

Wine consumption declining in France

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(PhysOrg.com) -- If asked what you associate France with, you're most likely to say fashion, cheese and of course ... wine. But a new study shows that the Frenchman and Frenchwoman's love of wine may be losing its edge, as a growing number of nationals are ceasing to identify themselves with the drink made popular by the Greek god Dionysius. The findings, presented in the *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, hint at a terminal decline in the transmission of French wine heritage to future generations.

Over a period of 28 years, [wine](#) consumption in France has shrunk to the equivalent of some 4 billion 75-centilitre bottles, down from 7 billion. This accounts for not much more than a bottle of wine per adult per week. Other studies project that just a little over 16 % of the adult

French population consumes wine regularly; this data is in line with the [downward trend](#) observed in this latest study.

Researchers from the Groupe Ecole Supérieure de Commerce de Pau (ESC Pau) and Université Toulouse 1 (UT1) Capitole in France postulate that a shift from regular 'alimentary' wine consumption at mealtimes emerged, as people are choosing to drink for pleasure instead of uncorking a bottle at every meal. While the number of wine drinkers has dropped overall, experts have observed a rise in the number of those who drink on occasion instead.

The results suggest that health issues are behind the drop in wine consumption, particularly within the last two generations, say co-authors Pascal Poutet from the Self-development Department at ESC Pau and Thierry Lorey of ESC Pau and UT1 Capitole.

The duo assessed 4 groups of people: those over 65 years old that lived through World War II (the heritage generation); those between 40 and 65 years old that lived through a period of growth and global development (the baby boomers); those between 30 and 40 years old ('Generation X'); and those under 30 years old ('Internet generation').

According to the researchers, each successive generation represents a general escalation in libertarian attitudes and irreverence towards institutions.

While all generations agree on the values of conviviality, sharing and pleasure conveyed by wine, they differ in their wine-drinking habits. People aged over 65 consume wine daily, acknowledging the strong social and cultural heritage. They take pleasure in sharing the wine experience with friends and family. The baby boomers and Generation Xers consume wine occasionally, on a more social level with friends and not family. For these two groups, wine consumption plays a role in their

social status. For the under-30 group, wine consumption is not about pleasure or social heritage; they drink wine less frequently than the other three groups.

Say the researchers: "There is a dual gap between the three generations, older, middle-aged, younger; on the one hand, the consumption frequency gap (from a daily [wine consumption](#) to a festive one, and then exceptional), on the other, the pleasure gap (evolution from a genuine pleasure towards a more ostentatious pleasure, more difficult to perceive for the younger generation)."

The oldest group recognizes the symbolism of wine across the cultural, historical and religious aspects of France. The middle-aged group acknowledges the cultural and gastronomic factors but less so the historical ones. The youngest group places little weight on all factors. It should be noted that the latter maintains great pride in wine, however.

"The generational analysis of the representations of wine in France does seem to be appropriate to explain the deep changes that wine has undergone in the last 60 years," the duo points out. "It is precisely the progressive loss of the identity, sacred and imaginary representations of wine (nation, region, lesser importance of the transmission of the culture of wine by the father within the family, etc.) over three generations that explains France's global consumption attitudes, and especially the steep decline in the volumes of wine consumed."

More information: Lorey, T., & Poutet, P. (2011) The representations of wine in France from generation to generation: a dual generation gap. *Int. J. Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 13: 162-180.
[www.inderscience.com/browse/in ... r=2009&vol=8&issue=2](http://www.inderscience.com/browse/in...r=2009&vol=8&issue=2)

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