

Abstract

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Title: *The Impact of Price Prestige on Perceived Wine Quality, Pairing Effectiveness, and Guest Experience in a Fine Dining Context*

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Introduction

This research explores how the perceived price of wine influences guest perception in a fine dining setting. Drawing on the concept of price prestige, the study investigates whether higher stated wine prices affect how diners evaluate wine quality, satisfaction with wine-food pairing, the sense of luxury, and overall dining experience. The project was conducted at Suzie's & Van Aken, a Michelin-recommended restaurant in Oegstgeest, the Netherlands.

Methodology

A quasi-experimental case study design was implemented. Sixty guests were randomly assigned to receive a wine pairing made up entirely of either €15 or €30 retail-priced wines. The wines were carefully selected and paired with the same tasting menu, with equal attention to style and complementarity. The only variable manipulated was the communicated price tier, which was made visible during the meal. Before dining, guests completed a segmentation survey to identify consumer types (e.g., connoisseurs, price-sensitive guests, experience-seekers). After the meal, participants rated their perceptions on key dimensions using five-point Likert-style scales. A total of 59 valid responses were collected and analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Results

Across all categories, guest responses were highly positive. However, the €30 wine group consistently rated the experience marginally higher in the following areas:

- Perceived Wine Quality: 4.26 vs. 4.07 (on a 5-point scale)
- Pairing Satisfaction: 4.35 vs. 4.22
- Perceived Luxury: 4.11 vs. 4.00
- Effect on Overall Experience: Both groups scored 4.00

Stacked bar charts further illustrated how the €30 group gave more responses in the highest categories (e.g., “very high quality,” “extremely satisfied”). Qualitative comments supported these trends. Some €30 guests expressed that the wines felt appropriately priced for a high-end setting, while a few €15 guests noted that the wines seemed less impressive on their own, though successful in combination with food.

Conclusion

The study provides evidence that price visibility can subtly shape guest perception in a fine dining context, even when product quality is carefully matched. This suggests that pricing strategy plays a psychological role beyond objective quality and highlights the importance of perceived value and presentation in hospitality.

While the modest sample size limits generalizability, the findings are particularly relevant to practitioners in fine dining and wine service, offering practical insights into how price cues influence guest satisfaction.

Recommendations

- Fine dining establishments should consider the psychological effects of wine pricing on guest perception, especially in pairing formats.
- Operators may benefit from investing in storytelling and presentation around wine, as these reinforce perceived value.
- Future research could replicate the study across multiple venues and price tiers to expand the dataset and confirm patterns.

Key words: *wine pricing, price prestige, perceived quality, wine pairing, fine dining, guest experience, consumer psychology, wine perception, pricing strategy, restaurant research, wine marketing*