




# Sicilian Wine's Effect on Consumers' Identity-Behavioral Intentions: The Mediation Effect of Subjective Norms and Social Activity

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**Purpose:** Wine has a purely symbolic connotation in the eyes of consumers and the market. Therefore, it could lead to a different consideration and perception of buying local wine which could be sensed as a social experience rather than an automatic action. The research aim is to highlight the bond between customers and the product (Sicilian DOC wine) by overcoming the utilitarian limit and showing the social one. This study has the purpose of understanding in depth how individual behavior and social relationships are able to influence people's behavioral intentions which lead to an increase in wine consumption.

**Methods:** The sample was characterized by 302 consumers of Sicilian DOC wine who gave their consent to participate to the research to verify how the social aspects may lead to the behavioral intentions of purchase. The cross-sectional research has been conducted using an online survey which was available to be filled in by participants from May 2019 to December 2019. Data were analyzed using SPSS.

**Results:** The results show how subjective norms and social activity constitute two crucial dimensions for consumption behavior through mediating the effect of individuals identification with people that tend to choose and consume Sicilian DOC wine (social identity) on the behavioral intention of that product to fulfill their desire. Both indirect effects of social identity on behavioral intentions (IE = 0.04; C.I. = 0.01–0.05; IE = 0.02; C.I. = 0.005–0.03) are significant and mediated by subjective norms and social activity.

**Conclusion:** Social activities and subjective norms influence people's intention to purchase a Sicilian DOC wine for purely social and symbolic purposes.

**Keywords:** social activity, subjective norms, business, consumption, products, intensity

## Introduction

Consumption is seen as a rational element and a consequence of economic activity. Defining consumption as the object of analysis of the economy is not completely correct because it is necessary to remember the human dimension that belongs to every purchasing decision. The most dated micro-economic approaches considering the rational dimension forget that the consumer is a living subject and as such is guided by shared values, passions, tastes, desires, feelings and attitudes. Kotler, Bowen, and Makens in "Marketing for Hospitality and Tourism"<sup>1</sup> highlight that consumption behavior is strongly influenced by various cultural, social, personal and psychological factors. Marketing professionals cannot control these elements, but it is necessary to take them into account. The last fifty years witnessed a shift from an economic to a psychological perspective. Besides, this transition saw a shift of attention towards the

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role of the consumer who was considered as mature and interactive today rather than uninterested and passive as he appeared to be in the past. As a matter of fact, he was defined as a “sensation-seeker” who, when dealing with consumer goods, involves all his senses.<sup>2</sup> Consumer society turns consumer goods into products of desire which are purchased to satisfy the desire that they represent. For this reason, wine is no longer just a food product, but it is also an object of careful choice, comparison, evaluation and argument. In recent years two opposite phenomena have emerged: on the one hand there has been a reduction in the consumption of table wine, on the other hand there has been a greater demand for quality wines. Indeed, more and more attention has been paid to DOC, DOCG and IGT wines (controlled designation of origin, registered designation of guaranteed origin and typical geographical indication), which gather elements of quality and regional specificity. Wine is a source of pleasure with a strong hedonistic character that is increasingly destined to arouse “emotions”.<sup>3</sup> In 1972 Tauber<sup>4</sup> identified the so called “purchasing motivations” subdividing them into three different kind of motives: Utilitarian motivations, hedonistic motivations and social motivations. The first ones (utilitarian or rational motivations) underline how the role of the product is to maximize economic gain: consumers buy to satisfy their fundamental needs. Regarding hedonistic or emotional reasons, it is possible to refer to the research of Hirschman et al,<sup>5</sup> which emphasizes the presence of an emotional component (such as pleasure and fun) that influences the purchase. Social motives have a relationship with the most common relational activities.<sup>6</sup> All the changes that emerge at a cultural level are visible through the consumer. If in the past wine could not be absent from the table, now it is considered as an optional extra, which means that today it is consumed only for pleasure. For this reason, it is necessary at a strategic level: communicate. A few decades ago, this communication was only done through the label that simply gave information about the wine. Today, the communication through the label has an intrinsic goal, which is to change consumer behavior.<sup>7</sup> Communication should not only enhance the qualities of a product and its peculiarities but has to be able to excite. As a matter of fact, the shopping experience is lived as a moment of sociality aimed at meeting the other and strengthening the group membership of the individual that leads the latter to be what influences the consumer’s choice and purchase. Experiential marketing is also an interesting brand management tool, since it can help to change the positioning of a brand on the market.<sup>8</sup> Experiential marketing has various tools, which can be defined as Experience

Provides, or “creators of experience”,<sup>8</sup> which can help the product to be successful, here we find: packaging, product design, events, point of sale, advertising and atmosphere. These become a market strategy aimed at hitting and intriguing not only the individual but also the latter aspects that characterize the final product and make it easier for him to share the consumer enjoyment experience with friends, relatives and colleagues. Today’s consumer describes the transition from the “Made of” culture of the Sixties in which it was necessary to explain the content of what was drunk (ie, the content of the bottle) to the following decades:

- “Made in” culture of the Eighties: during this period importance was given to the territory and therefore the choice between Italian and French wine;
- “Made by” culture, the nineties: the brand gained more importance;
- “Made by for me”: the product must reflect the consumer and his needs, so it must be tailored to the customer.<sup>9</sup>

## Theoretical Background

Despite the economic crisis and a strong tradition of wine production and consumption there was a strong growth in the consumption of craft beer.<sup>10</sup> Although wine production in Italy is higher than beer production, the same cannot be said of its per capita consumption: from 1980 to 2015 it fell from 92.9 to 36.2 liters for wine but increased from 16.7 to 30.8 liters for beer.<sup>11</sup> All this can be explained if we consider that today consumers do not only want original products in taste, but also genuine and qualitatively appreciated products. In addition, they also want to have a strong link with the territory, all of this is achievable thanks to the research and consumption of food and wine products such as craft beer or DOC wine.<sup>12,13</sup> The theoretical background applied to this study refers to two important concepts: Consumption Intensity<sup>14</sup> and Self-Regulation Theory of Richard Bagozzi.<sup>15,16</sup> These two theoretical constructs allow to identify the variables that influence the intensity of consumption of Sicilian DOC wine, and to predict which other variables influence the purchase intention of consumers in general.<sup>17</sup> Several researches have been conducted on the intensity of consumption and the variables involved in it. Besides, Twedt’s study<sup>18</sup> shows one of the most interesting results which argues that the different types of consumer behavior cannot be explained only through demographic characteristics, but other variables need to be identified and investigated. Accordingly, a study conducted by

Platania and Santisi<sup>19</sup> investigates the consumption behavior of those who choose to buy local products, especially wine, with the aim of identifying the determinants of choice (variables) that influence the purchase. The results of this research highlight the relationship between local wine consumption and purely social reasons. The intensity of consumption is linked to the concern for a healthy life and the interest in gastronomy, which underlines how the consumption of wine is linked to social activities. Specifically, Subjective Norms (H1), Social Identity (H3) and Perceived Behavioral Control (H4) predicted consumers' behavioral intentions (H5). An interesting research conducted by Santisi and colleagues<sup>13</sup> investigates the variables that influence behavior, intensity and identity of the typical Sicilian wine consumer. The results highlight how men are more involved in the brand than women. Regarding the intensity of consumption and its relationship with social activities, concern for a healthy life and gastronomic interest, it is shown that connoisseurs have a greater interest in food than others. In addition, connoisseurs are used to associate typical Sicilian wine with a business lunch and at the same time pay special attention to their health. Di Vita and colleagues<sup>20</sup> investigate consumer's motivations behind the choice of different types of quality wines. The quality hierarchy of wines is organized into four categories: DOC, IGP, basic wine and bulk wine. This study analyzes the perception of quality of wines and studies whether Italians perceive significant differences between the different categories. The results indicate that motivations and determinants of consumption tend to change according to the quality of the wine. There is a difference in the determinant of DOC and IGP consumption and it concerns the way they are purchased. In this analysis a greater propensity to buy online only for IGP wines is found. Education and age influenced only the consumption of DOC wines and not IGP wines. The outcomes also show a positive correlation between high annual income and the consumption of both IGP and DOC wines. According to Kuhl<sup>21</sup> differences in behavior can be deduced from the self-regulatory tendency. Self-regulatory trends influence consumer behavior<sup>22</sup> and it is the increase in emotional excitement that explains the impulsive behavior of consumers.<sup>23</sup> Martinez-Carrasco et al<sup>14</sup> provide a good model that shows us how the intensity of consumption is influenced by three different variables, which are social activity, concern for a healthy life and interest in gastronomy.

- Social activity,<sup>24</sup> emphasizes that wine not only has a utilitarian character, but above all has a symbolic character and all the related cultural and value dimensions.<sup>17</sup> In this sense, choosing Sicilian DOC wine could help to

determine its status and assert its prestige (Bello e Cervantes, 2002).<sup>12</sup> In recent years, wine consumption patterns are changed, different lifestyles and the price which lead to a change in the consumer's taste. The most significant change is the change of vision: from an undifferentiated staple food to an identifying personality factor. The choice of wine, as well as the choice of clothing and furnishings are increasingly individual and identifying personality. Considering this propensity to personalize taste on the one hand we find a consumer who is careful to include a part of himself in his choices, and therefore chooses a purchase that can express his personality. On the other hand, the wine consumer tends to combine wine with certain significant moments of his life. Therefore, from all this follows a propensity to make his tastes unique and peculiar. This can generate added value to wine as well as becoming a competitive factor. Social reasons have a relationship with the most common relational activities.<sup>6</sup> As claimed by Kotler et al

consumer behavior is also influenced by so-called social factors, which include consumer groups, family, social roles and status. Since social factors can significantly influence consumer responses, companies must take them into account when designing their marketing strategies. (p. 151)<sup>1</sup>

- Regarding "Concern for Healthy Living", today's consumer is much more watchful and informed about the quality and typicality of wines. As shown by Caniglia et al,<sup>3</sup> the wine consumer wants the traceability of the product. Consumers usually have demands and expectations of satisfaction, but also sensory expectations which, if not satisfied, have an impact on the quality judgment of the wines. The increase in demand for organic, biodynamic and natural wines represents one of the most successful events in Italian's wine production.<sup>25</sup> In 2016 organic wine sales in Italy reached 275 million euros, with an increase of 34% compared to 2015 and 45% of sales compared to 2016 for a total of 3.84 million liters sold in supermarkets. Moreover, Italy's organic areas will reach 130,000 in 2022, and this is because organic wine is highly appreciated for its ability to respect the environment (76%), for its wholesomeness (61%), for its authenticity (50%) and for its organoleptic qualities (43%).

- With regard to "Interest in Gastronomy", nowadays the culture of wine is linked to gastronomy, not only because wine is present on our tables but especially because it is connected to moments of play, leisure and

entertainment for which the choice of wines almost always depends on the occasion for which the wine is intended.

To identify the determinants of consumer choice, the Self-Regulation Theory<sup>15</sup> is used, which is an extension of Ajzen and Fishbein's Theory of Reasoned Action<sup>26</sup> which receives considerable recognition as it is able to explain the social action,<sup>15</sup> and Ajzen's Theory of Planned Behavior<sup>27</sup> in which perceived behavioral control is added to the Theory of Reasoned Action as a determining factor of intentionality.<sup>15</sup> The Reasoned Action Theory<sup>26</sup> is based on the central assumption that as well as motivation, attitudes have direction and strength and can influence behavior through their relationship to the intention to act. For Fishbein and Ajzen the best way to predict a certain behavior is to ask people if they are willing to act. The above theory assumes that the intention is conditioned by the attitude towards behavior and subjective norms, that is, the product of individual perceptions about the expectations of others and the individual's motivation to conform to those expectations. Subsequently, this theory is extended and deepened by Ajzen<sup>27</sup> who enlarges it to account for the importance of "perceived behavioral control" over action. This model indicates that perceived control over behavior corresponds to the extent to which the person believes it is easy or difficult to perform a certain action in order to achieve certain results. Bagozzi's theory not only considers cognitive factors but considers it fundamental to determine both intention and present behavior as well as experience.

By Self-Regulation Theory we mean the monitoring appraisal, and coping activities that translate 1) attitude into intention, 2) subjective norm into intention and, 3) intention into action leading to goal attainment. (p. 183)<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, according to the author, behavioral intentions are influenced by evaluative and affective attitude, social identity, subjective norms (beliefs about how others judge that behavior and individual motivation to conform), desire and perceived behavioral control. Wine tends to be consumed for hedonistic reasons. Indeed, wine is able to provide the fulfillment of the sensorial and/or psychological-social desires, forcing the consumer to buy it to appreciate "the organoleptic characteristics of the product and meet psychological needs or satisfy the desires of conviviality, communication, membership and ostentation" (p.88).<sup>17,28-32</sup> For many consumers, the choice and therefore the act of buying a bottle of wine is fogged by insecurity. It is believed that the choice of the wrong bottle generates negative social action. A lot of authors have hypothesized that the perception of risk is an

essential element in wine purchasing behavior.<sup>33,34</sup> For this reason, social activities can play a key role in predicting behavioral intentions in order to avoid the risk of committing a poor social action that could affect conviviality, communication and relationships with others (H2, H5).

The choice of which wine should be purchased depends on various elements, such as sensory quality and price.<sup>35</sup> The latter is often used as a quality indicator, the higher the price, the better the quality of the product.<sup>36</sup> The price is also decisive because the consumer decides his budget before going to the store, this has been demonstrated by various authors.<sup>37-39</sup> Furthermore, many marketing studies show that the choice of product to buy is influenced by its origin.<sup>40,41</sup> The identification of origin informs about the geographical origin of the product, it is a guarantee of quality. European consumers consider the designation of origin as one of the most important attributes of the product, also because the consumer is willing to spend more for this quality.<sup>42,43</sup> Indeed, Marketing literature is full of contributions that highlight how the consumer during the act of purchase is driven by utilitarian motives and reasons related to the satisfaction of his needs.<sup>44,45</sup> It is important to notice wine's social function that becomes increasingly relevant during the last years. People tend to purchase and consume wine during moments of conviviality such as festive meals (93,6%) or meals at restaurant with family or friends (86,4%), special events (78,4%), during trips (76,8%) and at home (67,2%) and other situations.<sup>46</sup> Besides, it is possible to notice how sociability represented a good prediction of wine consumption.<sup>47</sup> The innovative aspect of this research lies in the desire to understand whether these social motivations already have a predictive effect on the purchase intentions rather than in the manifestation of the action itself. Despite the fact that the purchase intention compared to the action attracted the interest of various researchers in the past, no one asked whether the social activities performed daily by individuals in combination with their subjective norms could influence them somehow (H6). For this reason, the purpose of this study is to underline not only the link between wine consumption and the reasons listed above but also the importance and influence of the purely social reasons, these results can be useful to marketers to better understand consumer behavior.

## Methods

The aim of this research is to deeply analyze what social aspects and how they influence the consumption behavior of individuals who have chosen to taste DOC Sicilian wine. Specifically, we analyze if some dimensions of

intensity of consumption and Subjective norms could mediate the relation between Social Identity and Behavioral Intentions. The data collection was conducted from May to December 2019 through an anonymous autonomous questionnaire filled out by regular consumers of Sicilian DOC wine who pay particular attention to the types of product they choose during the act of purchase. Study participants expressed their explicit consent in oral form to fill in the questionnaires.

All data have been managed according to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and in accordance with the directives of the Italian Psychology Association and the APA. The Internal Ethic Review Board (IERB) of the Department of Educational Sciences of University of Catania approved the present research.

Hypothesis 1: Subjective Norms will be positively correlated with Social Activity, Social Identity Perceived Behavioral Control and Behavioral Intentions;

Hypothesis 2: Social Activity will be positively correlated with Social Identity, Perceived Behavioral Control and Behavioral Intentions;

Hypothesis 3: Social Identity will be positively correlated with Perceived Behavioral Control and Behavioral Intentions;

Hypothesis 4: Perceived Behavioral Control will be positively correlated with Behavioral Intentions;

Hypothesis 5: Subjective Norms, Social Activity, Perceived Behavioral Control and Social Identity will predict Behavioral Intentions;

Hypothesis 6: Social Identity's effect on Behavioral Intentions will be mediated by Subjective Norms and Social Activity.

## Participants and Procedures

Three hundred and two consumers of DOC Sicilian wine participated to the study which were subdivided into 160 Males and 142 Females. The age of the sample showed that 43.7% of it was characterized by people between 18 and 24 years old which represented the age group with the highest percentage of people, 36.4% of participants are between 25 and 34, and 19.8% are over 35 years of age. It is noticeable that 54% of the sample had a degree, 32.8% had a high school diploma and 12.3% had a post-graduate degree. Besides, most of the sample declared to be a student (51%).

## Measure

### Wine Consumption Intensity

This dimension is measured using a scale characterized by 26 items with a 7-point Likert scale (from "Absolutely disagree" to "Absolutely agree") which evaluate three different dimensions (Social Activity, Healthy Life, Interest in Gastronomy);<sup>14</sup> that could affect people's consumption intensity. Social Activity is composed by 13 items to assess people's tendency to give particular importance to the consumption of a quality wine. Reliability of this factor is reported to be  $\alpha = 0.91$ . Healthy Life is characterized by 6 items to highlight the bond between a healthy lifestyle and consumption of wine. Factor's reliability is indicated to be  $\alpha = 0.95$ . Interest in Gastronomy consists of 7 items ( $\alpha = 0.89$ ) and it underlines the appreciation shown by people towards good food and wine.

Regarding the behavioral aspects related to the purchase, the intentions and the behavioral variables that affect them are measured relying on the measurement techniques provided by Bagozzi, Gurhan-Canli and Priester.<sup>16</sup>

### Subjective Norms

The construct is assessed using a statement "Most of the people who are important to me approve my decision to buy Sicilian DOC wine" with a 4-point scale (from completely false to completely true).

### Desire

This dimension is evaluated through a statement "I would like to buy Sicilian DOC wine again" with a 4-point scale (from completely false to completely true).

### Perceived Behavioral Control

This construct is detected using the following statement "If I wanted to, it would be easy for me to buy Sicilian DOC wine again." with a 4-point scale (from completely false to completely true).

### Behavioral Intentions

The item "How likely are you to buy Sicilian DOC wine again?" is used to assess this dimension. Participants answer to this question using a 4-point scale from very unlikely to very likely.

### Social Identity

It is asked to the participants the level of superimposition of their identity with one of the individuals who buy Sicilian DOC wine. A 7-point scale was used (from widely separated to completely overlapped).

## Results

According to previous researches<sup>19</sup>, it is possible to find significant levels of correlation between the dimensions of the intensity of consumption of Sicilian DOC wine and Subjective Norms, Desire, Perceived Behavioral Control, Behavioral Intentions and Social Identity using SPSS 26 (Table 1).

In Table 1 we include a summary of means, standard deviations and correlations between variables. It is noticeable that almost all variables positively correlated with each other. Specifically, Social Activity positively correlated with Subjective Norms ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Desire ( $r = 0.26$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Perceived Behavioral Control ( $r = 0.22$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ), Behavioral Intentions ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and Social Identity ( $r = 0.27$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, Behavioral Intentions positively and significantly correlated with all the other dimensions except Healthy Life which was not significant. The lack of correlation between the two variables could be due to the fact that the sample of reference values the recreational purpose in order to make the purchase more than the one related to a healthy lifestyle. It brought us to consider if Behavioral Intentions could be predicted by Subjective Norms, Desire, Perceived Behavioral Control, Social Identity<sup>19</sup> and one of the Intensity of Consumption's dimensions which is Social Activity. More specifically, people tend to highlight the importance of wine not only because of its utilitarian value but also as a symbolic value to show their status at a social level.<sup>24</sup> As a result, it could stimulate people to show the behavioral intentions to purchase wine. For this reason, we performed a stepwise regression analysis using SPSS 26.

As a result, it could stimulate people to show the behavioral intention to purchase wine. For this reason, we conducted a regression analysis with SEM in AMOS 22.0.

The Partial Least Squares regression analysis is presented in the path diagram (Figure 1) and shows that Subjective

Norms ( $\beta = 0.312$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Perceived Behavioral Control ( $\beta = 0.278$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), Social Identity ( $\beta = 0.187$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) and Social Activity ( $\beta = 0.121$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) are significant predictors of individuals' Behavioral Intentions (dependent variable) to purchase DOC Sicilian wine and they have a significant effect on it as shown above (Table 2). Besides, it is remarkable that the following model explained 37% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.370$ ).

We also applied SEM approach to test the mediational hypothesis (Figure 2) verifying the significance of the indirect effects, through the bootstrapping method in AMOS. Two goodness-of-fit indexes are provided by AMOS such as the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.963) and the standardized root mean square residual (SRMR = 0.046). Considering Hu and Bentler<sup>48</sup> who suggest that a two-index presentation can represent an acceptable fit, it is possible to confirm the suitability of the hypothesized model.

In Table 3 we report the results of the partial mediations showing the standardized  $\beta$  which indicates the intensity of the effect. In addition, we showed the Confidence Intervals (C.I.) 95% which expresses the significance of the effect with a 5% of probability of error (C.I.  $> 0$  are significant). The results show that the total effects of Social Identity on Behavioral Intentions ( $\beta = 0.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ;  $\beta = 0.10$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) are significant as well as its direct effect on it ( $\beta = 0.08$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ); moreover, both indirect effects of Social Identity on Behavioral Intentions (IE = 0.04; C.I. = 0.01–0.05; IE = 0.02; C.I. = 0.005–0.03) are significant and mediated by Subjective Norms and Social Activity.

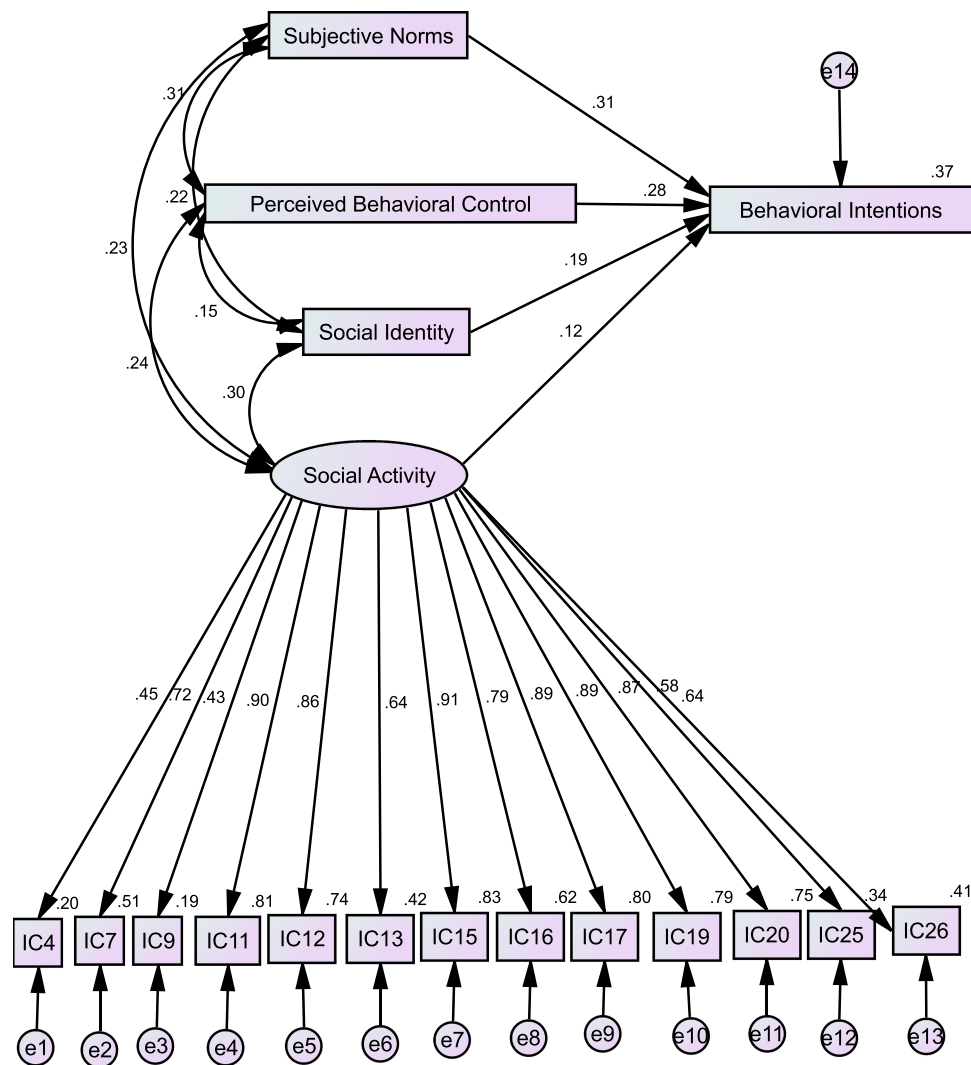
## Discussion and Conclusion

The priorities tend to change in our society from an economic, demographic and cultural point of view. Specifically, population's consumption of wine and alcoholics is enhanced

**Table 1** Descriptive and Correlations Between the Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Social Activity	3.68	1.51	1							
2. Healthy Life	3.75	1.40	0.81**	1						
3. Interest in Gastronomy	4.37	1.81	0.88**	0.85**	1					
4. Subjective Norms	3.33	0.633	0.19**	0.11*	0.17**	1				
5. Desire	3.48	0.608	0.26**	0.15**	0.28**	0.53**	1			
6. Perceived Behavioural Control	3.41	0.654	0.22**	0.16**	0.23**	0.31**	0.46**	1		
7. Behavioral Intentions	3.40	0.678	0.28**	0.10	0.20**	0.46**	0.58**	0.43**	1	
8. Social Identity	4.02	1.65	0.27**	0.15**	0.24**	0.22**	0.32**	0.15**	0.33**	1

**Notes:** M and SD are used to represent mean and standard deviation, respectively; \*Indicates  $p < 0.05$ ; \*\*Indicates  $p < 0.01$ .



**Figure 1** Path Diagram of the partial least square's regression predicting behavioral intentions with subjective norms, perceived behavioral control, social identity and social activity. IC is used to represent Intensity Consumption for all items which loaded in the factor while "e" represents the error.

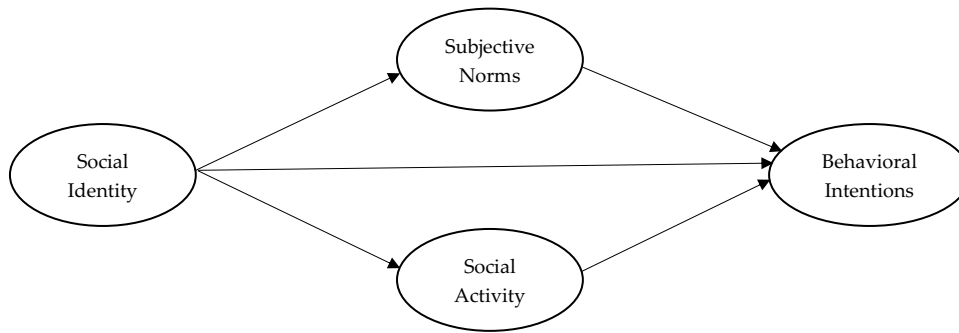
by social occasions such as special moments or events<sup>49</sup> because people want to satisfy less vital and more abstract needs. As a matter of fact, beer consumption is linked to pure social reasons in fact it is believed by consumers that their

purchase decisions are made to satisfy their own needs, desires and those of people which are considered important by them too.<sup>10</sup> In addition, people increasingly seek to pay attention to the region of origin of food and wine on the basis of their tastes, preferences and purposes of use.<sup>3</sup> This research deepened the findings presented by Santisi, Platania, Vullo<sup>12</sup> regarding the effects that the intensity of consumption could have on consumers' behavioral intentions when choosing Sicilian DOC wine and extending the sample of Platania and Santisi<sup>19</sup> to be capable of generalizing the outcomes. They show how people's desire could fully mediate the relationship between Subjective Norms and Behavioral Intentions and the psychological analysis of the consumption behavior of individuals and consumers. According to these findings, it is relevant to remember that Fernandez<sup>24</sup> highlight the fact that wine not only has a value

**Table 2** Regression Results

	Behavioral Intentions			
	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p
Subjective Norms	0.312	0.053	6.291	***
Perceived Behavioral Control	0.278	0.051	5.646	***
Social Identity	0.187	0.020	3.821	***
Social Activity	0.121	0.043	2.314	0.021
R2				0.370

**Notes:** S.E. is used to represent standard error while C.R. refers to critical ratio; \*\*\*p < 0.001.



**Figure 2** Hypothesized model predicting behavioral intentions with social identity mediated by subjective norms and social activity.

of use, but it has a value of symbolic exchange: it serves to demonstrate status. Consequently, people who identify themselves as consumers of Sicilian DOC wine consider that others share their choice and give to wine as a product the ability to contribute to their social relationships.<sup>50</sup> It is important to bear in mind that the Self-Regulation Theory of Bagozzi<sup>15</sup> highlights the fact that behavioral intentions are influenced by evaluative and affective attitude, social identity, subjective norms, desire and perceived behavioral control. As a result, this leads them to express their behavioral intention to buy DOC Sicilian wine. Accordingly, these results strengthen the link between the social functions of wine and its actual purchase by showing how the motivations of buying a product rather than another one is determined by the motivations related to the social relationships with others and the social context they belong to.<sup>19,50</sup> All these results underline the importance of typical Sicilian products in lifestyle and choices of people when they want purchase wine. This highlights a trend also present in previous research<sup>51–53</sup> in reference to the significance of the origin and quality of products that in combination with social support and the affirmation of their social status bring added value to DOC wine. Besides, it has been shown that a brand could be easily hated by audience not for their products’ performance but mostly for the symbolic impact that is connected to the brand itself.<sup>54</sup> It means that the brand must pay attention to its symbolic value to be aligned with the symbolic values sought

by the consumer in order to be chosen and purchased. Companies should take particular care to provide a quality product that highlights its social function in such a way that it does not take the risk of being discarded by the consumer during the choice phase and to take advantage of the opportunity to develop marketing strategies aimed to touch specific groups of consumers and others focused on the social value which respect their expectations and interpersonal connection created by Sicilian DOC wine in order to attract new consumers.<sup>55,56</sup> Regarding the limitations and prospects of this research, it is fundamental to analyze differences considering several control variables such as gender, level of instruction, ethnicity and income. Indeed, previous researches showed that females tend to consider that wine consumption is good for people’s health rather than males.<sup>19</sup> In addition, females and males prefer to consume wine in different social activities: females choose a certain wine to be enjoyed as an accompaniment during a conversation while males are wine talking.<sup>14</sup> Another aspect of the research that should be extended for further studies is the enlargement of the sample to include subjects from different countries to investigate the potential interest of foreigners in Sicilian products and wine.

In this study, we investigated the potential influence of social factors on the behavioral intention to buy Sicilian wine. The current society has changed its priorities by making the purely symbolic value of the product prevail

**Table 3** Effects of Social Identity on Behavioral Intentions Through Subjective Norms and Social Activity (Standardized  $\beta$ )

Paths	Indirect Effect		Direct Effect		Total Effect	
	$\beta$	C.I. 95%	$\beta$	C.I. 95%	$\beta$	C.I. 95%
Social Identity – Subjective Norms – Behavioral Intentions	0.04	0.01 – 0.05	0.08	0.04 – 0.12	0.12	0.02 – 0.08
Social Identity – Social Activity – Behavioral Intentions	0.02	0.005 – 0.03	0.08	0.04 – 0.12	0.10	0.02 – 0.08

**Note:** C.I. is used to represent confidence interval.



in order to be appreciated by others for our choices. According to our results, it was possible to see how the social identification of an individual, the thoughts of others and the social and recreational activities promoted the increase of the purchase intention of Sicilian DOC wine and the effective fulfillment of the act of purchase.

## Disclosure

The authors report no conflicts of interest in this work.

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