

## THE IMPORTANCE OF SITUATIONAL FACTORS IN CONSUMER BEHAVIOR AND THE FUNCTIONING OF SMALL HORECA ENTERPRISES

Stanisław WALIGÓRA

Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny w Katowicach; stanislaw.waligora@edu.uekat.pl, ORCID: 0009-0004-4811-184X

**Purpose:** The paper aims to examine the significance of situational factors in shaping consumer behavior and the operational functioning of small enterprises in the HoReCa sector, with particular emphasis on the wine industry. The study seeks to identify which situational factors most strongly influence purchase decisions and overall customer experience.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The research employs a qualitative case study approach, using an in-depth individual interview (IDI) with the manager of a small HoReCa enterprise. The study applies Russell Belk's (1975) taxonomy of situational factors—physical environment, social environment, temporal perspective, task definition, and antecedent states—to analyze the impact of these factors on customer behavior and operational decisions.

**Findings:** The study demonstrates that physical environment, social environment, and task definition play a key role in shaping consumer experience, perceived value, and purchase readiness. Physical elements such as location, store layout, and sensory cues, as well as social interactions and the purpose of purchase, significantly influence consumer engagement. The research highlights that in the wine sector, purchases are largely experiential and culturally mediated rather than purely transactional.

**Research limitations/implications:** The study is based on a single case, which limits the generalizability of findings across the HoReCa sector. Future research could expand to multiple enterprises or regions to validate the impact of situational factors across different contexts. Longitudinal studies could also explore temporal changes in situational influences.

**Practical implications:** The results suggest that small HoReCa enterprises can enhance customer experience and sales by consciously managing situational factors. Strategic attention to store atmosphere, employee competence, social engagement, and temporal dynamics of visits can increase perceived value and customer loyalty. The findings provide actionable insights for operational and marketing strategies in niche, culturally oriented markets such as wine retail.

**Social implications:** By promoting well-designed consumer experiences that integrate social and cultural dimensions, HoReCa enterprises can contribute to community building and enhance customer well-being. Encouraging responsible consumption and social interaction in controlled settings may positively influence public attitudes toward social and cultural engagement.

**Originality/value:** The paper offers new insights into the practical significance of situational factors in the HoReCa sector, particularly in the context of small enterprises and wine retail. It combines theoretical frameworks with operational practice, providing value to managers,

marketers, and researchers interested in consumer behavior, experiential marketing, and niche hospitality management.

**Category of the paper:** Research paper, case study.

**Keywords:** Situational factors, consumer behavior, wine retail, IDI.

## 1. Introduction

The wine industry should be regarded as a market of considerable historical and economic significance (Unwin, 1996). In the United States, for example, in 2013 wine sales reached their highest volume on record, generating a retail value of USD 37.6 billion (Taylor et al., 2018). Wine is a complex product from the consumer's perspective (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008). The analysis of consumption motives is often based on a tripartite paradigm, which encompasses utilitarian (physical), symbolic, and hedonic needs (Holbrook, Hirschman, 1982; Levy, 1986; Thompson, Vourvachis, 1995). It is suggested that wine consumption is primarily focused on experiential and symbolic categories, and only to a limited extent on utilitarian purposes (Groves et al., 2000). Key motivational factors influencing wine consumption include (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008): Enjoyment, Personal historical context, Lifestyle-related issues, and Situational factors. In the literature, enjoyment is a collective concept. Research shows that under this term one may define such motivational factors as taste, the effect of alcohol, or the intellectual challenges arising from the discovery of new wines, which for those highly involved in consumption may become almost obsessive. Such a challenge involves thinking about wine, learning about it, and developing the ability to identify its characteristics (Charters, 2008). The personal historical context refers to symbolic motivations and derives directly from the consumer's life history — the motivation to consume wine may stem from an important life event or even one's origin. Lifestyle includes factors related to symbolic motivations as well, referring to the way the consumer perceives themselves and their role in society. Wine consumption may serve to support one's self-image or to enhance the way others perceive the individual. Wine thus becomes an aesthetic commodity that defines not only relationships with others but also one's self-perception (Demossier, 2004). In studies on wine consumption, a holistic approach is essential — one that considers the interplay between internal (intrinsic, push – personal traits) and external (extrinsic, pull – situational or product-related features) motivators (Taylor et al., 2018). These motivators interactively influence personal involvement with wine, which subsequently predetermines actual consumption (Taylor et al., 2018). Understanding motivation is crucial, as motives vary depending on the specific situation (Brunner, Siegrist, 2011).

## 2. Situational Factors

A situation consists of situational factors — it is defined in the literature as all factors characteristic of a particular time and place of observation that do not result from either the intra-individual characteristics of the buyer or the attributes of choice alternatives, yet demonstrably influence the buyer at the moment of purchase. To systematize this concept and facilitate its operationalization, Belk (1975) distinguished five groups of so-called situational factors: physical surroundings, social surroundings, temporal perspective, task definition, and antecedent states. The physical surroundings include elements of the shopping environment such as product layout, colors, or cleanliness (Chen, 2023), as well as the distance to the store (Kvalsvik, 2022) or atmospheric conditions (Yao, 2023). Research conducted over the years shows that atmospheric factors strongly affect retail sales (Badorf, 2020; Yoo, 2024). The social surroundings refer to interpersonal interactions during the purchase, the presence of other people, and the role of staff, which may increase the likelihood of purchase (Atulkar, Kesari, 2018; Chocarro, 2013). Motivations related to wine purchase, such as the presence of family and friends, also fall into this category. The temporal perspective concerns factors related to time: the calendar period (e.g., weekend effect), the duration of the transaction, or the waiting time for it (Chen et al., 2018; Olsson et al., 2022). Studies confirm that the weekend effect influences both prices (Scholten, 2009) and the perception of stimuli at points of sale (Ahlbom, 2023). Task definition includes the intention or requirement of purchase — that is, the context in which the purchase is made. The literature distinguishes such task definitions as planned or impulsive purchases, or purchases for personal consumption versus as gifts for others. Different task definitions are associated with store choice (Kenhove et al., 1999). Antecedent states refer to temporary moods (e.g., uncertainty, pleasure, hostility) or conditions (fatigue, illness, pain), distinguishing them from enduring individual traits (Belk, 1975). They can determine consumption choices, and studies show that a positive mood reduces the tendency toward analytical evaluation of advertising content (Batra, 1990). Belk's (1975) classification remains the fundamental framework for the analysis of situational factors, widely used in research on retailing, product choice, and shopping patterns (Chocarro et al., 2013; Hand et al., 2009).

Situational factors are also of great importance in the HoReCa sector, as they determine when and why wine is chosen (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008). Sociability is identified as one of the most important factors motivating wine drinking (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008; Heath, 2000). Wine plays a role in strengthening social bonds and facilitating socialization (Douglas, 1987). It fosters socialization both through physiological and psychological effects (alcohol relaxes and breaks down barriers) and by serving as a catalyst for interaction (discussions about taste, structure, or origin) (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008). For example, for Generation Y consumers, born between 1977 and 1999, sociability is a significant element predefining consumption, as wine is perceived as a social beverage (Olsen et al., 2007). Wine consumption among friends

is strongly motivated by this factor for both men and women in this age group (Dlačić & Kadić-Maglajlić, 2013). It should also be noted that, within Belk's (1975) classification of situational factors, sociability itself is not an element of the situation, as it is an enduring characteristic of the consumer. Nevertheless, sociability translates into increased sensitivity to situational factors within the social surroundings group, such as the presence of friends, family, and acquaintances.

Food enhancement is the second most significant motivator of wine consumption, alongside taste (Thomas, Pickering, 2003). Wine complements meals in terms of flavor, providing pleasure (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008). The presence of food dominates as a motivator in situations where wine is consumed with a partner or family. Studies have shown that this factor is relevant to consumers regardless of age, as appropriately paired wine universally enhances the taste of dishes (Dlačić, Kadić-Maglajlić, 2013). This underscores the importance of the situational factor from the social surroundings group — namely, the presence of family or friends not only at the moment of purchase but also during subsequent consumption. It is worth emphasizing that another situational factor from the task definition group also plays an important role: a consumer purchasing wine for immediate consumption is differently influenced by the presence of family and friends than one buying for future consumption. Generation Y and younger consumers tend to drink alcoholic beverages, including wine, mainly in pubs, bars, and restaurants, as opposed to older generations, who more often consume at home (Teagle et al., 2010). During special occasions such as parties or business meetings, women from Generation Y are primarily motivated by sociability, whereas for men, the food factor has a greater influence (Dlačić, Kadić-Maglajlić, 2013). Wine consumption is also an important means of relaxation (Charters, Pettigrew, 2008). It may also function as a temporal marker — a point in time symbolizing the transition from work to home leisure, serving a ritualistic function (Gusfield, 1987).

In the context of HoReCa research, it is also worth mentioning the factors often discussed in the literature that negatively affect wine consumption. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced new negative and positive situational factors that strongly influenced consumer intentions regarding, among other things, wine tourism (Gastaldello et al., 2022). A higher aversion to risk reduces travel intentions (Luo, Lam, 2020). Despite physical restrictions, the lockdown period may have provided consumers with more free time to engage in other forms of leisure (Gammon, Ramshaw, 2020). In the context of wine, the acquired interest in wine (AQWINT), a form of situational involvement (SI), strengthened future wine tourism intentions (Gastaldello et al., 2022) and, consequently, future wine consumption. This factor has a strong positive impact, acting as a mediator between personal involvement (PI) in wine consumption and travel intentions (Gastaldello et al., 2022). This means that marketing activities in this area should be intensified during the consumer's planning and "dreaming" phases (Gastaldello et al., 2022). Research conducted on the wine industry focuses on the mechanisms by which various factors influence the customer; however, there are not many studies indicating clear implications derived from this research for organizations operating within the industry.

Research in the wine sector primarily focuses on the wine–consumer relationship and the mechanisms through which consumer motivations exert influence. At the same time, there is still a lack of studies systematically analyzing the significance of situational factors in the HoReCa industry and their practical implications for business operations. As noted by Jaeger et al. (2010), most consumers report that the importance of wine selection criteria would change depending on the consumption context (e.g., a dinner with friends vs. retail shopping). Therefore, in-depth research on the role of situational factors in the HoReCa sector could provide companies with concrete marketing and operational insights, enabling more effective alignment of offerings with the variable needs and motivations of consumers.

### **3. Research Methodology**

The studied entity is a commercial and service enterprise located in the Silesian Voivodeship. The company operates a sales point situated within the Upper Silesian-Zagłębie Metropolis. This point serves both as a retail space, where sales transactions are conducted, and as a service area, where customers can consume wine and other Italian-style products. The respondent in the conducted study was the manager of the enterprise, a professional with several years of experience in the HoReCa industry. The respondent holds higher education in a non-economic field.

The study was conducted using a qualitative research method — the individual in-depth interview (IDI). This was the primary tool for obtaining empirical data within the developed case study. The application of this method made it possible to gain insight into the subjective perspective of the studied entity, allowing for the capture of meanings assigned to specific phenomena and decisions by the participant, without imposing predetermined analytical categories or structuring responses according to pre-established criteria (cf. Nikodemaska-Wołowik, 1999). The respondent was the owner of the enterprise in question, directly responsible, among other things, for the planning and implementation of operational activities at the local level. The choice of respondent was determined by his access to both strategic and operational knowledge, which made it possible to obtain rich material of a cognitive and diagnostic nature.

The collected empirical data were organized and then subjected to interpretative analysis consistent with the assumptions of qualitative research methodology. The aim of the study was to identify and preliminarily assess the impact of selected situational factors (classified according to Belk's taxonomy, 1975) occurring in the environment and operational activities of the enterprise, on its functioning and managerial decision-making. Particular attention was paid to the changes observed in these factors and their potential influence on the company's current activities and adaptive mechanisms.

## 4. Research Results

In the context of situational factors, the physical surroundings play a significant role in the HoReCa industry, encompassing—according to Belk's (1975) classification—material and sensory elements related to the place of consumption, such as spatial layout, lighting, music, scent, or weather conditions. In the analyzed case, it was indicated that the key element influencing the operation of the establishment is its location and spatial accessibility. As the respondent emphasizes, the choice of sales location is crucial for the level of customer traffic and the perception of the offer; however, in smaller towns, unlike in large urban centers, standard location analyses do not yield the expected results. Location is therefore a situational factor of great importance, although its impact may be limited by the specificity of the local market.

*"[...] in large cities [...] market research is conducted within a radius of 50-100 meters [...]. Here [...] the town is too small to carry out such studies [...]"*

Another element of the physical surroundings is weather conditions, which in the analyzed case exhibit a complex, non-linear influence on buyer behavior. The respondent indicates that both unfavorable weather and exceptionally good weather conducive to outdoor activities can lead to a decrease in the number of customers visiting the establishment.

*"[...] when the weather is bad, it seems like no one wants to leave the house, but on the other hand, exceptionally beautiful weather is also a factor that [...] does not encourage people to stay in the store"*

As the respondent notes, the weather can even constitute a form of competition for stationary business activity, since during the summer season customers satisfy their consumption needs in other contexts—e.g., while traveling or attending outdoor events. Consequently, the vacation period, commonly regarded as a time of increased sales in gastronomy, may in the case of specialty stores result in a decline in turnover.

In the area of spatial design and sensory experience, the respondent highlights the importance of atmosphere and comfort within the establishment. She points out that a pleasant environment, appropriate lighting, and music consistent with the visual communication build positive emotions, which encourage longer visits and increase the likelihood of purchase.

*"[...] it is more pleasant to spend time in a pleasant place [...]. If the customer feels good here, they are more likely to walk around the store and browse the products"*

Particular attention should be paid to the specificity of the assortment, which in the analyzed case represents an important element of the consumption situation. Offering niche products, often unfamiliar to consumers, may lead to confusion and withdrawal among customers who, as the respondent observes, enter the store with a sense of competence but encounter a reality different from their expectations. This type of cognitive dissonance becomes a factor limiting purchase readiness and requires active support from the salesperson.

*“[...] the customer walks confidently into the store [...] only to find that there is not a single product they actually recognize [...]. When the customer encounters such an unfamiliar reality—they withdraw from the purchase [...].”*

The analyzed case indicates that in the HoReCa industry, the physical surroundings fulfill both a communicative and emotional function, serving as an important background for customer–brand interaction. A well-designed space can minimize cognitive and emotional barriers, encourage customer returns, and strengthen their attachment to the place. At the same time, external factors such as weather or location require flexible managerial approaches and the adjustment of promotional activities to changing environmental conditions.

Another group of situational factors in Russell Belk’s (1975) framework is the social surroundings, encompassing the presence and behavior of other people in the consumption setting, interactions among customers, and relationships with staff. In the HoReCa sector, this factor gains particular importance, as the customer experience is largely co-created through interpersonal contact and the social atmosphere within the establishment.

The analyzed case demonstrates that, despite attempts to build around the establishment a micro-community centered on shared interests, this process requires time and consistency. The respondent emphasizes that “the community is not yet closely connected”, even though the company regularly organizes tastings and themed meetings that attract considerable interest. According to the respondent, the goal of these activities is to create a space that serves not only as a sales venue but also as a social hub- *a micro-community that, after several such meetings, will begin to function together as a group with shared interests*. Thus, the respondent perceives the development of social bonds as a potential factor that can strengthen both customer loyalty and sales performance.

The social surroundings also manifest in the relationships between customers and staff. The respondent notes that the style of service plays a crucial role in shaping the shopping experience—not so much through sales effectiveness as through the degree to which it meets customer expectations. As she explains, *proactive service undoubtedly increases the likelihood of purchase*, yet some customers were *not always satisfied* with an overly sales-oriented approach. In this context, the owner points to the need for a balance between professionalism and authenticity—customers *expect service that demonstrates expert knowledge*, rather than aggressive selling techniques.

From a managerial perspective, the analyzed business identifies situational factors as an important element requiring advance planning and staff preparation. This particularly concerns employee training: in the context of specialized sales, staff members must possess in-depth product knowledge to effectively reduce customers’ cognitive and emotional barriers. The long-term process of staff preparation is viewed as an investment in building the quality of the consumer experience and in creating an environment conducive to purchase decisions.

*“[...] training personnel capable of providing expert service is a much more time-consuming process [...]. It requires much greater engagement from both sides [...].”*

In light of these observations, the social surroundings in the analyzed establishment function as a moderating factor in the purchasing experience—affecting perceptions of service quality, comfort of stay, and willingness to repurchase. This is an example where the social aspect goes beyond the mere number of people present in the space, constituting instead an element of the identity and operational character of the place.

In Russell Belk's (1975) framework, the temporal perspective refers both to the moment in time when a purchasing decision is made and to the subjective availability of time that a consumer possesses during the purchasing process. In the HoReCa industry, this factor influences not only purchase decisions but also the nature of interactions with staff and the manner in which customers engage with the establishment's offerings.

In the studied enterprise, the temporal aspect is closely linked to the atmosphere of the place and to customers' expectations regarding the shopping experience itself. As the respondent emphasizes, *customers don't come here just to enter and leave – most of them want to experience the atmosphere of this place*. This means that time availability becomes a condition for full participation in the offered experience. Customers who are not under time pressure are more likely to make purchasing decisions, and the process itself takes on a recreational and symbolic rather than merely transactional character. The respondent confirms this relationship, noting that *a high availability of time increases the likelihood of purchase*.

The second dimension of the temporal perspective concerns the point in time, that is, the specific moment of purchase. In the analyzed establishment, this dependence is particularly evident for products such as wine. As the respondent observes, *it is definitely an afternoon topic – in the morning, purchases are made rather because one must, needs it for the afternoon*. Thus, the temporal factor differentiates not only the volume of sales throughout the day but also the motivations of customers – in the morning, purchases are predominantly goal-oriented and functional, whereas in the afternoon, they acquire a more emotional and experiential character.

It is also worth noting that in this case, the respondent deliberately refrains from seasonal and short-term marketing activities, stating that she does not apply *any price marketing* and does not change prices *at any time during the year*. Despite being aware that such practices could boost sales at specific moments, the entrepreneur argues that her customers are driven by values other than temporary economic benefit. As he notes, *customers don't want discounts because they are also aware of how difficult running such a local business is*. This attitude indicates a strong anchoring of the shopping experience in social and ethical dimensions, which in turn diminishes the significance of time in the market sense while reinforcing its symbolic function.

In conclusion, in the analyzed case, the temporal perspective is not merely an operational parameter but a factor that shapes the rhythm and character of consumption. Time—understood both as an available resource and as the moment of decision—constitutes an integral element of the customer experience and co-creates the unique image of a place where shopping acquires a cultural and emotional dimension.

In Russell Belk's (1975) framework, the definition of the task refers to the goal that guides an individual during the act of consumption—it defines the context in which the purchase occurs and the expectations the consumer associates with a given experience. In the HoReCa industry, this factor plays a crucial role, as customers' purchasing motivations often go beyond purely functional needs, encompassing symbolic, cultural, and emotional aspects.

In the studied establishment, planned purchases predominate, stemming from a clearly defined consumption intention. As the respondent emphasizes, *these are planned purchases in most cases. It's not often that they are impulsive purchases, perhaps due to the nature of the store.* Customers therefore come with a specific purpose in mind, often linked to a particular event (*for Friday, they plan to serve pasta, so they know they need a certain wine*), which reflects a high level of goal awareness and a limited influence of incidental situational stimuli.

At the same time, the owner recognizes the potential for shaping a more dynamic purchase structure, noting that *it is possible to work on suggestion, to change this proportion towards more impulsive purchases*, for instance through the recommendation of complementary products to those already being purchased. Nevertheless, she admits that the nature of the store and the profile of its customers make such actions difficult. This results from the cultural and symbolic status of the offered products—they are perceived not as everyday necessities but as elements of lifestyle and expressions of taste.

Importantly, based on the respondent's statements, several distinct customer segments can be identified, differentiated by the purpose and context of the purchase. A significant group consists of customers making purchases for gift-giving purposes. The respondent notes that "people often come to such a store to buy gifts—this is, in fact, a very large area to be developed". In this case, the situational factor takes on a social and emotional dimension, as the purchase is not intended to satisfy the buyer's own needs but rather has an intentional and relational character, linked to the act of giving.

A separate segment is formed by customers driven by cultural and culinary interests, referred to by the respondent as *Italophiles*, who purchase products "for themselves, for current consumption", thereby attributing to the purchase the character of an authentic cultural experience.

In the context of the organization under study, the presence of situational factors related to task definition thus reveals a dual—and at the same time segmentally differentiated—nature of purchasing motivations: on the one hand, they are rational and planned; on the other, they are symbolically and socially charged. In both of the aforementioned customer groups, consumer behavior reflects a high level of cognitive and emotional involvement, indicating the significant role of situational factors in shaping consumption experiences within a niche, culturally oriented HoReCa sector.

The final group of situational factors analyzed comprises antecedent states, which—according to Russell Belk's (1975) framework—refer to temporary physiological and emotional conditions of the individual immediately preceding the act of consumption. These include

variables such as fatigue, hunger, emotional tension, or pain, which may substantially modify both the perception of the purchasing situation and the readiness to make a consumer decision.

The analysis of the respondent's statements confirms the importance of this category of factors in the operational context of the analyzed establishment. As she notes, "women who come in after treatments are exhausted; they often travel from a distance and arrive tired and hungry. This is something that actually drives such purchases". According to the respondent, situations of this kind occur on a regular basis, particularly on days with a high volume of visits to nearby cosmetology and aesthetic medicine clinics. This allows these purchasing situations to be treated not as incidental but as, to some extent, recurrent consumption episodes. In such cases, the purchase assumes a compensatory character: a reduced level of physical and emotional comfort encourages customers to seek small pleasures and mood-enhancing experiences.

The respondent emphasizes that in these circumstances, products with hedonic connotations are more readily purchased, serving a gratificatory function and acting as symbolic means of restoring emotional balance. These are most often items intended for immediate consumption, such as sweet baked goods, desserts, high-quality coffee, or small portions of products perceived as premium, which do not require lengthy preparation or consumption processes. In some cases, this process also takes on a social dimension—female customers accompanied by their partners after cosmetic treatments receive small gifts from them, which further reinforces the emotional aspect of consumption.

The observations cited align with a broader stream of research on the affective dimension of consumer behavior, according to which emotions and transient states may function as significant determinants of purchasing decisions, particularly in categories of luxury goods and pleasure-oriented products (Cohen, Areni, 1991). In the case of the analyzed venue, these factors assume an occasional yet cyclically recurring and meaningful form: they activate consumption during moments of heightened emotional tension, thereby complementing the rational and planned purchasing decisions discussed in previous sections.

In light of Belk's conceptual framework, it can therefore be concluded that antecedent states—although transient in nature and difficult to measure directly—exert a tangible influence on purchasing decisions in the examined case, especially with regard to products perceived as symbolically rewarding. Their managerial relevance lies in the possibility of anticipating periods of increased susceptibility to compensatory purchases and adjusting the product offering to customers' short-term, affective needs. The importance of these situational elements is particularly evident in the HoReCa sector, where consumption is frequently intertwined with the emotional and social dimensions of experience, and purchasing acts as a form of expression or compensation for affective states.

## 5. Summary and Managerial Implications

The conducted study confirms the significance of situational factors in shaping consumer behavior within the HoReCa industry, with particular emphasis on the wine sector. At the same time, these findings should be interpreted in light of the applied research design, which was based on a single, in-depth case study. The analysis demonstrated that three situational domains are of key importance: the physical environment, the social environment, and task definition. Each of these directly influences the shopping experience, the perceived value of the offering, and the customer's readiness to make a purchase.

The results confirm that in the context of products characterized by a high degree of symbolic meaning and consumer involvement—such as wine—the purchasing process is not purely transactional but experiential and cultural in nature. Emotions, time, and the surrounding environment jointly co-create the value perceived by the customer. At the same time, these observations are exploratory and descriptive in character, aiming to identify potential mechanisms through which situational factors operate rather than to provide empirical generalization.

From a managerial perspective, the findings point to the need for a holistic approach to consumer experience management, in which every situational element—from service quality to the atmosphere of the venue—constitutes an integral part of experience formation and should be incorporated into the marketing strategy, particularly in small enterprises operating within the HoReCa sector. It is important to emphasize, however, that the implications formulated here should be understood as interpretative guidelines derived from observations of a single organization, rather than as universal strategic recommendations applicable across the entire industry or sector.

In the context of management in small HoReCa enterprises, the conscious shaping of the customer experience through the strategic use of situational factors becomes crucial. The physical environment of the venue functions as a communication and emotion-building tool: appropriate lighting, music, scent, and spatial layout enhance customer comfort, encourage longer stays, and increase the likelihood of purchase. At the same time, staff play a critical role, as their competencies and product knowledge have strategic importance in reducing customers' cognitive uncertainty. This finding is consistent with the research of Sassenberg (2021), which identified music and social interactions—such as opportunities for shared consumption among friends—as among the most important elements of a winery's atmosphere. These elements, however, should not be interpreted as direct mechanisms of loyalty formation but rather as potential components of the consumption experience whose significance requires further verification.

Similarly, the development of social forms of consumption—such as tastings or themed events—may strengthen the social dimension of the experience; however, within the scope of the present study, it is not possible to draw definitive conclusions regarding their long-term impact on customer relationships. Incorporating the temporal dynamics of purchasing and situational segmentation allows for a more nuanced description of the diversity of decision-making contexts, without prejudging their managerial effectiveness in other locations or business formats. Moreover, in line with earlier research by Bruwer (2016), there is potential to stimulate demand through the offering of niche-based brands targeted at specific segments, such as young women.

Effective management in the wine sector requires the recognition and active shaping of situational factors as a source of competitive advantage. Wine, as a product with a high symbolic and cultural load, demands particular sensitivity to the context in which it is selected and consumed. The conclusions presented here should therefore be treated as a point of departure for further research, especially studies based on data triangulation, which would enable a more comprehensive assessment of the relationships between situational factors and managerial strategies.

## References

1. Ahlbom, C.-P., Roggeveen, A.L., Grewal, D., Nordfält, J. (2023). Understanding how music influences shopping on weekdays and weekends. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 60(5), 987-1000.
2. Atulkar, S., Kesari, B. (2018). Role of consumer traits and situational factors on impulse buying: Does gender matter? *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 46(4), 386-405.
3. Badorf, F., Hoberg, K. (2020). The impact of daily weather on retail sales: An empirical study in brick-and-mortar stores. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 52, 101921.
4. Batra, R., Stayman, D. (1990). The role of mood in advertising effectiveness. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17(2), 203-214.
5. Belk, R.W. (1974). An exploratory assessment of situational effect in buyers' behavior. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 11(2), 155-163.
6. Belk, R.W. (1975). Situational variables and consumer behavior. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 2(3), 157-164.
7. Bruwer, J., McCutcheon, E. (2016). Consumption dynamics and socio-demographics in the wine product category: Baseline behaviorism metrics for marketing strategies. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, 29(3), 519-536.

8. Bruwer, J., Saliba, A., Miller, B. (2011). Consumer behaviour and sensory preference differences: Implications for wine product marketing. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 28(1), 5-18.
9. Charters, S., Pettigrew, S. (2008). Why do people drink wine? A consumer-focused exploration. *Journal of Food Products Marketing*, 14(3), 13-32.
10. Chen, J., Chang, Y.-W. (2023). How smart technology empowers consumers in smart retail stores? The perspective of technology readiness and situational factors. *Electronic Markets*, 33(1).
11. Chocarro, R., Cortiñas, M., Villanueva, M.-L. (2013). Situational variables in online versus offline channel choice. *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 12(5), 347-361.
12. Cohen, J.B., Areni, C.S. (1991). Affect and consumer behavior. In: T.S. Robertson, H.H. Kassarian (Eds.), *Handbook of consumer behavior* (pp. 188-240). Prentice Hall.
13. Dlačić, J., Kadić-Maglajić, S. (2013). The role of gender and situational factors in wine consumption of Generation Y. *South East European Journal of Economics and Business*, 8(1), 53-61.
14. Douglas, M. (Ed.) (1987). *Constructive drinking: Perspectives on drink from anthropology*. New York: Cambridge University Press.
15. Dubow, J.S. (1992). Occasion-based vs. user-based benefit segmentation. *Journal of Advertising Research*, 32(March/April), 11-18.
16. Gammon, S., Ramshaw, G. (2020). Distancing from the present: Nostalgia and leisure in lockdown. *Leisure Sciences*, 4(1/2), 131-137.
17. Gastaldello, G., Streletskaya, N., Rossetto, L. (2023). Glass half-full? A comprehensive PLS-SEM approach to explore the pandemic's effect on wine tourism intentions. *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 35(2), 322-345.
18. Groves, R., Charters, S., Reynolds, C. (2000). Imbibing, inscribing, integrating and imparting: A typology of wine consumption practices. *Journal of Wine Research*, 11(3), 209-223.
19. Gusfield, J. (1987). Passage to play: Rituals of drinking time in American society. In: M. Douglas (Ed.), *Constructive drinking: Perspectives on drink from anthropology* (pp. 73-90). New York: Cambridge University Press.
20. Heath, D.B. (2000). *Drinking occasions: Comparative perspectives on alcohol and culture*. Ann Arbor: Taylor and Francis.
21. Holbrook, M.B. (1995). *Consumer research: Introspective essays on the study of consumption*. Thousand Oaks: Sage.
22. Jaeger, S., Danaher, P., Brodie, R. (2010). Consumption decisions made in restaurants: The case of wine selection. *Food Quality and Preference*, 21(4), 439-442
23. Kenhove, P.V., De Wulf, K., Van Waterschoot, W. (1999). The impact of task definition on store-attribute saliences and store choice. *Journal of Retailing*, 75(1), 125-137.
24. Kvalsvik, F. (2022). Understanding the role of situational factors on online grocery shopping among older adults. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 68, 103009.

25. Laaksonen, M. (1993). Retail patronage dynamics: Learning about daily shopping behavior in contexts of changing retail structures. *Journal of Business Research*, 28(1-2), 3-174.
26. Levy, S.J. (1986). Meanings in advertising stimuli. In: J. Olson, K. Sentis (Eds.), *Advertising and consumer psychology, Vol. 3*, (pp. 214-226). New York: Praeger.
27. Luo, J.M., Lam, C.F. (2020). Travel anxiety, risk attitude and travel intentions towards 'travel bubble' destinations in Hong Kong: Effect of the fear of COVID-19. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(21), 1-11.
28. Nikodemaska-Wołowik, A.M. (1999). *Jakościowe badania marketingowe*. PWE.
29. Olsen, J.E., Thach, L., Nowak, L. (2007). Wine for my generation: Exploring how US wine consumers are socialized to wine. *Journal of Wine Research*, 18(1), 1-18.
30. Olsson, J., Osman, M.C., Hellström, D., Vakulenko, Y. (2022). Customer expectations of unattended grocery delivery services: Mapping forms and determinants. *International Journal of Retail & Distribution Management*, 50(13), 1-16.
31. Sassenberg, A.-M., Sassenberg, C., Sassenberg, C., Heneghan, M. (2022). Effects of atmosphere on emotions and consumer behaviour at wineries. *International Journal of Wine Business Research*, 34(4), 523-541.
32. Scholten, P.A., Livingston, J.A., Chen, J. (2009). Do countercyclical-weekend effects persist in online retail markets? *Electronic Commerce Research and Applications*, 8(2), 174-181.
33. Taylor, J.J., Bing, M., Reynolds, D., Davison, K., Ruetzler, T. (2018). Motivation and personal involvement leading to wine consumption. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 702-719.
34. Taylor, L. (2016). Motivation and personal involvement leading to wine consumption. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*, 30(2), 702-719.
35. Teagle, J., Mueller, S., Lockshin, L. (2010). *How do Millennials' wine attitudes and behaviour differ from other generations?* Proceedings 5th International Academy of Wine Business Research Conference, 8-10 February 2010, Auckland, NZ. Academy of Wine Business Research.
36. Thomas, A., Pickering, G. (2003). The importance of wine label information. *International Journal of Wine Marketing*, 15(2), 58-74.
37. Unwin, T. (1996). *Wine and the vine: An historical geography of viticulture and the wine trade*. London: Routledge.
38. Yao, W., Zhao, H., Liu, L. (2023). Weather and time factors impact on online food delivery sales: A comparative analysis of three Chinese cities. *Theoretical and Applied Climatology*, 153(3-4), 1425-1438.
39. Yoo, J., Eom, J., Zhou, Y. (2024). Thermal comfort and retail sales: A big data analysis of extreme temperature's impact on brick-and-mortar stores. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 77, 103699.