on the Chinese wine market were held. Importers, wine educators and sommeliers offered their different points of view about Italy’s wine market. The seminar “Wine in China: big importers small importers”, testified that importers and also Chinese consumers are changing. In the past, large Chinese groups interested only in top brands were the professional figures that used to dominate their market, but nowadays, the tendency is giving way to smaller importers attracted by medium level businesses.

If importers are changing, so are the consumers: helped by trade magazines and *connoisseurs*, the new Chinese wine consumers are trying new products and are progressing upwards to higher quality wines. Furthermore, the old phenomenon of collectors who buy wine as an investment is in decline as is the custom of ordering top cru wines as gifts for others after the recent crackdown on corruption started by current China President Xi Jinping¹¹³ 习近平.

The second seminar “The Chinese palate according to Chinese sommelier” was the crucial one for a better understanding of the new trade situation. The moderator was Weiley Lu, the wine director of “*Pinor Sommelier Magazine*”, who introduced a panel of fellow sommeliers. The potential of food and wine pairing was stressed. “*The sheer variety of Italian wines offers many opportunities for successful combinations and, following this same principle, the great number of regional cuisines in China can drive sales of a plethora of different Italian varieties*”¹¹⁴ said Hou Tielin, the beverage manager hotel sommelier at the Kerry Hotel in Shanghai. Wu Xiaobin, spoke of his work at the famous Shanghai MINT club, describing his customers’ preference for full bodied red wines like Amarone. Hu Yingxia, wine advisor at The House of Roosevelt, gave the audience Italian bottle and glass prices, but the panel gave more insights into Chinese tastes after Weily Lu

¹¹¹Ashley, B.; Hollows, J.; Jones, S.; Taylor, B. (2004) “*Food and Cultural Studies*”, Routledge, pp.59-73.

¹¹²Ashley, et al. (2004), *Ibidem*.

¹¹³Branigan, T. (22 January 2013) “*Xi Jinping vows to fight ‘tigers’ and ‘flies’ in anti-corruption drive*” in “The Guardian” (www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jan/22/xi-jinping-tigers-flies-corruption).

¹¹⁴Hou Tielin “*The Chinese Palate According to the Chinese Sommelier*”. Speech translated by Giulia Marini during Vinitaly Fair 2015.

stated that “*there is actually no such thing as the Chinese palate, there being so many regional differences*”¹¹⁵.

Each sommelier went on to talk about the typical cuisine of their regional birthplaces and how they naturally combine with different types of Italian wine. Then they underline that the impact of modern life on eating trends, especially in big cities, is changing in favour to Western and in particular Italian-style restaurants. There is a new wave from traditional meals with family members’ consumption replaced by solo-meals in western style restaurants where quality wine is on the table. The interesting advice that these young sommeliers gave to those who want to sell wine in China, was to study transitional Chinese culture and tradition.



Fig.36 Pinor group and Stivie Kim, managing director of Vinality International.

This was also the theme of the third seminar, “Wine Education in Hong Kong: the challenges of food & wine pairing and wine descriptions”. The main focus was selling this self-referential European starting point that must give way to the Chinese cultural context to the Chinese market. On one hand, empowering Chinese consumers by learning about Italian wine culture helps them to buy into the Italian wine experience. On the other hand, the Italian producers themselves

¹¹⁵Weiley Lu “*The Chinese Palate According to the Chinese Sommelier*”. Speech translated by Giulia Marini during Vinality Fair 2015.

must also be prepared to learn how their wines fit in with China's sophisticated culinary culture before they can put it on Chinese tables¹¹⁶.

Another message that emerged during the "Talk Business Series" was the fact that Italian wineries must improve their marketing strategies. Italian wines at the moment are less popular in China than French ones: there were theories about the high acidity in Italian wines being too much for Chinese tastes, and about the power of consumer perceptions. An important contrast was pointed out between how Italian and French respective trade bodies were working to promote the wines. The French wineries are very well organised, more than the Italian ones in this respect, and are relentless in pushing their message. The consensus was that quality was not making the difference, but superior marketing was.

To sum up, for Chinese sommeliers and also for international wine experts, the strong point for selling wine in China is to study Chinese and Italian wine and food pairing better, to study the Chinese culture and symbols, to rely on the promotional strategies (see Chapter 4.4.).

In conclusion, sociology endeavours to establish the conditions in which the consumers of cultural goods, and their taste for them, are produced. Cultural practices have to be seen within their anthropological sense, so the elaborated taste for the most refined objects, for instance, is always reconnected with the elementary taste for the flavours of food and beverage¹¹⁷. In cultural consumption, the main opposition, are between rich and poor fractions which prefer in order rarity and common goods. These fractions of the classes are oriented towards cultural practices so different in their style and object and sometimes so antagonistic, that it is "*easy to forget that they are variants of the same fundamental relationship to necessity*"¹¹⁸.

Eating and drinking are basic instincts to survive, but tastes come along with the experience and also with the process of identification. Even the field of primary tastes is organized according to the fundamental opposition, with the antithesis between quantity and quality, belly and palate, matter and manners, substance and form. The true basis of the differences found in the area of consumption is "*the opposition between the tastes of luxury (or freedom) and the tastes of necessity*", which are determined especially by the income but also on the individual choice¹¹⁹.

Nonetheless, the concept of rational and individual choice refers to the grounds on which beliefs are held¹²⁰. The individual choice follows a coherent, logical and compatible way attested through personal experience, thus, rationality implies rule-governed social and cultural

¹¹⁶For further information, see the website: www.vitalyinternational.com/it/node/1977

¹¹⁷Bourdieu, P. (1984) "*Taste of Luxury, Taste of Necessity*" in Korsmeyer, C. (2005) "*The Taste Culture Reader: Experiencing Food and Drinking*", Oxford, Berg pp.72-78.

¹¹⁸Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Ibidem*.

¹¹⁹Bourdieu, P. (1984), *Ibidem*.

¹²⁰Barker, C. (2003) "*Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*", Sage Publications Ltd. p.42.

conventions¹²¹. Furthermore, capitalist modernity involve an element of cultural homogenization for its increases in levels and amount of global co-ordination. However, the current direction of global consumer capitalism is such that it encourages limitless needs and wants. On the contrary, niche markets, customization and the pleasures of constant identity transformation give rise to diversity¹²².

¹²¹Barker, C. (2003), *Idem*, p.174.

¹²²Barker, C. (2003), *Ibidem*.

CHAPTER 3

Abstract

This chapter will treat latest data on Chinese wine business. From the import-export, to the problem of the wine counterfeiting, the on-line sale aspect, and the use of the social media WeChat (*Weixin* 微信) for marketing promotion.

3.1. Brief Economical Analysis

The import-export of wine is one of the most developed economic activities in China. The latest worldwide data indicated China as the 5th country for bottled wine importation and the 8th country for sparkling wine importation¹²³.

BOTTLED	Th. Liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
1 USA	699.991	4.161.207	5,94
2 UK	805.218	3.395.353	4,22
3 Germany	568.985	2.147.085	3,77
4 Canada	269.430	1.716.774	6,37
5 China	288.084	1.364.588	4,74

Tab.8 World top bottled wine importer countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

SPARKLING	Th. Liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
1 UK	119.733	992.473	8,29
2 USA	85.032	896.794	10,55
3 Germany	63.334	489.049	7,72
4 Japan	33.397	468.021	14,01
5 Russia	37.120	210.717	5,68
6 Switzerland	18.214	207.739	11,41
7 Canada	11.952	127.073	10,63
8 China	13.872	82.432	5,94

Tab.9 World top sparkling wine importer countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

The same data for Italy showed that our country was worldwide at the 2nd place for each bottled wine, sparkling and bulk. France is the first regarding bottled and sparkling wine, and Spain is the first regarding bulk wine export.

¹²³For further information, see the website: www.uiv.it/wine-by-numbers/

Bottled	Th. Liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
France	1.025.227	6.340.332	6,18
Italy	1.219.084	5.102.356	4,19
Spain	777.007	2.130.332	2,74
Chile	451.848	1.515.583	3,35
Australia	311.941	1.247.475	4,00
Usa	215.163	1.119.940	5,21
New Zealand	135.342	918.910	6,79
Argentina	180.508	740.267	4,10
South Africa	168.298	506.585	3,01

Sparkling	Th. Liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
France	164.829	3.493.169	21,19
Italy	240.342	1.116.476	4,65
Spain	169.081	546.054	3,23

Bulk	Th. Liters	Th. Dollars	\$/liter
Spain	1.262.992	668.760	0,53
Italy	563.296	527.607	0,94
France	245.961	403.178	1,64
Australia	400.287	375.019	0,94
Chile	317.281	256.601	0,81
Usa	177.560	253.223	1,43
South Africa	288.197	244.858	0,85
New Zealand	56.128	186.025	3,31
Argentina	66.692	63.737	0,96

Tab. 10 World top wine export countries (source: www.uiv.it)

Considering the wine export in China, Italy has the 5th place for bottle wine and the 2nd for sparkling one: France, Australia, Chile and Spain are our main competitors¹²⁴.

The Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) indicated that the Italian wine export to China in 2014 was 5,11 billion of euro, with an increasing of +1,4% compared to 2013¹²⁵.

¹²⁴*Ibidem*.

¹²⁵“Istat Annual Report 2014”: www.istat.it/en/files/2014/06/Sintesi-rapp-ann-2014-en1.pdf

BOTTLED	Liters		\$		\$/liter	
	2014	% change	2014	% change	2014	% change
1 France	124.948.165	-2,9	613.182.552	-6,9	4,91	-4,1
2 Australia	36.192.649	-0,6	247.065.412	9,3	6,83	10,0
3 Chile	34.188.184	33,9	124.500.111	24,5	3,64	-7,1
4 Spain	35.057.294	17,8	96.137.999	4,9	2,74	-11,0
5 Italy	18.349.893	-6,7	81.192.152	-9,9	4,42	-3,5

Tab. 11 China top bottled wine export countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

BOTTLED	Liters		\$		\$/liter	
	2014	% change	2014	% change	2014	% change
1 France	2.473.201	4,8	43.960.422	9,4	17,77	4,4
2 Italy	6.718.313	78,9	22.266.555	55,9	3,31	-12,9

Tab. 12 China top sparkling wine export countries (source: Wine by Numbers)

The global wine consumption is growing, but the countries which are leading it are no more the traditional ones as France and Italy, but new wine consumers are emerging. Nowadays, according to Coldiretti, almost 39% of wine production it is consumed outside Europe, in contrast with just 31% in 2000¹²⁶.

As a matter of fact, according to the Italian Trade Commission (ICE) of Shanghai, China and Hong Kong together surpassed France, Italy, USA and Germany for wine consumption, with a total annual growth of 15%¹²⁷. During 2014 in China there was a decrease in wine field, nonetheless, it occurred because of the new governmental austerity campaign. A rapid increase in consumption it is expected, and according to the same ICE analysis, the next five years will show a total growth of 37 million of Chinese wine consumers. ICE underlined also that in China there is much more oenology culture in comparison with the last 10 years. This could be witness, for instance, in the new Chinese professional sommelier figures or in the numerous international wine fairs through the country. It is important to note that also the model of consumption are changing. Chinese medium class is increasing, and also its spending power, with many Chinese wine consumers that are becoming more aware of foreign quality products. To the contrary, ICE analysis

¹²⁶Coldiretti, (25 March 2015) "Vino: gli Italiani ne bevono sempre meno" in "AgroNotizie" (<http://agronotizie.imagelinenetwork.com/agricoltura-economia-politica/2015/03/25/vino-gli-italiani-ne-bevono-sempre-meno/42384>).

¹²⁷ICE (10 March 2015) "Cina quinto consumatore di vino al mondo" in "Panorama Internazionale – Cina" (http://mefite.ice.it/cenweb/ICE/News/ICENews.aspx?cod=58136&find=Y&Ric_TestoLibero=vino&Ric_IsAllWords=True&Ric_Paese=720&Ric_Regione=-1&Ric_AreaGeo=8&Ric_Settore=1030500&Ric_Rubrica=-1).

stressed that Chinese wine consumers are still not so refined and their preferences continue to go on expensive iconic wines, which they consider a real status symbol¹²⁸.

According to the latest report provided by Source for Wine & Spirits Analysis (IWSR) the global wine consumption for 2018 is expected to increase of +3,7%, with a prediction of 2,37 billion case to be sell¹²⁹. More specifically, wine consumption in 2018 will show negative data for Italy (-5,1%), but positive data for China and Hong Kong (+24,8%)¹³⁰. Regarding Italian wine export in China, according to Carlo Flamini, director of Wine by Numbers, there are good perspectives in the future, especially due to the 2014 France' export weakness. In China, Director Flamini added, "*the moralising wind of the new government gave serious trouble to the French first and foremost (...) Italian wine represent the best alternative for quality and price ratio*"¹³¹. Chinese wine market, however, is beginning to take shape with more clarity. From his perspective, this reshaping will force everyone, including the French, to question long-established sales strategies. To the contrary, countries which are still small in Chinese wine market, like Italy and Spain, begun to establish long-term relationships with local partners. In particular, in 2014 there was extensive growth for Italian wine export as regards sparkling wines, thanks to the driving force of Prosecco, while growth was modest as regards bottled wine. Nonetheless, according to the Institution for Agro-Food Market Services' (Istituto di Servizi per il Mercato Agricolo Alimentare, ISMEA) focus, the first three months of 2015, attested that Italian wine had a positive impact on Chinese market¹³². China imported more than one million hectolitres (+23,8%) of Italian wine, spending 406 million dollars (+17,6%). Sparkling wine still have great importance in volume (+26%)¹³³.

3.2. On-line Sales and Social Media Marketing Strategy

During the "Wine2Wine" event¹³⁴, several seminars and workshops were held by key players of business sectors, targeting Italian wine producers, journalists and wine professionals. The opening session of the event was entirely dedicated to China, confirming the great importance ascribed to this growing wine market. The workshop "The New Faces of The Chinese Market", underlined that the growing interest in wine in China is strongly correlated to the circulation of

¹²⁸*Ibidem*.

¹²⁹For further information, see the website: www.theiwsr.com/index.aspx?ReturnUrl=%2f

¹³⁰Gambero Rosso, (year 6, n. 10, 12 March 2015) "*Tre Bicchieri Magazine*", p.3.

¹³¹Flamini, C. (2015) "*Wine by Numbers*" pp.3-4.

¹³²Gambero Rosso, (year 6, n. 20, 14 May 2015) "*Tre Bicchieri Magazine*" p.2.

¹³³For further information, see the website: <http://www.ismea.it/flex/cm/pages/ServeBLOB.php/L/IT/IDPagina/143>

¹³⁴For further information, see the website: www.wine2wine.net/evento

Internet lines and smart-phones which today represent the main purchasing instrument amongst young Chinese consumers.

The Chinese wine market is currently undergoing an evident slowdown generated by the anti-corruption policies that have mostly affected local production. According to Yanni Wu, a professional wine competitor with focus on consumer, this phenomenon should be considered as “*a moment of transition between two important phases: the consumer era of tomorrow and the old glory days of the past, when both imported wine and local production were undergoing a consistent growth and wine was still regarded almost exclusively as a gift*”¹³⁵.

Nowadays, a key role is played by online sale and social media marketing. According to Alizila Group, which focus on e-commerce industry, China’s online shopping market expanded more slowly last year but still recorded a growth rate of 48.7%¹³⁶.

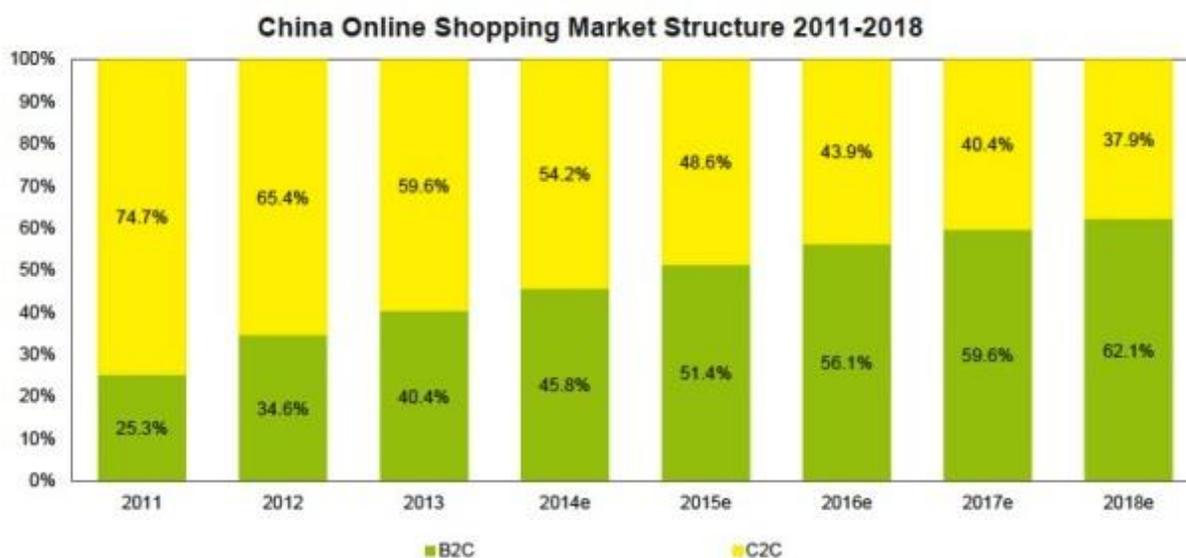


Fig.37 China Online Market Predictions 2011-2018(source:iResearch)

Shopping via mobile devices continues to make inroads with consumers while e-shopping is increasingly penetrating China’s third- and fourth-tier cities. The same Alizila research has shown that China’s online shopping during 2014 accounted for 10.7% of total retail sales of consumer goods, posting a double-digit share for the first time. Predictions from *iResearch*, an organization focusing on in-depth research in China's internet industry, underlined that China online shopping market will maintain a compound growth rate of about 27% over the next years¹³⁷. The data provided by Alizila remarked that Chinese consumers are becoming more discerning, and they are

¹³⁵For further information, see the website: www.wine100.org

¹³⁶Alizila, (23 March 2015) “*Online Shopping Still Growing Strong in China*” in “Global Biz Circle” (www.globalbizcircle.com/china-online-shopping/)

¹³⁷For further information, see the website: www.iresearchchina.com

increasingly buying online from big merchants and brands. Selling by small merchants and individuals, consumer-to-consumer (C2C) as it was in the past, nowadays does create the same results. This activity, called business-to-consumer (B2C), will make up more than half the market in 2015. On this account, mobile shopping last year grew at a much faster rate, almost nearly 240%, than the e-shopping market as a whole, and iResearch sees the trend continuing.

Share of Major E-commerce Companies in Mobile Shopping Market in 2014

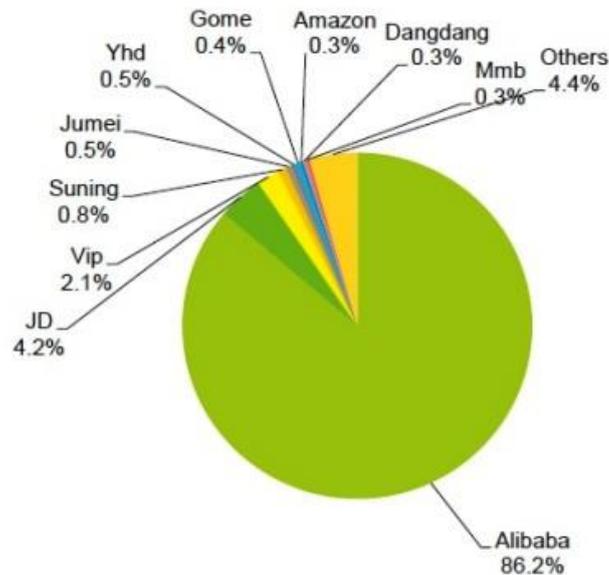


Fig.38 Mobile shopping market 2014 (source: iResearch)

Frank Lavin, United States undersecretary of commerce for the international trade, affirmed that online market have many positive aspects, such as the fact that companies can get sales data in real time. He said that company “*can adjust for consumer preferences and make changes to account for trends far more quickly. Additionally, online merchants require less inventory and have lower logistical and set-up costs. Finally, companies can easily test communication themes and promotional strategies online*”¹³⁸. Once a company has a strong e-commerce presence, he added, it can expand to offline with a dataset of knowledge as to what works. In China, where consumer behaviour is overwhelmingly a social experience, consumers share results and purchases on social media.

¹³⁸Levin, F. (24 March 2015) “*Selling to China: Most Common Mistake Merchants Make*” in “Global Biz Circle” (www.globalbizcircle.com/selling-to-china).

At the moment, one of the main social media in China is a Tencent¹³⁹ messaging application called WeChat (*Weixin*微信). According to the latest Daxue Consulting' research on social media, WeChat has 468 million users active every month, an increasing presence overseas, and concerted efforts to spread the use of the application to countries like India and Brazil¹⁴⁰. Projections of the same research, suggested that WeChat will earn nearly 10 billion *yuan* in 2015.

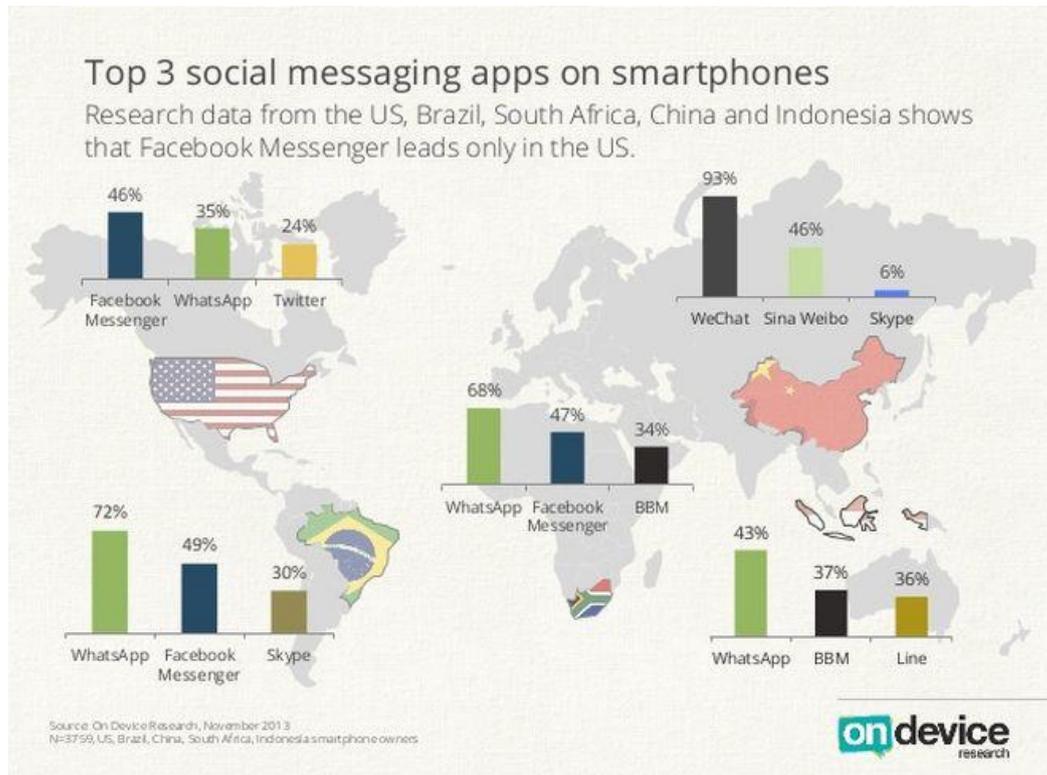


Fig.39 Top social media applications 2013 (source: On Device Research)

Nonetheless, Daxue Consulting informed, companies which “integrate WeChat into their marketing strategy by treating it simply as a notice board or a way to spread news, are failing to take advantage of the system”. In conclusion, as a marketing tool in China, WeChat has been defined as “invaluable”, and companies should approach it with a plan to utilise its peculiar characteristics and its opportunities for branding¹⁴¹.

3.3. Counterfeit Wine Market

¹³⁹For further information, see the website: www.tencent.com/en-us/index.shtml

¹⁴⁰Daxue Consulting, (28 November 2014) “Optimising Your WeChat Marketing in China” (www.daxueconsulting.com/optimising-your-wechat-marketing/).

¹⁴¹Roberg, M. (30 May 2014) “How to Maximize Your WeChat Marketing Campaigns” in “Maximize Social Business” (www.maximizesocialbusiness.com/maximize-wechat-marketing-campaigns-13888).

Nowadays, the latest data on fake wine market demonstrated that almost 20% of the wine in the world is counterfeit¹⁴². This tendency is confirmed also by Live-ex Fine Wine Index, which calculates monthly hundred wines' price variations, and which shows a great subordinate market for Italian wines¹⁴³.

Wine counterfeiting is a major problem on the Chinese wine market. According to data provided by Daxue Consulting, foreign brands are facing fake wine problems, and almost “50% of the bottles sold in China are fake (...) Wine counterfeit experts said that this percentage could be as high as 70%”¹⁴⁴. It is also indicated that the real problem is that counterfeiters use the original label with very slight differences. As most Chinese people cannot read French or English, it is particularly difficult for them to detect the difference.

Nowadays, the world's 5th largest wine consuming country, especially with its Chinese supermarkets, clubs, hotels and restaurants, is under constant threat from counterfeit wines, particularly in second- and third-tier cities where consumers have less knowledge of fine wines¹⁴⁵.

Wine adulteration represents a serious problem into global market, and how to defend fine wines is becoming a central issue. In the past, the old winery's custom was to sell the label to collectors or wine lovers, but nowadays it is a vanished habit because of the counterfeit risk.

Counterfeiters use the “refill” technique, which consist in refilling an original bottle with a low quality wine and sell it to international buyers as if it was the real one. This is a matter of good winery image' destroy, and of huge economic loss. It represents also an health danger for the unconscious consumer. Counterfeiters use low-end wine to make high-end fakes for exorbitant profit, nonetheless, there is not enough knowledge about how much this low-end wine can create collateral damage¹⁴⁶.

Winery should affix their seal associated to alphanumeric code and Quick Response (QR) code. QR code is formed by an hologram which can be scanned. Each bottle owns its unique QR code, so typing the code on their website the consumers should be able to authenticate the original bottle by themselves¹⁴⁷. An Italian example of how to deal with counterfeiters is given by Ornellaia winery since 2011. An authentication seal is affixed by the Estate to all bottles of Ornellaia before

¹⁴²Sud Ouest, (13 January 2015) “Counterfeits and Thefts Targeted by the Cnaoc”

(www.bordeauxwinenews.blogs.sudouest.fr/counterfeits-and-thefts-targeted-by-the-cnaoc.html).

¹⁴³For further information, see the website: www.liv-ex.com/staticPageContent.do?pageKey=Fine_Wine_100

¹⁴⁴Daxue Consulting, (22 September 2014) “The Chinese Red Wine Market, Both Promising and Difficult”

(www.daxueconsulting.com/chinese-red-wine-market).

¹⁴⁵Shaw, L. (10 June 2013) “Fake Fine Wines on the Rise in China” in “The Drink Business”

(www.thedrinksbusiness.com/2013/06/fake-fine-wines-on-the-rise-in-china).

¹⁴⁶Kevany, S. (7 May 2014) “Fake Bordeaux in China Being Made on Offshore Boats” in “Decanter”

(www.decanter.com/news/wine-news/586847/fake-bordeaux-in-china-being-made-on-offshore-boats-says-official).

¹⁴⁷Gambero Rosso, (year 6, number 10, 12 March 15) “Tre Bicchieri Magazine”, p.8

shipment. This seal includes information pertaining to the specific bottle in question, which is registered in a database accessible to consumers¹⁴⁸.



Fig.40 QR code on wine bottle (source: www.divahound.com/where-can-i-use-a-qr-code/)

To cope with wine Chinese market, there are also other solutions. For instance, foreign companies usually smash bottles after tastings in China. Anti-counterfeiting measures by major international spirits brands, which also fall victim to fakes in China, include bottle buyback programs, tamper-proof caps and covert tagging of bottles. Nonetheless, such measures are still less common with wine brands¹⁴⁹.

¹⁴⁸For further information, see the website: <http://www.ornellaia.com/#/authenticity>

¹⁴⁹Yue, T.J (9 June 2013) “In China, Fake European Wine More Worrying Than Tariffs” in “Reuters – Lifestyle, China” (www.reuters.com/article/2013/06/09/us-china-wine-fakes-idUSBRE95801Q20130609).



Fig. 41 Bottles of fake wine are destroyed in Nanjing (source: Reuters)

James Sucklings, a wine critic, underlined the matter on his personal blog, writing that “*fake wine seems to be a huge problem at the moment in China. Everyone seems to speak about it in the wine trade, both in Hong Kong and Mainland China (...) I wonder what sort of impression the bottle (which I recognized as fake) would have left on someone who didn’t know something about wine, or hadn’t tried the real thing. That’s the big problem. It makes any wine drinker lose confidence*”¹⁵⁰.

¹⁵⁰For further information, see the website: www.jamessucklings.com

CHAPTER 4

Abstract

This chapter will treat the results about the survey aimed at assessing several aspects of wine in China. The analysis was carried out through interviews, data from wine market agencies (i.e. Daxue Consulting), questionnaires and specific surveys¹⁵¹ collected during wine tastings and events.

¹⁵¹For further information, see the website: www.surveymonkey.com/s/L2TNXQS

4.1. Investigation Methods

The aim of this research was to assess and define the main characteristics of the average Chinese wine consumer. Statistic information was obtained through more than 320 interviews and on-line survey. More specifically 214 were gained from Chinese wine consumers and 110 from winery owners and wine experts.

The survey investigated general questions such as age, gender, and profession. Parenthood, wine preferences, drinking frequency, eventual partners and purpose were also taken into account.

The survey was based also on specific questions such as if winery owners sell Italian wine in China and why; how many Chinese clients do they usually have; how it is the definition of Chinese wine buyer and the final consumer. The main questions to the wine experts regarded in which social class they put Chinese wine lovers, and why from their professional point of view Chinese people started to drink foreign wine.

The target of people interviewed were 20 and 50 years old with a high cultural level.

The most important wine tasting events and wine fairs were selected as location for the interviews. Especially, fashionable circles of five stars restaurants, clubs and hotels, such as Park Hyatt Hotel or Mint Club in Shanghai were favored.

	Name of event	Period	Location	Information
1	Wine Tasting	2007-12-13	Florence (It)	www.calicisottolestelle.it
2	International Wine Fair	06-09/04/14	Verona (It)	www.vinality.it
3	International Workshop	15/04/2014	Siena (It)	http://www.conorziovinonobile.it/
4	Wine Tasting	17-19/10/14	Shanghai (Ch)	www.wine100.org
5	International Wine Fair	29-31/10/14	Shanghai (Ch)	http://www.vinisud-asia.com/
6	International Wine Fair	06-08/11/14	Hong Kong (Ch)	http://www.hktdc.com/fair
7	International Wine Fair	12-14/11/14	Shanghai (Ch)	http://www.prowinechina.com/
8	Wine Tasting	2014-11-14	Shanghai (Ch)	http://www.smartshanghai.com/
9	International Wine Fair	21-25/03/15	Verona (It)	www.vinality.it
10	International Wine Fair	2001-05-15	Milan (It)	www.expo2015.org

Tab. 13. Research location and wine events

Since few researches were carried out on Chinese wine consumers, I decided to conduct my survey based on Graham Holter' project¹⁵². However, the six types of Chinese consumer detected from his research were reduced to four.

- Profile 1: the subject does not know wine but considers it as high status symbol; is between 20 and 30 years old, with no interest in taste or smell, but wants to show his or her westernization buying expensive and famous bottle of wine.
- Profile 2: the subject knows wine and its properties; is a mature consumer among 35 and 40 years old, which goes to wine classes and degustation as a real “*connoisseur*” and loves both famous and rare wine.
- Profile 3: this consumer is grown up abroad, an overseas Chinese; he or she knows wine because it is part of his or her socio-cultural background; this is a person around 30 and 50 years old, which loves rare wines.
- Profile 4: the subject is a business-woman; she is interested in wine because of *bon-ton* manners; she wants to show emancipation rather than high social position; she prefers to drink sparkling wine.

4.2. Results from Chinese Wine Consumer

The analysis showed that among 214 Chinese wine consumers, 59% were male and 41% were female. In Figure 41 it is reported the place where interviewed people come from. The majority of these people were from Hong Kong (29%) and Shanghai (25%).

¹⁵²Holter, G. (23 November 2012) “*Research in focus – China: 1,3bn People, 19m Wine drinkers, Six types of Consumer*” in “Wine Intelligence” (http://www.just-drinks.com/analysis/13bn-people-19m-wine-drinkers-six-types-ofconsumer_id108774.aspx).

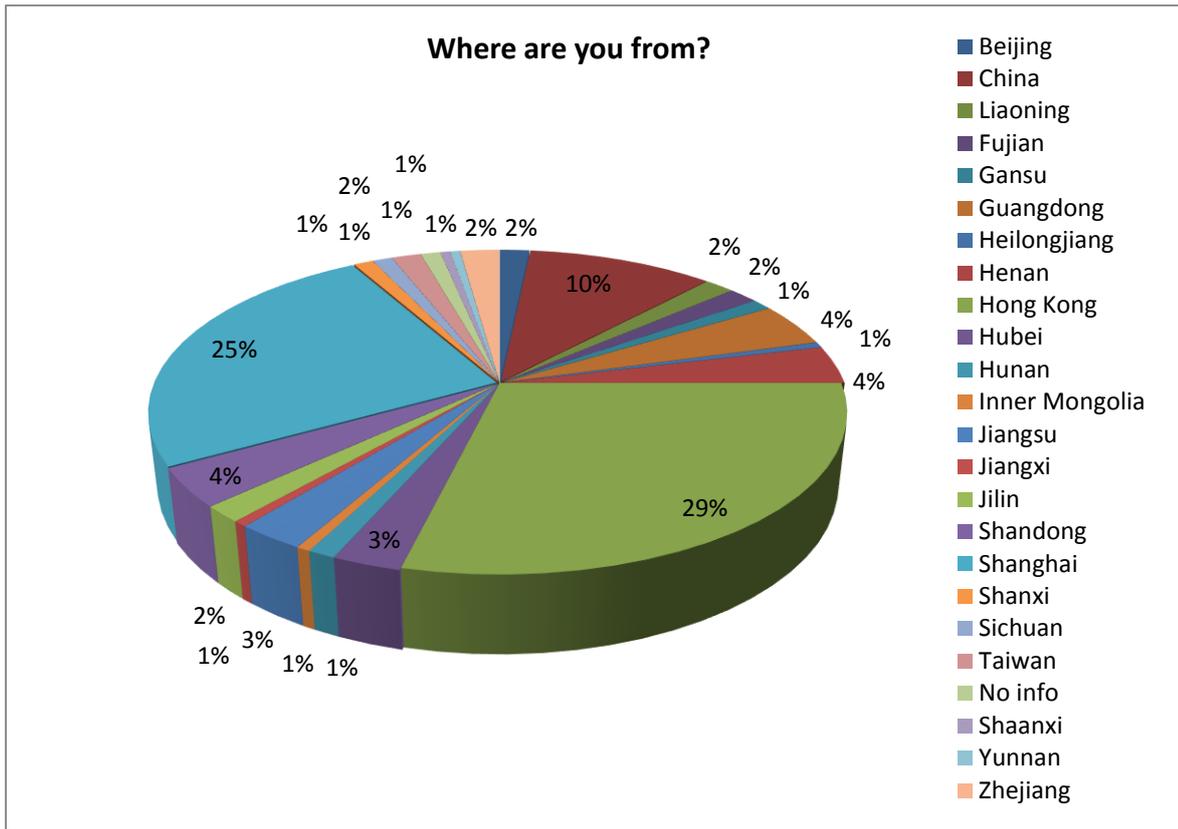


Fig. 41 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

32% of the Chinese wine consumers interviewed define themselves as businessmen and 29% as employees and the majority of them do not have children (62%).

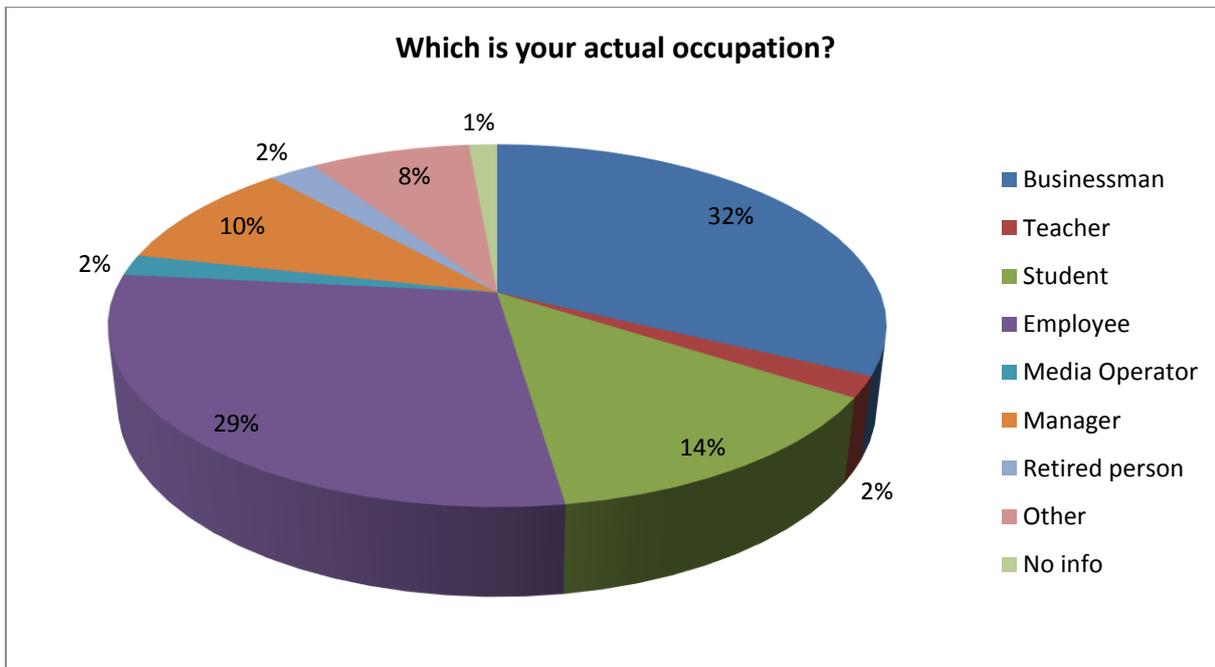


Fig.

42 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

96% of the interviewers like grape wine and the small percentage remained do not drink alcohol at all. A total of 73% of Chinese wine consumers prefers red wine. The second preference goes to white wine instead of sparkling wine.

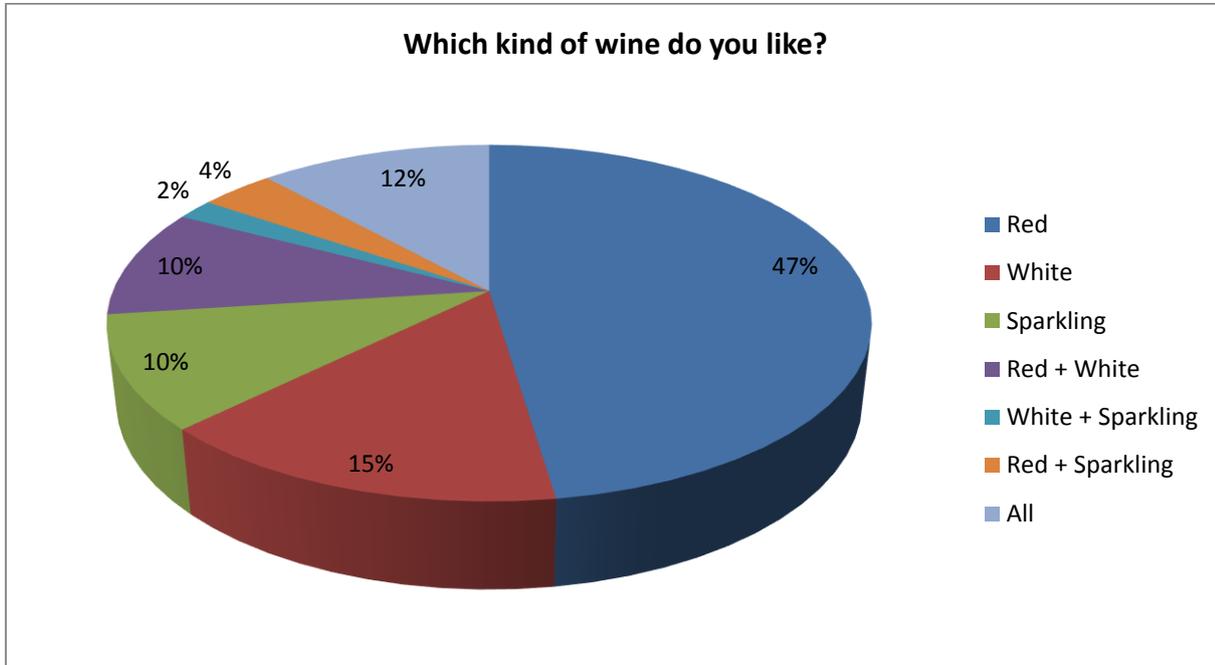


Fig.

43 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

These people usually drink wine with friends (84%), however, they started to drink wine also by themselves (28%).

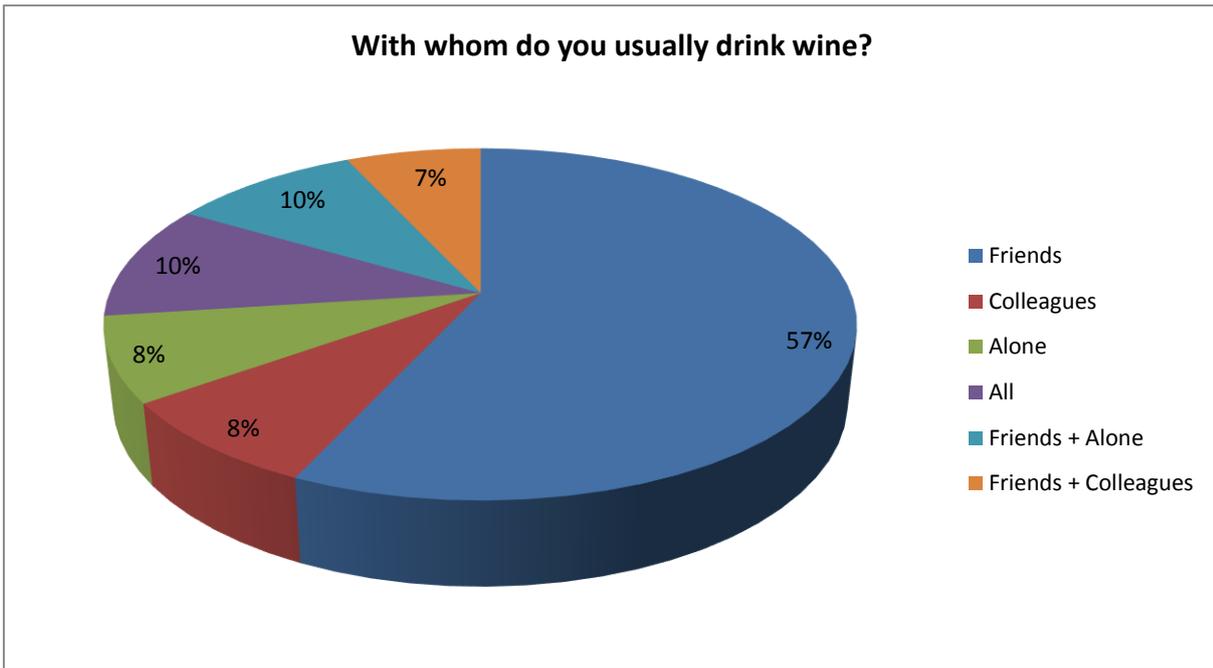


Fig.

44 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

The majority of the Chinese wine consumers generally drink wine once per week (41%). Some of them drink wine only once per month (24%) or even everyday (19%).

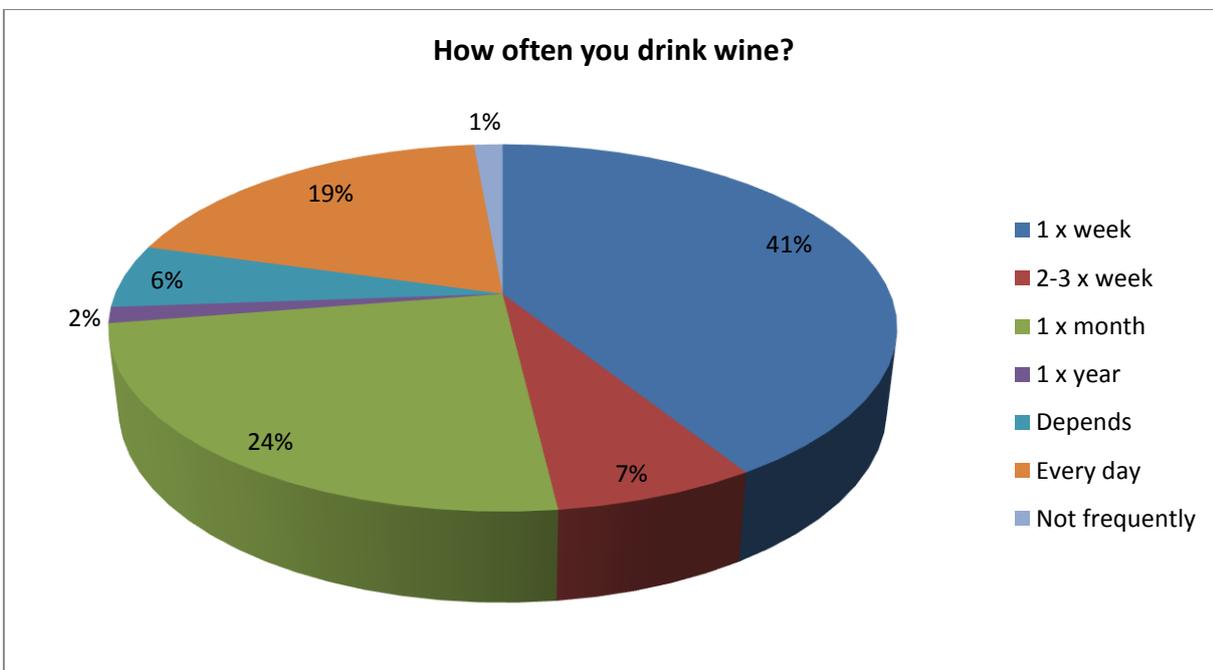


Fig.

45 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

The majority of the Chinese wine consumers interviewed drinks wine only for pleasure (40%) and in the occasion of celebrations (37%). Very few of them declared to drink foreign wine to show a high status of life (1%).

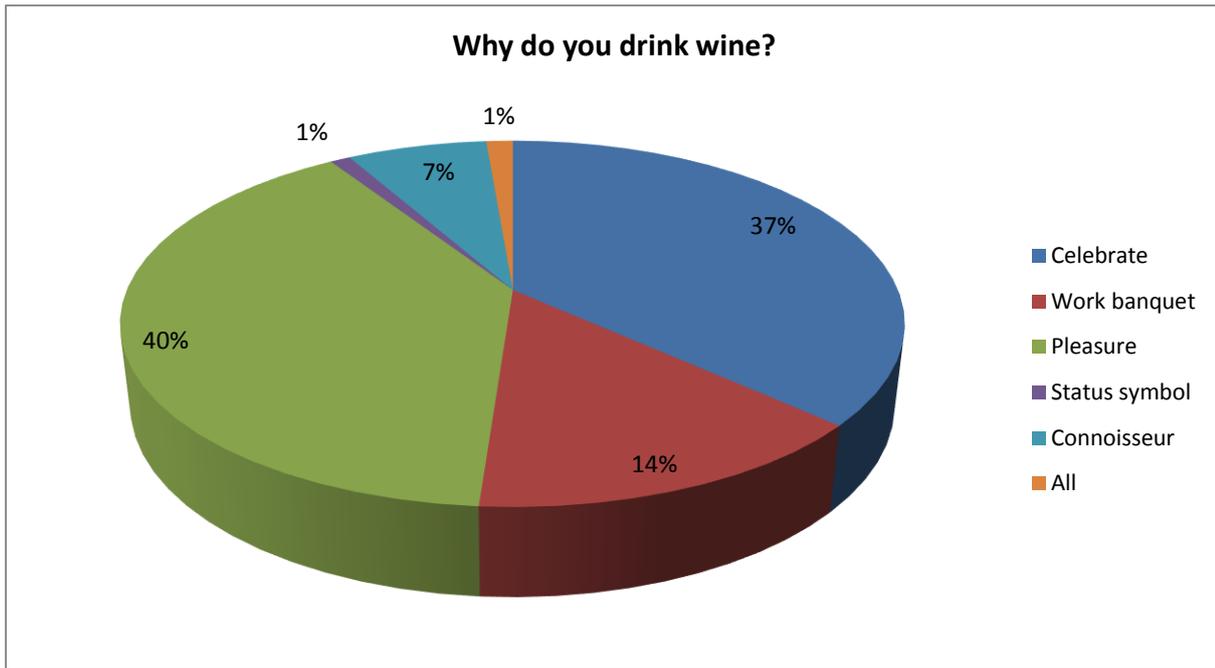


Fig.

46 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

Still, 22% of the interviewers had never taste Italian wine. Nonetheless, they are familiar with “Made in Italy” concept (13%) and with the taste (34%) and quality (22%) of Italian wine.

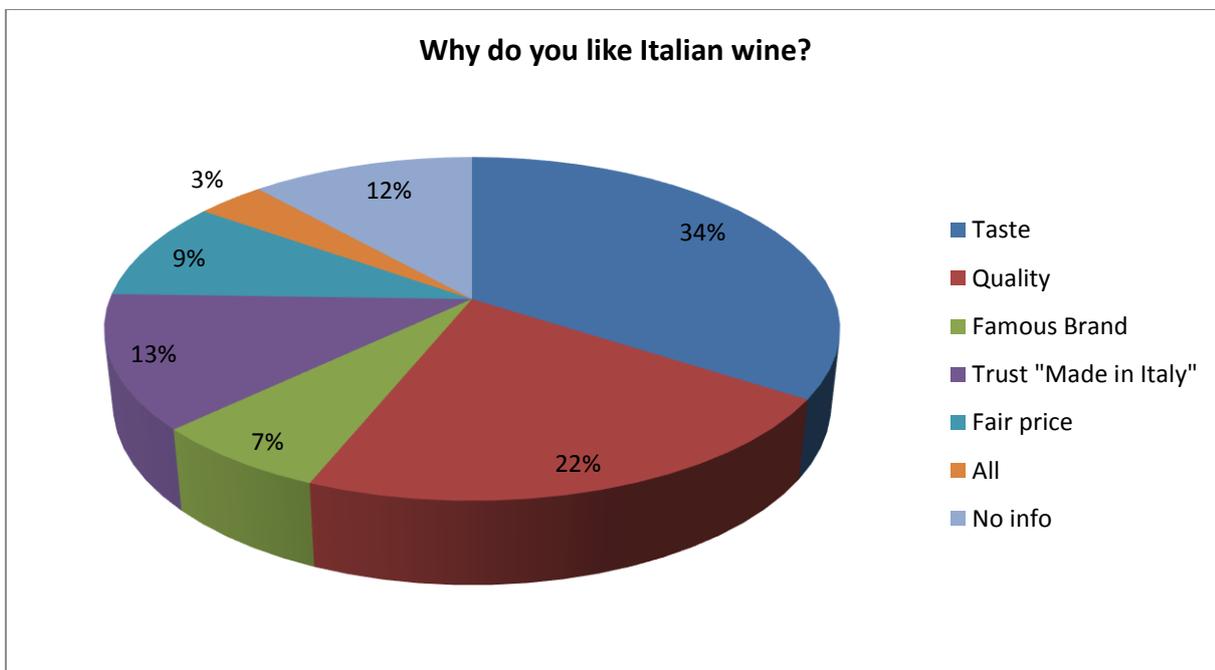


Fig.

47 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

Chinese wine consumers in analysis still made mistakes recognizing Italian grapes, brands, and winery, or do not know at all Italian wine (19%). However, in spite of appearances, iconic wines such as Amarone, Barolo, and Chianti are well-known (56%).

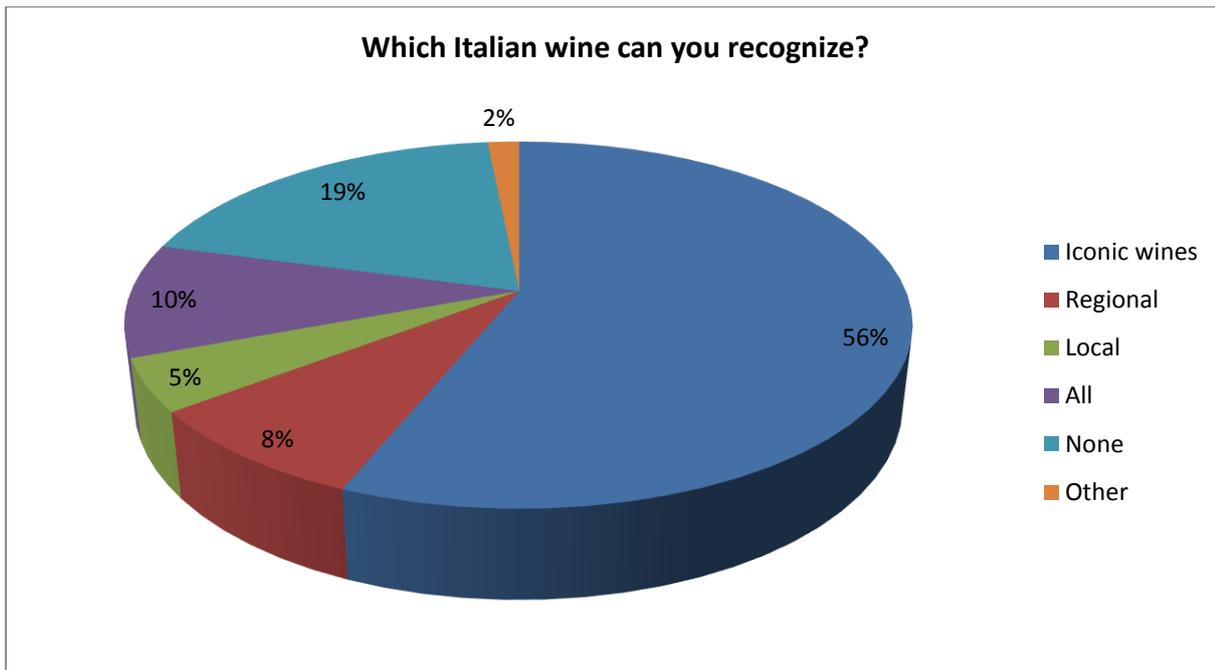


Fig.

48 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

The medium class tends to spend 10-500 *yuan* (70%) per Italian wine and the high and privileged class spends up to 500-6000 *yuan* (16%).

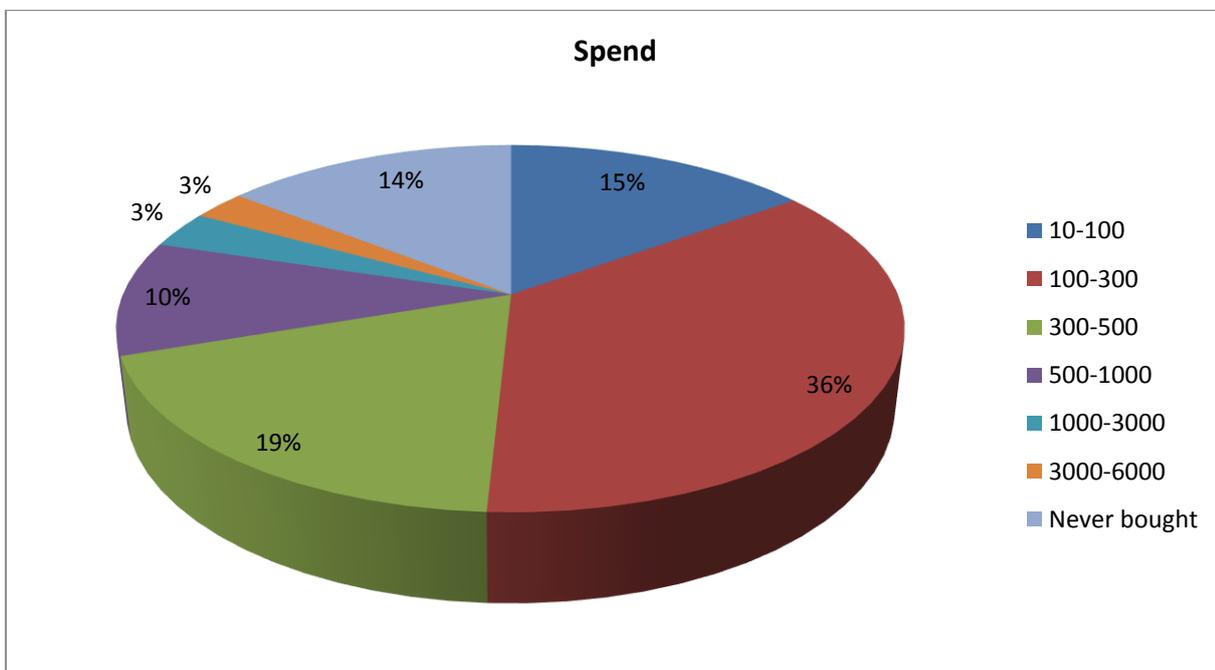


Fig.

49 Survey to Chinese wine consumers

4.3. Results from Winery Owners and Wine Experts

To have a proper parallel about Chinese wine consumption, also Chinese and foreigner winery owners and wine experts were interviewed. A total of 110 surveys were collected. Among them, 72% were male professionals and 28% were female professionals. 83% of the owners and experts interviewed comes from Italy.

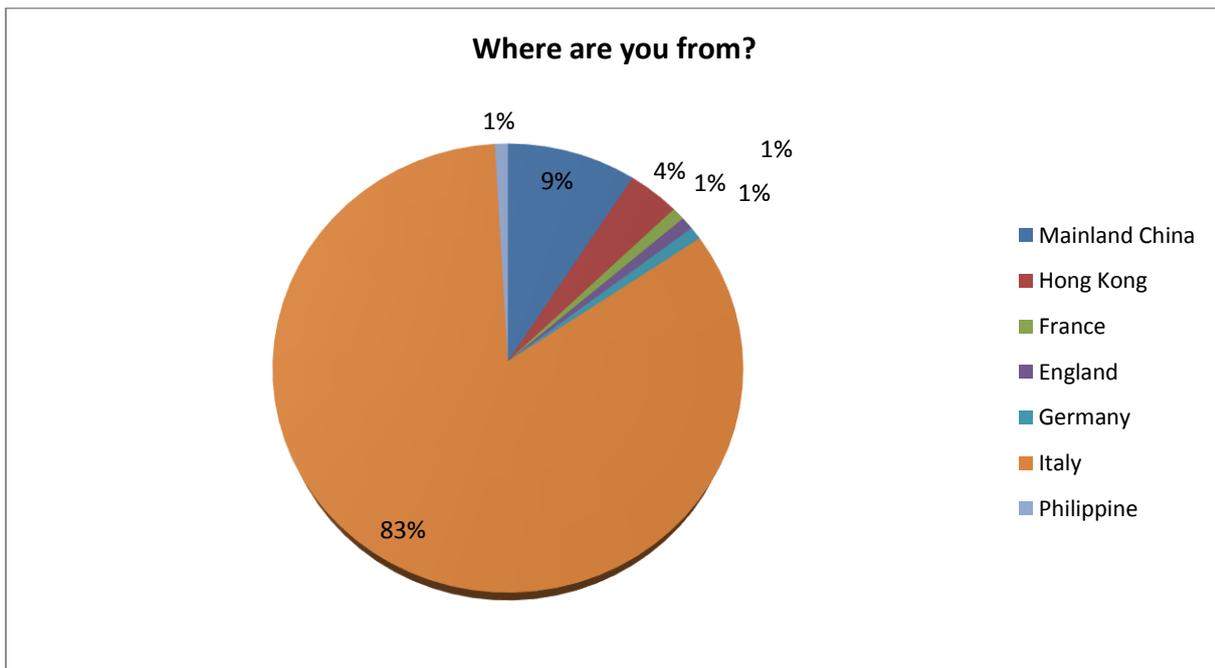


Fig.

50 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

The 76% of the interviewers sells Italian wine in China, and 15% represents potential investors.

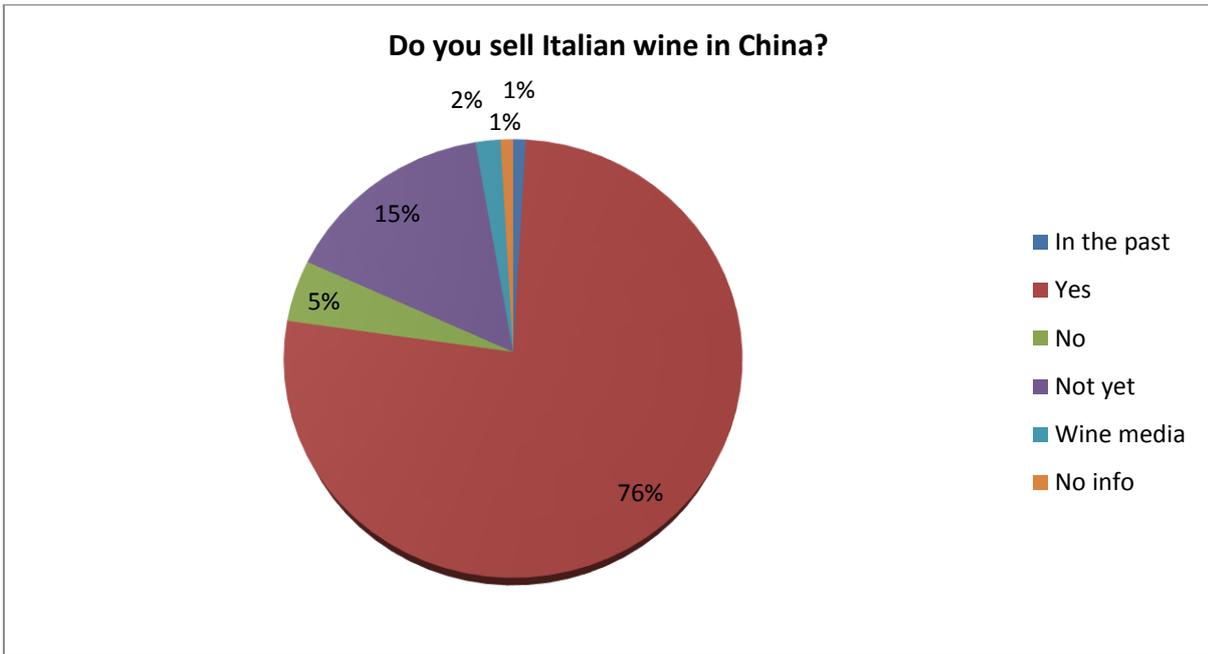


Fig. 51

Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

Analyzed winery owners declared to sell Italian wine in China mainly because of the importance of “Made in Italy” products (44%) among Chinese people. Secondly, because Chinese people like the taste of Italian wine (14%), and winery owners see the chance to increase their business (13%).

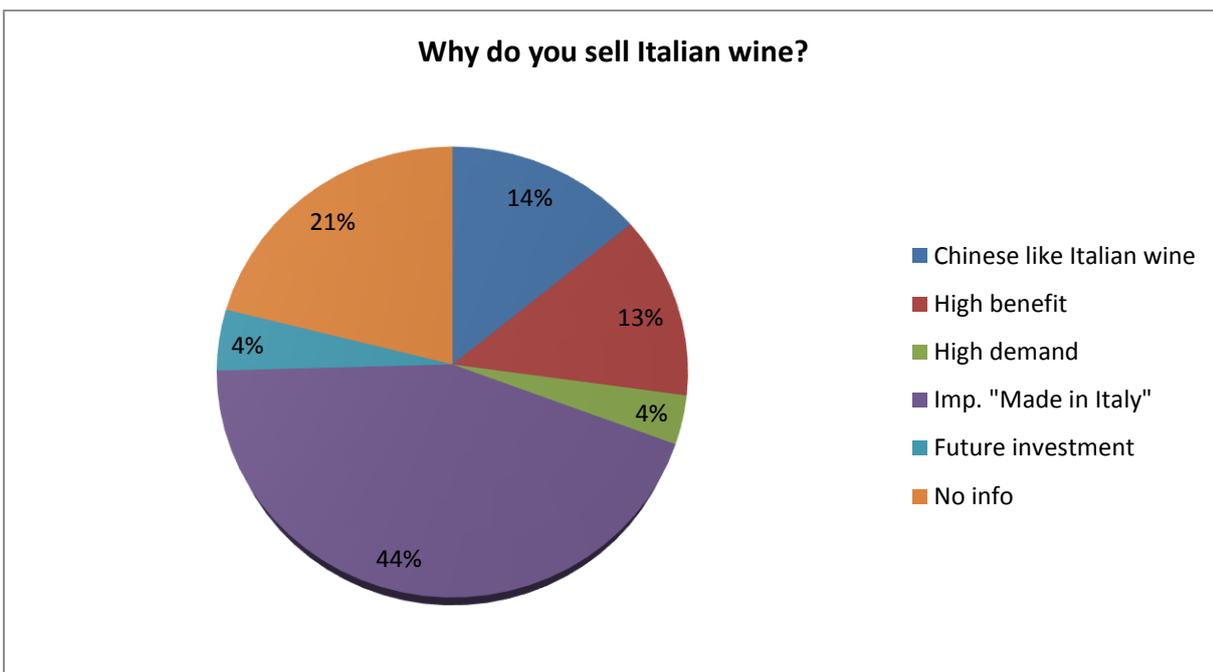


Fig.

52 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

38% of the interviewers decided to enter wine business for family tradition, and 34% of them considered the pleasure of their job and its profits.

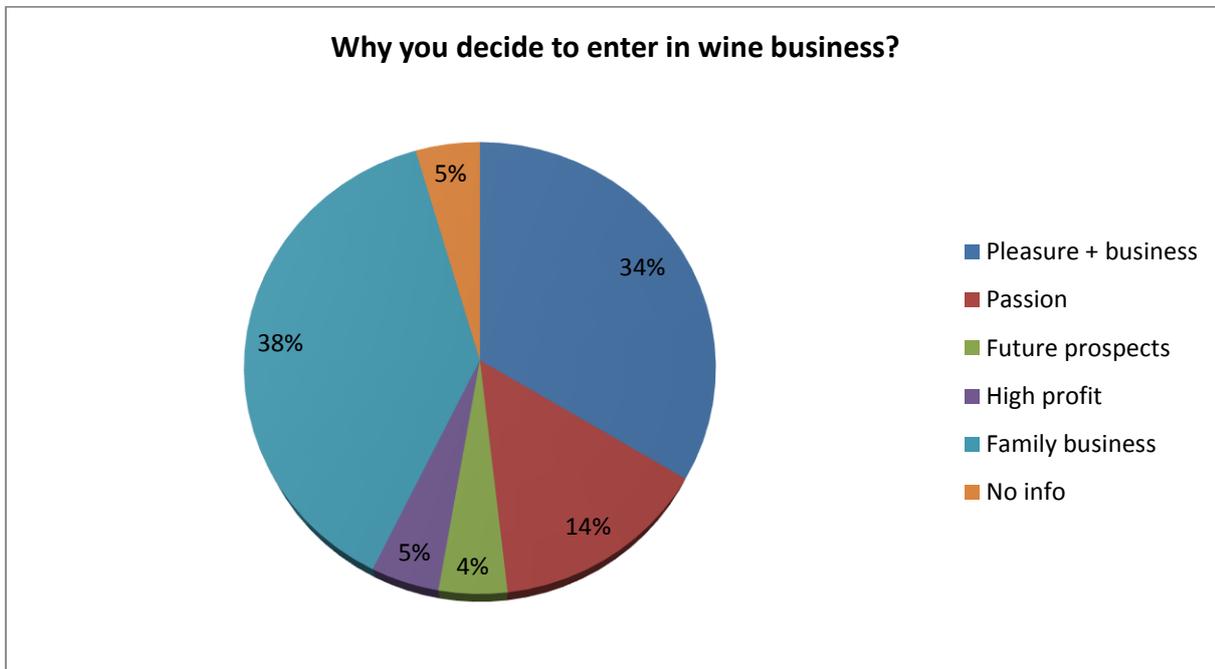


Fig.

53 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

A total of 78% of interviewed winery owners and wine experts consider the average Chinese wine consumer to be part of medium and high classes, while 16% declared that their usual Chinese clients are consumers from privileged class.

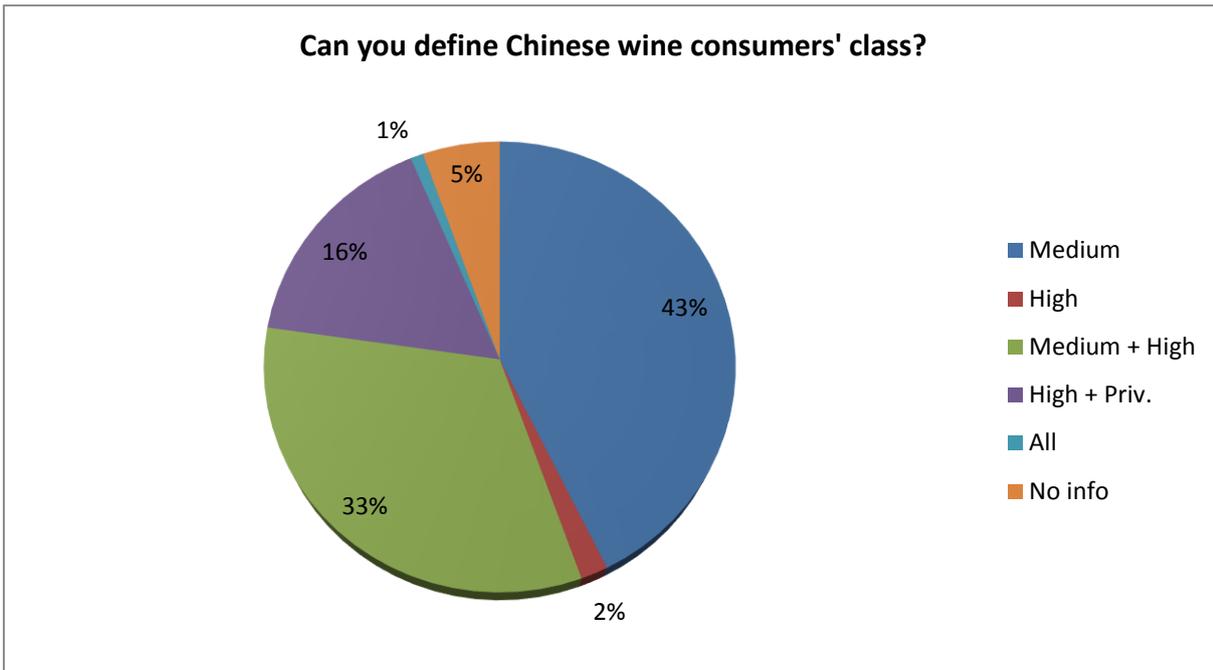


Fig.

54 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

According to the collected data, Chinese wine consumers prefer red wine (87%), however, sparkling wine is becoming more appreciated (31%).

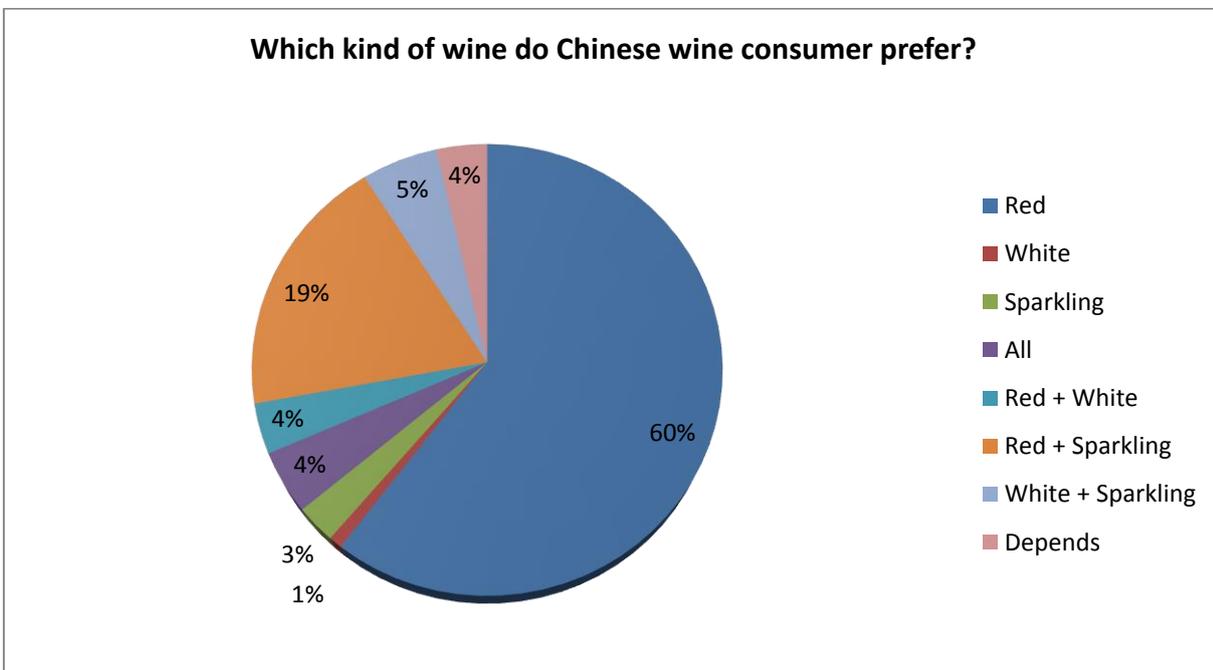


Fig.

55 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

According to the winery owners and wine professionals, 28% of Chinese wine consumers drink to celebrate. However, 23% of them drink also to increase their status of life.

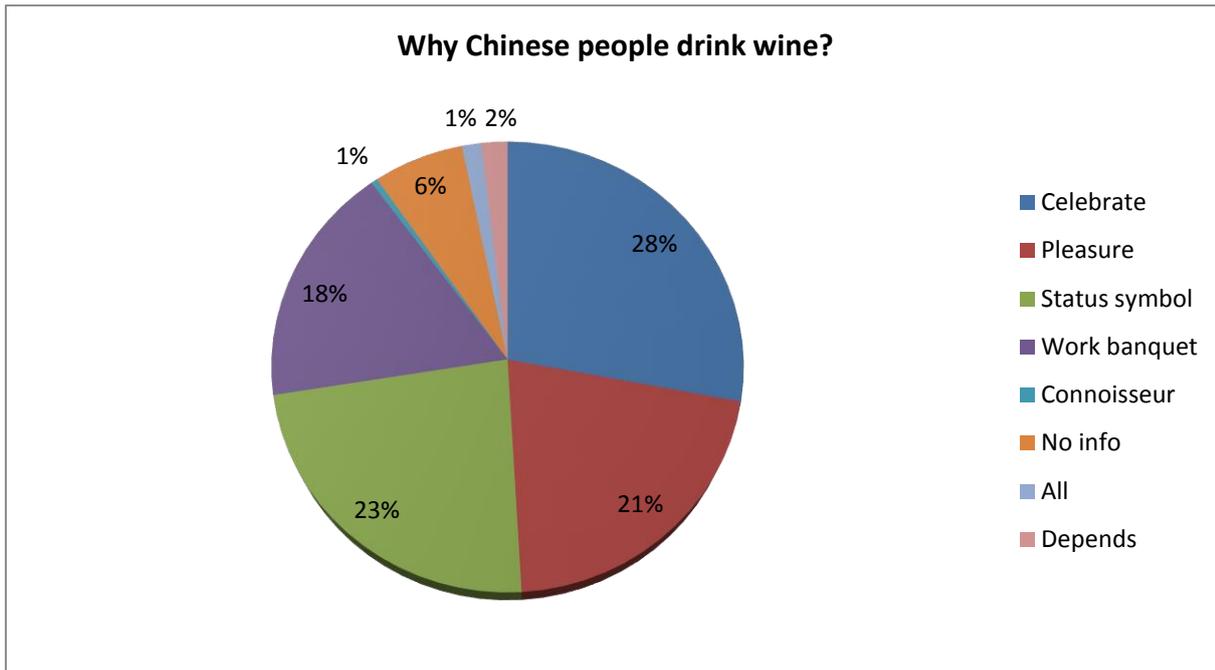


Fig.

56 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

Moreover, 45% of winery owners and wine professionals do not have information at all about their Chinese wine buyer, which are mainly described as persons with no professional continuity (22%), and which are not reliable (13%).

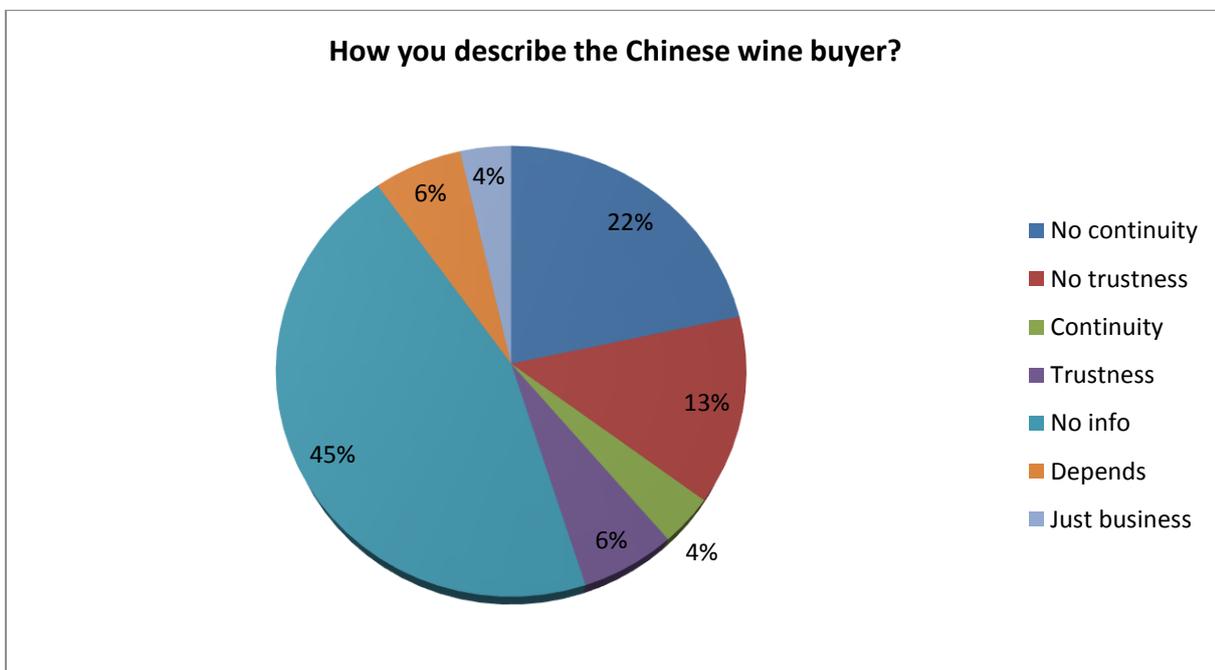


Fig.

57 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

Furthermore, the majority of winery owners and wine experts in analysis also have no information about the final Chinese wine consumer (29%). Although, they affirmed that Chinese wine consumers need more wine education (30%).

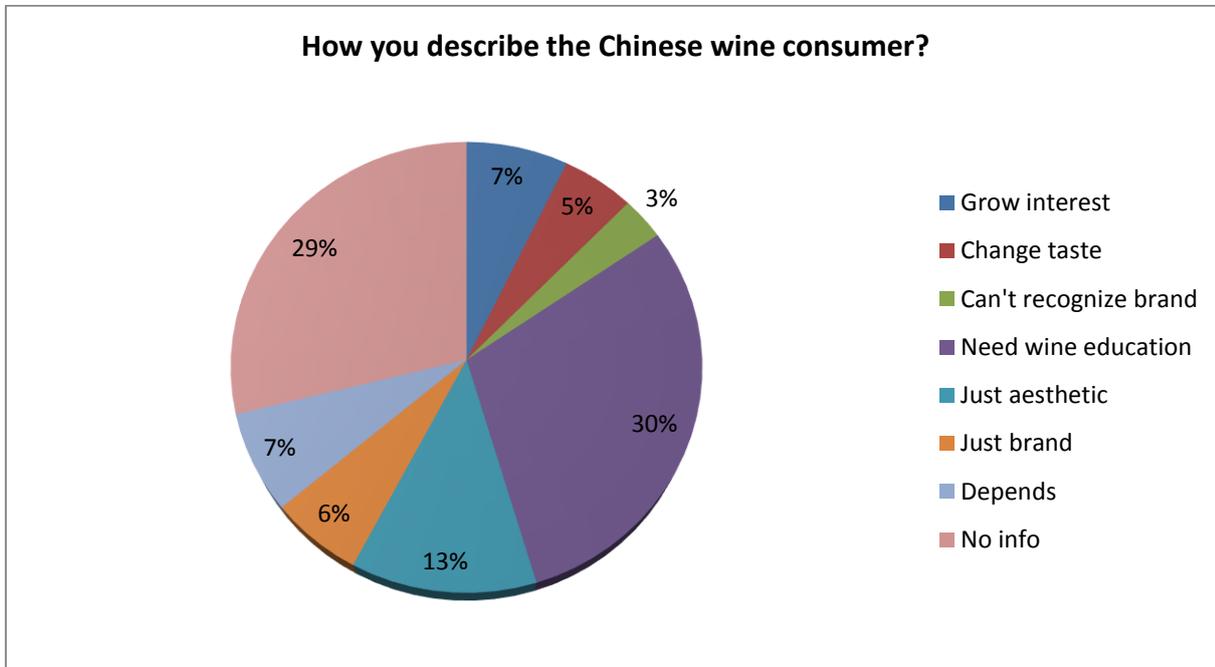


Fig.

58 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

Nonetheless, only a total of 9% of winery owners changed their bottle' packaging to sell in Chinese wine market, while the majority of them still prefer a traditional packaging (17%).

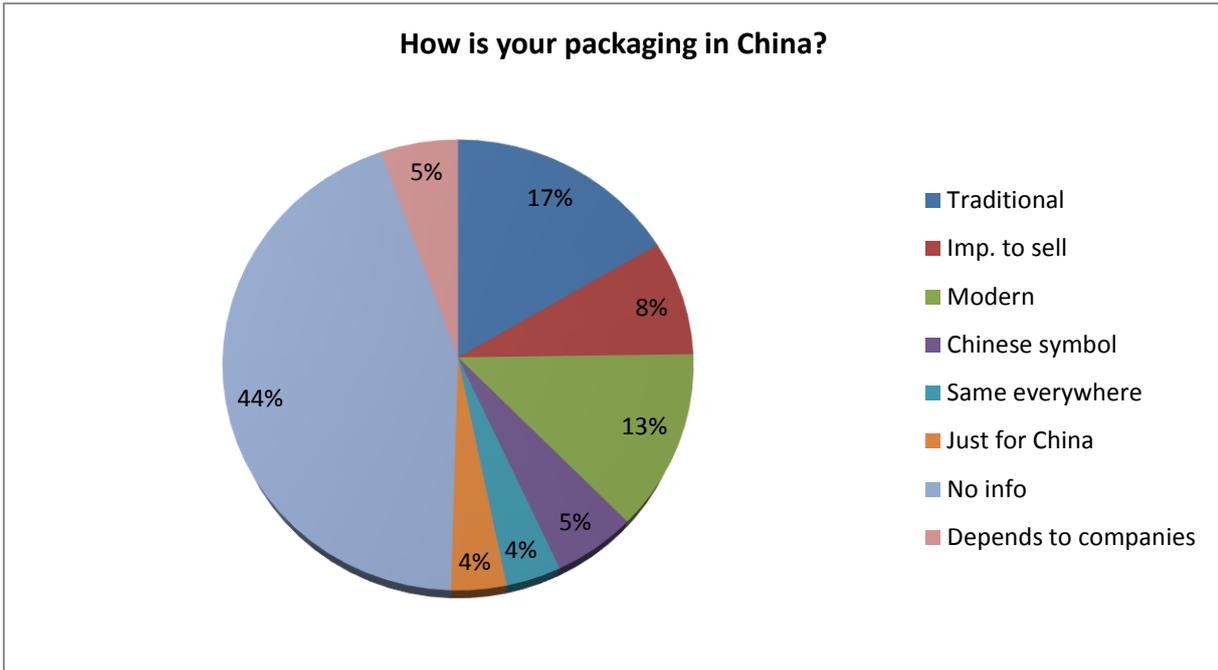


Fig.

59 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

Finally, more than 80% of the interviewers think that wine business in China will grow in the near future, while 7% of them affirm that it will be difficult to penetrate in Chinese wine market.

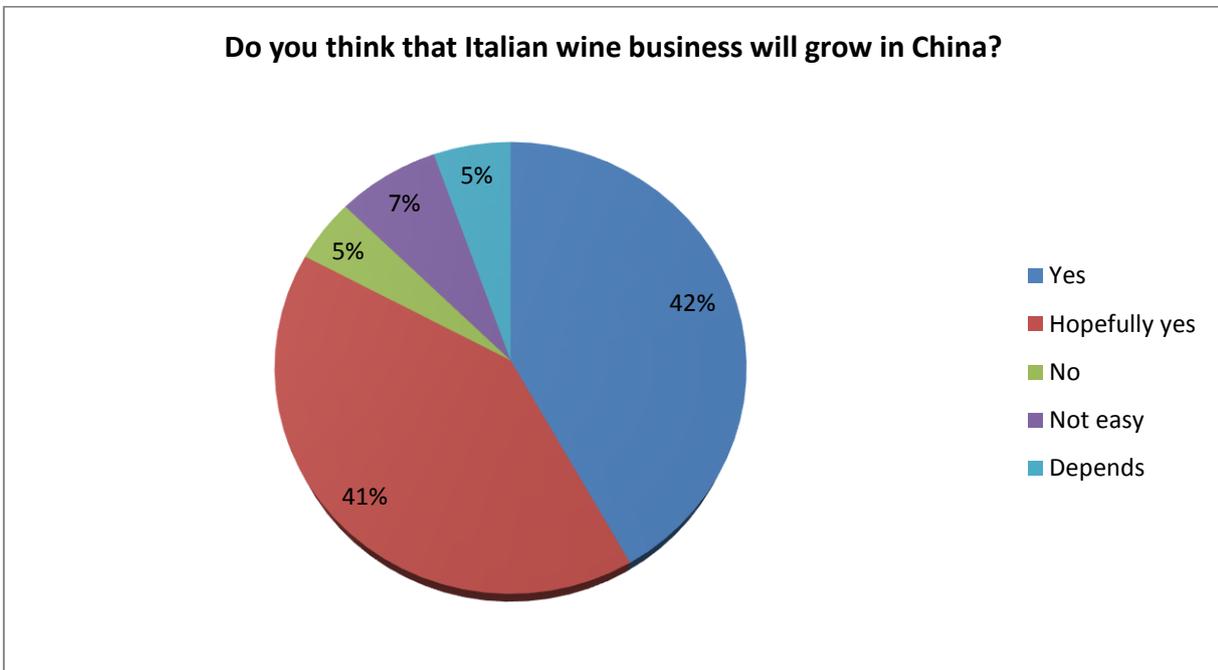


Fig.

60 Survey to Winery Owners and Wine Experts

4.4. Discussions

Thanks to these results it was easier to understand the main characteristics of Chinese wine consumers. The information obtained by both Chinese wine consumers and winery owners and wine experts confirmed the profile of the four Chinese wine consumers identified at the beginning of the research.

In China there are 10 million of habitual wine consumers and 20 million of occasional wine consumers¹⁵³. This amount of wine consumers represents just a little portion if compared to the total of Chinese population¹⁵⁴.

From the survey emerged small but significant percentages that underline that an interest in wine culture is growing also in Chinese second- and third-tier cities (see Fig.41). Therefore, notwithstanding the Chinese big cities are still the core of wine business, there will probably be the development of new wine cities in the future such as Guangdong (广东), Henan (河南), and Shandong (山东). Furthermore, Guangdong, Henan and Shandong are the places where Chinese wine is produced, so more interest to foreign wine should be considered as a logical consequence (see Chapter 1).

Occupation is closely linked with the capability of buying expensive and superior quality wines. Chinese wine consumers interviewed were businessmen and employees (see Fig.42). As a matter of fact, according to the interviewed winery owners and wine experts, Chinese wine consumers are divided in medium and high classes. A little portion of privileged class has also been confirmed (see Fig.54). The Chinese consumer class division is connected with the percentages of the Chinese wine consumers' survey on their potential spending. 70% of Chinese wine consumers could spend until 500 *yuan* and 16% even until 6000 *yuan* (see Fig.49). Since the 62% of interviewees do not have a family, the capability of buying wine is also connected to this. Having a family with children involves heavy expenditure in different fields such as school and clothes which are a priority compared to the spend in foreign wines.

The typical Chinese average wine consumer is represented by businessmen that only buy expensive wine. Nonetheless, also employees are increasing their potential spending and tend to buy foreign wine, but of lower quality. Italian wineries should be more focused on this emerging medium class of Chinese wine lovers in order to have long-time guarantee on their wine market. The growing medium class of Chinese wine consumer may be explained by the fact that the luxury

¹⁵³Rivera, N. A. (25 January 2013) "*Vino, il rosso che piace ai cinesi*" in "AgiChina" (www.agichina24.it/focus/notizie/vino-il-rosso-br/-che-piace-ai-cinesibr-).

¹⁵⁴For further information, see the website: www.census.gov/popclock/

wine market in China experienced a net slowdown in 2014 due to political decisions. The anti-corruption policy influenced the sales of luxury wines, however, because of a more educated consumer base, the Chinese wine market is going under an important “restructuring”. Even though the overall market is growing, it is harder to sell wine and the offer is swiftly changing from a “luxury” or so called “high-end” dominated offer to a “middle-end” offer (see Fig.60).

In addition, to reiterate the importance of wine imagery, questions such as linking a colour with Italian wine were asked to the interviewers. Some connotations are clear in the wine professionals and Chinese wine lovers’ mind. For instance, Italian wines are widely associated with the red colour (see Fig.43). The reason of the red wine’ preference could be found in the red color itself, which for Chinese people is a lucky one. Unexpectedly, the second preference goes to white wine, in contrast with the latest statistics that see sparkling wine as favorite (see Fig.55)¹⁵⁵. Not only women prefer white wine but also a growing piece of Chinese wine consumers that is changing taste (see Chapter 2).

Drinking wine became a habit, especially for Chinese middle, high and privileged classes. This could be explained with the westernization process of Chinese society, and the assimilation of Western lifestyle. As a matter of fact, the majority of Chinese wine consumers in analysis drink wine with friends and colleagues. However, they are starting to drink wine also on their own as a result of changing their drinking habits (see Fig.44). This data may be due to a more accurate knowledge that Chinese wine consumers are showing. In addition, the Chinese overseas citizens used to Western drinking habits, spread this wine culture to China.

Moreover, the frequency of drinking wine among Chinese people was also taken under analysis. The majority of the Chinese wine consumers interviewed drink wine once per month, once per week or even as a health daily practice (see Fig.45). The different frequency of drinking wine could be defined by the big distinction among the wine lovers and the people that cannot afford wine every day. Another explanation should be given by the fact that many Chinese wine consumers do not know how to match wine with the right food, and they restrain to drink it often. From one end, the Chinese high class’ wine consumer is interested in foreign wine and would like to know more about it. On another end, the Chinese medium class’ wine consumer shows not so much interest in Italian wine and still prefers drinking Chinese alcohol, which sounds more familiar.

From both surveys it is evident that Chinese wine consumers drink wine to celebrate, for pleasure, and also during work banquet. However, 7% of Chinese wine consumers interviewed even define themselves as “*connoisseurs*”, while 23% of winery owners and wine professionals interviewed consider the Chinese wine consumer as a “status symbol” drinker (see Fig.46 and

¹⁵⁵Flamini, C. (year 88, n.12, 20 April 2015) “*Sparkling Fever*” in “*Il Corriere Vinicolo*”, pp.2-5.

Fig.56). This contrast may be due to the fact that Chinese wine consumer do not tend to admit that the main reason to purchase foreign wine is for developing their status symbol. Also, most winery owners and wine experts still do not know Chinese buyer and Chinese final consumer' profiles (see Fig.57 and Fig.58).

Even if the majority of Chinese wine consumers give great importance to “Made in Italy” wine, to its quality and its taste (Fig.47), 22% of them had still never tasted Italian wine. It is demonstrated by the lack of Italian investments in promotion, and by the need of more knowledge on Chinese drinking culture.

Furthermore, only 9% of winery owners interviewed changed their bottle' packaging for the Chinese wine market or added Chinese symbols to it. However, 17% of them still prefer traditional packaging for worldwide wine market. The bottle' packaging choice should be clarified by the fact that many wineries prefer to transmit the concept of Italian tradition through the same imagery instead of changing its essence for only one specific wine market.

Finally, despite the fact that 56% of Chinese wine consumers interviewed know Italian iconic wines such as Amarone and Chianti, 19% of them still make mistakes in recognizing the Italian grapes, brands, and wineries (see Fig.48). The misunderstanding could happen because they confuse vineyards, brands and Italian geography, or simply they just do not know the differences.

CONCLUSIONS

The knowledge of the main characteristics of Chinese wine consumers may represent in the next decades a fundamental field of research in order to give a further economic and cultural boost on Italian wine sector. Results from this work can be considered experimental since they allowed to obtain first indications about the Chinese wine consumers.

This research brings out five main points that represent the currently Chinese wine market from its strength to its weakness.

Firstly, despite Chinese people still do not have a proper wine culture, a more growing interest in Italian wine is evident. Therefore, Italian wine tasting, marketing and advertising should be present in China, in order to strengthen the basis for a wider Italian wine commercialization.

Then, the survey also indicated that besides big cities like Hong Kong and Shanghai representing the centre of Chinese wine markets, other cities such as Guangdong, Henan, and Shandong are becoming the new areas of wine business and culture.

The survey also gave an overview about changes in social aspects of Chinese culture. In particular, despite the majority of Chinese people drink wine for celebrating (e.g. parties, holidays), some Chinese wine consumers are beginning to drink wine also for their own pleasure. Moreover, this new lifestyle is also linked to particular wine brands (e.g. expensive wines from Italy or France) to demonstrate a high social status.

Furthermore, although the Italian wine is highly recognized as one of the most expensive and famous, it is not so well-known in the whole China. This data should be considered, especially by Italian wine companies, in order to fill the gap with wines from other countries through the promotion of an unique image of the “Made in Italy”.

Finally, the survey also indicated that Internet and other ways of communication could represent the future for Italian wine market in China. In particular, thanks to the excellent quality and price ratio, websites may be used to customize contacts and offers. Moreover, a higher participation to the main Asian and international wine fairs also may be a vehicle to spread the knowledge of Italian wine. However, regardless which is the best communication way, Italian wine should be linked with Italian culinary tradition and Italian fashion luxury brands in order to achieve an effective strategy in Chinese market.

The understanding of Chinese wine market and its sensitivity, Chinese territory, and methods for local wine production are the most important aspects to be studied for entering into this Country. Italian wine companies should better investigate on Chinese wine realities with the

awareness of great Italian wine quality and grape varieties, and with a focus on Italian *terroir* and cultural background. Italian wineries should also invest in marketing and communications, working on long-term projects and public relations. All these strategies should be implemented regardless the fact that the Chinese market is still characterized by legislative and distribution issues as well as a wide variation of the wine type consumed from urban and rural areas. Currently the opportunities for improving the market of Italian wine in China are growing. Simple and effective strategies could be the fundamental tools.

Based on these conclusions, it is clear that further researches are needed with the aim of developing more knowledge about Chinese wine consumers. Such surveys may become an important growth indicator of Italian wine business in China, thus resulting mutually beneficial either from an economic side or from a trans-cultural side.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My main sources were formed by an Italian, English, and Chinese language bibliography and I also used websites that my professors from Birmingham, Florence and Venice Universities kindly suggested to me.

I found the materials from Professor Ceresa's course on "Cultural Studies", from Professor Heidemann's course at VIU, from the Press Office of the Italian Embassy in China's Magazine ("*Italia in Cina*"), and from the Oenology Team of the Agrarian University of Florence, particularly helpful.

This material is also present in the Reference and Website' Chapter. In particular, to have a guide in this wide wine field, I went through the helpful pages of Giovan Battista Mattii "*History of Viticulture*", and of Peter Scholliers "*Food, Drink and Identity*".

The most accurate and helpful websites I consulted were Wine by Numbers, and Gambero Rosso.

GLOSSARY

ENGLISH	CHINESE 汉字	PINYIN
Acidity	酸味儿	<i>Suānwèi(r)</i>
Alcohol fragrance	酒香	<i>Jiuxiang</i>
Astringent sensation	涩感	<i>Se (gan)</i>
Berry	果粒	<i>Guóli</i>
Bitterness	苦味菌病害	<i>Kǔwèijūn bìnghài</i>
Bottle aging	瓶中陈酿	<i>Píngzhōng chénniàng</i>
Bulk	散装	<i>Sanzhuang</i>
Cask aging	橡木桶陈酿	<i>Xiàngmùtǒng chénniàng</i>
Category	范畴	<i>Fanchou</i>
Characterizing taste, unique taste	独特风味	<i>Dute fengwei</i>
Competitor	对手	<i>Duishou</i>
Complex taste	复杂	<i>Fuza</i>
Consumer	用户	<i>Yonghu</i>
Daily diet	饮食习惯	<i>Yinshi xiguan</i>
Data, information	数据	<i>Shuju</i>
Decanting	滗酒	<i>Bìjiǔ</i>
Deng Xiaoping	邓小平	<i>Deng Xiaoping</i>
Dry wine	干 (干的口感, 口感的干)	<i>Gan</i>
Elegant wine	优雅的	<i>Yōuyǎ</i>
Ethyl alcohol	乙酸	<i>Yīsuān</i>
Expert, specialist	专家	<i>Zhuanjia</i>
Fermentation	发酵	<i>Fājiào</i>
Flavour	风味	<i>Fēngwèi</i>
Food & Hospitality China (FHC)	上海国际食品饮料及餐饮设备展览会	<i>Shanghai guoji shipin yinliao ji canyin shebei zhanlan hui</i>
Fragrance, perfume	香味	<i>Xiangwei</i>
Full body wine	重酒本, 酒体丰满的葡萄酒	<i>Zhongjiuti, Jiutifeng de putaojiu</i>
Gallon	加仑	<i>Jialun</i>
Glucose	葡萄糖	<i>Pútaotáng</i>
Grape	葡萄	<i>Putao</i>
Hill	丘陵	<i>Qiuling</i>
Hong Kong International Wine & Spirit Fair (HKIW&SF)	香港国际美酒展	<i>Xianggang guoji meijiu zhan</i>
Import-export	进出口	<i>Jinchukou</i>
Internship	实习	<i>Shixi</i>
Interview	采访	<i>Caifang</i>
Light body wine	轻酒本, 酒体轻盈的葡萄酒	<i>qing jiuti, jiutiqingying</i>
Lightly with sugar	略甜	<i>Lue tian</i>
Make wine	酿酒	<i>Niangjiu</i>
Mature, ripe	成熟的	<i>Chengshu</i>
Medium body wine	中等酒本, 酒体中等	<i>Zhongdeng jiuti, Jiuti zhongdeng</i>
Must	葡萄汁	<i>Pútáozhī</i>
Oak wood	橡木	<i>Xiangmu</i>

Phylloxera	根蠹蚜	<i>Gēnlǐúyá</i>
Plant, grown	种植	<i>Zhongzhi</i>
Questionnaire	调查问卷	<i>Diaocha wenjuan</i>
Research	研究	<i>Yanjiu</i>
Rich wine	厚重	<i>Hòuzhòng</i>
Richly fruit	果香浓郁	<i>Guoxiang nongyu</i>
Rosé	桃红葡萄酒	<i>Taohong putaojiu</i>
Rule	规则	<i>Guize</i>
Salty taste	咸味	<i>Xianwei</i>
Solid structure	结构结实	<i>Jiegou jieshi</i>
Sommelier	侍酒师	<i>Shijiushi</i>
Sour taste	酸涩	<i>Suanse</i>
Sparkling wine	起泡酒	<i>Qipaojiu</i>
Standard	标准	<i>Biaozhun</i>
Still	静止	<i>Jingzhi</i>
Survey	调查表	<i>Diaochabiao</i>
Sweet and sour	又酸又甜	<i>You suan you tian</i>
Sweetness	甜度, 甜 (口感的甜)	<i>Tiandu</i>
Tannin	单宁	<i>Dānnìng</i>
Taste and judge wine	品酒	<i>Pinjiu</i>
Taste, flavour	口感	<i>Kougan</i>
Typical model	典型	<i>Dianxing</i>
Vineyard	葡萄园 CL. 座	<i>Pútáoyuán</i>
Viticulture	葡萄种植	<i>Putao zhongzhi</i>
Wine	葡萄酒	<i>Putaojiu</i>
Wine expert, sommelier	酿酒师	<i>Niangjiushi</i>
Wine fair, wine event	葡萄酒展, 美酒展	<i>Putaojiu zhan, meijiu zhan</i>
Wine tasting	葡萄酒品味	<i>Putaojiu pinwei</i>
Wine variety	葡萄品种	<i>Pútáo pínzhǒng</i>
Winery	酒庄	<i>jiǔzhǔāng</i>
WTO: World Trade Organization	世界贸易组织	<i>Shijie maoyi zuzhi</i>
ZES: Special Economic Zones	经济特区	<i>Jingji tequ</i>
Zhang Bishi	张弼士	<i>Zhang Bishi</i>

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