



# Getting a look-in

To be chosen, you first have to be considered

Larry Lockshin

**T**he current state of affairs for the Australian wine sector is clear and one only has to read any of the press to hear the same story:

Australia has had a good run at the low priced, fruity, bottled sunshine wines, but cannot afford to keep lowering prices; and when consumers move up in price, they rarely choose Australian wines.

In the short term we cannot escape the image we have created and continue to create

by the shelf space we showcase in grocery and discount stores in all our key markets. Too much of our industry's overheads are tied up in maintaining those listings.

We can, however, focus our efforts on proven techniques to gain at least consideration as wine buyers choose wines in higher price points. Research across many dozens of categories, from those in supermarkets, to automobiles, credit cards and insurance show that buyers (consumers or trade buyers) have consideration sets—groups of brands they

see as substitutable from which they eventually choose the product(s) they want. If you are not in the consideration set, you won't be bought. Ask anyone going shopping for a new car what brands they considered purchasing. Typically it will be three to four brands, even though there are many more eligible brands in the same price and style category. With higher turnover items, like those found in the grocery or discount store, the repertoires or consideration sets are larger, but still limited to those products the buyer sees as

reasonable substitutes. The items in the repertoire change, of course, for different consumption or usage situations.

Old outdated marketing theory worked on the concept of purchase loyalty as the goal for marketers to achieve. Research in more than 100 product categories has shown that loyalty, in the sense of getting someone to purchase your product to the exclusion of others, simply does not exist for the majority of buyers. People seek variety and for most purchases there is also an aspect of randomness as to which actual product goes in the basket—again, because the products in the consideration set are seen as substitutes, it doesn't matter that much if it is this brand Chardonnay for \$12 or that one.

More recent theory has focused on awareness as the key aim for marketing. The buyer has to be aware of the product to consider it, a simple but powerful concept. If the buyer is a trade buyer, then much of marketing's focus is gaining awareness by visits, sales presentations, tasting and trade advertising. It is harder to directly affect consumers, but getting on the shelf or wine list is paramount. Then, marketers work on promotions based on specials, displays or recommendations. The problem is everyone does the same thing.

A more recent concept is the idea of salience—what brands/products enter the buyer's consideration set for a specific purchase occasion? Awareness is fine, but when someone wants a bottle of wine at \$15-\$20 to have with a meal that Friday night, or a bottle to give as a gift for \$50+, or one to take to a friend's house for dinner for \$25-\$35, different consideration sets often come to mind. The marketers of a brand and even more for a region or country need to work on creating salience, so that our wines

appear in the consideration set. If we are not considered, we cannot be bought. How do we do this?

Australia is doing some good things to create awareness of our regional styles and our iconic wines by conducting tastings with key buyers and opinion leaders. Although these tastings create awareness of Australian wines at higher price points, they do not necessarily create salience. Sometimes these tastings do match wine with food, so there would be some salience creation for those situations involving those foods. One of the opportunities we have is to make more comparisons between Australian wines and competing wines in the same price points. This seems like promoting your competitors, but if we want trade buyers to consider higher-priced Australian wines for their wine lists, then they need to see our wines in context.

Ours won't always be the best liked among realistic substitutes, but we are demonstrating they belong in the selected company. We actively create consideration sets by showcasing our wines with others of similar style at similar prices. We complain that consumers do not consider Australian wines when they move out of low priced situations into higher priced occasions. One way to increase the probability of consideration is to demonstrate it.

Brand marketers can follow the same line of thinking. Too often marketers and winemakers promoting their wines focus entirely on their wines and their story. Whether at a wine dinner with key consumers or at a trade appointment, only the winery's portfolio is usually presented. This often means tasting a range of wines of widely varying styles and prices in a short period of time. What level of salience

is likely to come from this? It might be more meaningful to take two key wines and compare them to similar styles from better known regions outside Australia. This way the buyers learn the more subtle differences and similarities of Australian wine in an informed context. At the same time, the winery promoting their wines gains some kudos for 'objectivity'.

In many cases Australian styles or brands are not considered for occasions where people want to spend more than the typical supermarket purchase. We can help change that by being proactive in how we promote our wines. I am not suggesting this is the only technique to use, but we are losing the battle to be in the consideration set to more well established competitors.

We are also facing the 'been there, done that' mentality, especially by trade buyers. Creating salience is a way to generate more excitement in the category, while providing objective wine education. This is not meant as a stand-alone marketing activity, nor is it the only example of how to use salience for better marketing results. Once we begin to understand that all buyers make choices from a range of products they consider substitutes, we can develop various ways to get our product considered. In the first instance, just learning what our buyers consider as substitutable is useful knowledge in its own right. We now know our competitors from the buyer's point of view, rather than our own.

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