**Are we what we drink?**

*An exploratory survey concerning the question if and to what extend there can be detected a connection between personality and preferred flavor profile of wine.*

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**Abstract**

In this study we try to find an answer to the question whether or not there is an association between personality and flavor preference in wine. If this can be found, it would not only contribute to already existing and further scientific research on the topic of personality and flavor preference, it would also be a starting point for a powerful marketing tool in the hands of beverage companies and retail chains specialized in alcoholic beverages.

The survey consists of two parts: a theoretical part and a practical part describing the results from a tasting with 101 participants. In advance it must be stressed that this survey is a direction for further scientific research. This because of the fact that the group of participants was too small and therefore not representative. This study also reveals some issues that became apparent while we carried out the survey.

The theoretical part of this thesis starts with the explanation of the DISC personality model. It is based on two variables. Whether or not a person regards his environment as favorable (people oriented) or not (task oriented) and whether or not that person regards himself as stronger (out-going) or less strong (reserved) than his environment. This leads to a quadrant consisting of four personality styles that are to a greater or lesser extent present in everyone:

- Dominance (D): task oriented and outgoing.
- Influence (I): people oriented and outgoing.
- Steadiness (S): people oriented and reserved.
- Conscientiousness (C): task oriented and reserved.

The DISC personality system was used in the tasting to define the personalities of the participants.

In the second chapter we focused on understanding flavor and the scientifically validated flavor style theory as presented by Peter Klosse. This theory consists of three elements. First, mouthfeel which is divided in contracting, coating and dry (which is neutral in between the other two elements). Secondly, flavor intensity which can be high, low or something in between. Thirdly, flavor type which is divided in two flavor tones: ripe and fresh. The combination of flavor intensity and flavor type is called flavor richness. This leads to eight flavor styles. Flavor richness low: neutral (dry), fresh (contracting), round (coating) and balance low.  Flavor richness high: robust (dry), pungent (contracting), full (coating) and balance high.

The next step was to combine the DISC system and the flavor style theory. Based on testing results from scientific research four assumptions were made in order to connect the DISC personality system and the flavor style theory.

1. Influential and steady personality styles prefer a sweet(er) thus coating wine.
2. Dominant personality styles prefer acidic and therefore contracting wines.
3. Dominant and influential personality styles prefer high flavor rich wines.
4. Conscientious personality styles prefer a contracting style of wine.

This led to the following connection.

- The dominant personality style is connected to the pungent flavor style.
- The influential personality style is connected to the full flavor style.
- The conscientious personality style is connected to the fresh flavor style.
- The steady personality style is connected to the round flavor style.

The four assumptions were also the starting point for the tasting as to whether or not they could be validated. During the tasting four white wines and four red wines were presented, for each flavor personality quadrant a white and a red wine.

The final chapter explains the setting and the outcome of the wine tasting. 101 participants took part in the tasting: 42 women and 59 men. Of these persons 30 participants were D style, 15 I personality, 35 had an S personality and 21 had a C personality style. The group was also divided in experts (23) and none-experts (78). Finally we looked at the axes outgoing vs. reserved and task oriented vs. people oriented.

Men and women scored almost identical on wine preference both in white and in red wines. This indicates that sex is not a determining factor in wine preference. The outcome of the experts vs. the none-experts made clear that the choice of wines based on the flavor style systematics should be done very carefully to rule out mistakes. Both the D wines in white and red scored significantly different in the experts group, the white wine because of acquired taste (Riesling with goût de petrol), red because of better quality level. On the one on one match between personality and wine of first choice experts score both in white and red above the ad random hit rate of 25% (30% and 35%). When also looking at the second choice in red they even score 78% (were 50% would be the ad random score). We do not know why this is.

The four personality profiles show in relation to matching flavor preference a mixed outcome looking at the first choice match. The white I (47%) and red D wine (53%) score above the ad random hit rate of 25%, the white C wine scores below average. The other wines score about ad random. Since the I and D wine score high, it raises the question of 'signature wines' that are liked by people in general rather than in connection to one's personality.

Finally we looked at the results based on the four assumptions. On out-going vs. reserved the out-going persons show a match on personality and first choice for white of 31% and 38% for red indicating a preference for high flavor richness in wine (assumption 3). On task oriented vs. people oriented the outcome is diverging. The people oriented persons score above ad random on white and ad random on red. This might point at a preference for a coating wine style in combination with personality (assumption 1). The task oriented people showed a score below average on the match between personality and wine on white and a match above average on red. This might indicate all the more that there was a failure in wine selection for the D white and red wine (assumption 2 and 4 remain inconclusive).

The overall conclusion is that the group of participants was too small to reach for representative outcomes. Further research will need a much bigger group to rule out mistakes in the set up for the tasting, for example mistakes made in filling in the DISC test. Suggestions were also made about a bigger tasting panel for selecting the wines in order to rule out bias concerning style of wine in advance. Further research should also be based on statistic models that take the complete DISC pattern consisting of all four elements of a person into account (not only the preferential style) thereby reaching much more accurate results. The present study is a good start in that direction.