

## THE FACTORS INFLUENCING CONSUMERS' BEHAVIOUR ON WINE CONSUMPTION IN THE MOLDOVAN WINE MARKET

**Silvius STANCIU**

[sstanciu@ugal.ro](mailto:sstanciu@ugal.ro)

*The University of Economic Studies of Bucharest, Romania*

**Tatiana NEAGU**

*Dunarea de Jos University of Galati, Romania*

With an area of over 148000 ha allotted to vine culture, the Republic of Moldova has a well-developed traditional wine industry, recognized on international markets. Although the largest part of wine-making products is designed for export, we must not neglect the domestic market, which assures the stability and constancy of consumption. The district Cahul, the region in which the research was carried out, represents one of the most important areas of production of red wines, sweet and semi-sweet wines. The study tried to highlight the main features of Moldavian consumer of table wines, factors of influence in the consumption and acquisition of wines, the degree of satisfaction regarding the products that exist on the market. The results of research can be useful to both producers and traders of local and import wines.

**Keywords:** table wines, consumer behaviour, quality of wine-making products.

**Jel code:** M16, M21

### **Presentation of studied area**

Cahul, residence of the district with the same name, is located in the South-Western part of Republic of Moldova, near the border with Romania and 175 km from Chişinău. It is on the sixth place as number of inhabitants (about 41,1 thousand inhabitants/2012), being the third city as economic development and social importance in the Republic of Moldova. In Cahul city there are registered 3.800 economic agents, most of them in the field of trade (2000), in industry (43), constructions (37), transport (67), peasant households (684). The city has a relatively diversified economy, the industrial sector being represented by companies in the food industry, light industry and factories of construction materials. In the food industry the main enterprises are Wine Factory Cahul, which processes every year 12-14 thousand tons of grapes, producing over a million decalitres of wine-making products; cheese factory, with capacity of about 70 tons of dairy products, 2.3 tons of butter and 0.6 tons of pressed cheese/day and bread factory with the capacity of 32 tons of panification products/day. In Cahul 143 enterprises activate in the sphere of trade, there are 8 restaurants and 77 public food enterprises etc.

The surface of agricultural lands in the district is 2,009 ha, of which arable lands 1,142 ha and vine plantations 673 ha. The main agricultural branch is vegetal production, with the spread of cereal cultures, sunflower, grapes and vegetable cultures. A major weight in agricultural production is held by the village Cotihana. As a population structure, the city of Cahul is a pluri-ethnic city. The census (2011) highlights that over 60 % of the total number of population are Moldavians/Romanians, followed by Russians (17,1%), Ukrainians (11%), Bulgarians (6,66%), Gagauzians (3,26%) and other ethnicities. The economically active population represents about 62% of the total number of inhabitants, most of them being hired in non-productive sphere.

### **Presentation of evaluated product**

Wines are beverages obtained by alcoholic fermentation of the must obtained from grapes, the fruit of vine (*Vitis vinifera*). There are known over 4,000 vine varieties, mostly producing wine-making grapes. The wine-making grapes have a high content of sugar, harmonious acidity, flavor components and release a large quantity of must. In order to obtain quality wines, the grapes are picked at full maturity or overmaturity. The table wines are mainly obtained from noble varieties of great productivity, cultivated in specialized vine areas. In the category of current consumption wines there are those obtained from "solitary vineyards", those resulted from grapes of table varieties which do not correspond for consumption in fresh state or those resulted from local varieties, with superior resistance to diseases, authorized for culture.

**Presentation of analysis questionnaire**

The market survey carried out targeted the collection of information about the current preferences of population from Cahul district regarding the consumption of alcoholic drinks – table wine. The research method used was direct, based on a questionnaire presented by the interview operator and through the internet network. The respondents were selected according to previously established conditions, by region, age and gender. The questionnaire is made of 37 closed questions, structured in six sections:

- a. Section I–contains questions which evaluate the environment in which the respondent and his family live (3 questions)
- b. Section II–designed for respondents who do not consume table wines, highlights the reasons for which they do not consume table wines and what other alcoholic drinks they consume/do not consume (2 questions).
- c. Section III–designed for those who consume table wines (8 questions), identifies the place where the respondent buys the wine, the frequency of acquisition, occasions, period of year, etc.
- d. Section IV–highlights the consumption preferences – colour, taste, variety of preferred wine, origin –import/export wine etc. (8 questions)
- e. Section V – identifies the exigencies of the consumer in the field of quality, degree of satisfaction, motivations of acquisition in relation to price, packaging etc. (8 questions)
- f. Section VI –general data regarding the respondent – gender, age, studies, income etc (8 questions)

**The formation of questionnaire** implies the selection of the number of persons, women and men and origin of respondents (urban, rural). The study targets a sample of 1000 persons from the district of Cahul, with equal weights of women and men, 500 interviews were carried out in urban environment (Cahul) and 500 in villages, proportional to the weight of population in the district. The segmentation of sample was done by taking into account:

**Geographical/demographic criteria.** The interviews were taken in balance -500 in the city and 500 in villages from Cahul district.

**Gender** – 50 % of sample was composed of men and 50 % women.

**Age** - all the interviewed persons are over 18 years and were grouped by four categories of age (18-25, 26-35, 36-50, respectively 51-65 years old)

**Description of sample subject to interview**

Different aspects of respondents from the sample were evaluated such as: age, gender, education, town, income and type of employment. Over 60 % of respondents have the age between 18-50 years old, 56 % of respondents have high school studies, 33% have higher education and the rest of them have elementary studies or do not have an education. The income level is average and large for 85% of respondents. The financial status can be qualified as satisfactory, in terms of purchasing power over 72 % of respondents have incomes between 75-150 euro

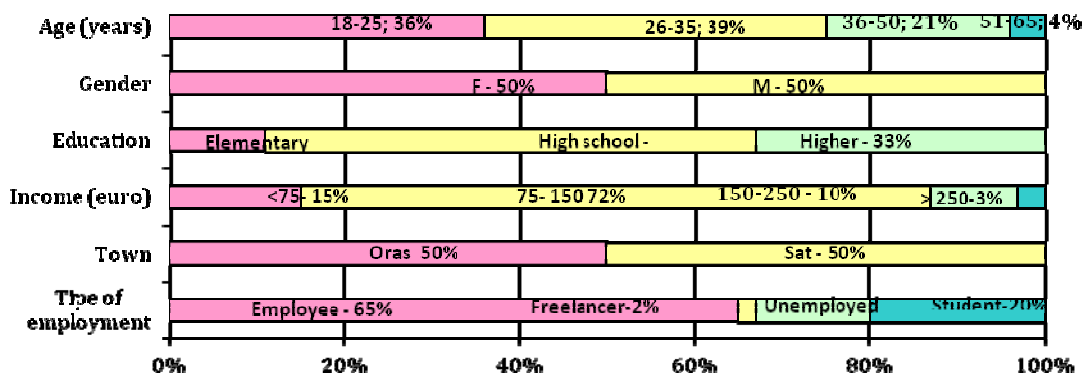


Figure 1. Structure of sample subject to survey (%)

**Frequency of consumption of table wine.**

To the question regarding the consumption of table wines 85 % of respondents answered affirmatively. For the differentiation of areas in which the frequency of consumption is higher, we evaluated comparatively the answers by the regions in which the interviews were taken (rural-urban). We noticed that the largest weight of table wine consumers was in Cahul, higher by 12% compared to rural consumers. So, about 57% of city inhabitants consume table wine, compared to villagers, where the

weight is slightly lower (about 47 %). In figure 2 we represented the consumption of table wine by the age of respondents. We can see that the respondents aged between 26 and 35 years old show affinity for table wine, close to the persons aged over 50 (60% - 70%), but there is no significant difference between the persons aged up to 25 years old and the average aged persons (45-53%).

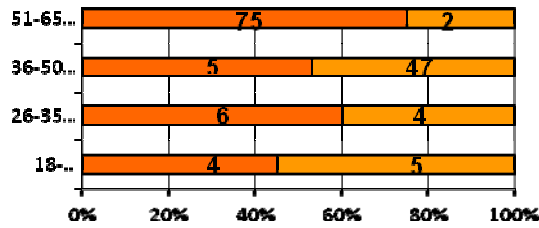


Figure 2. Weight of consumption by age

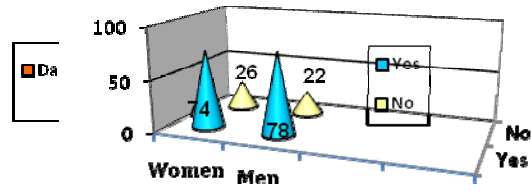


Figure 3. Weight of wine consumption by gender

The gender of consumer does not decisively influence consumption, the women consumers having a weight close to men's (figure 3).

### Reasons for which they do not consume table wine in Cahul District

The persons who said that they do not consume table wine were asked about the cause of abstinence. The most frequent reason was the consumption of other alcoholic drinks (80%) or other reasons- religion, etc (13,4%). Only 6,6 % of non-consumers invoked reasons of health for abstinence. Of those who do not drink table wine 66,6% prefer beer and 33,4% prefer champagne.

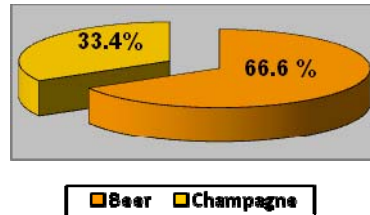
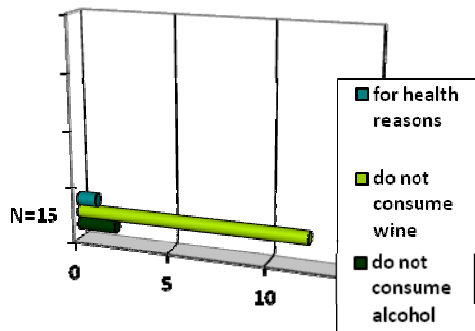


Figure 4. Reasons for which they do not consume table wine

As for their background, the persons from Cahul who do not consume wine invoked mostly health reasons (55,55%), while in villages the non-consumers of wine usually consume other alcoholic drinks (50%). About the same number of respondents from Cahul and from other towns said that they do not consume alcohol in general (11-16 %).

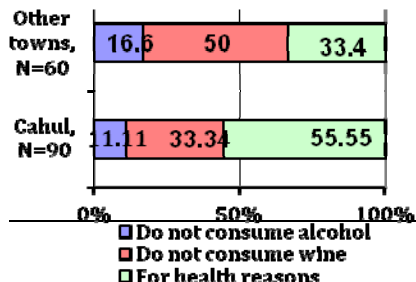


Figure 5. Reasons for not consuming table wine

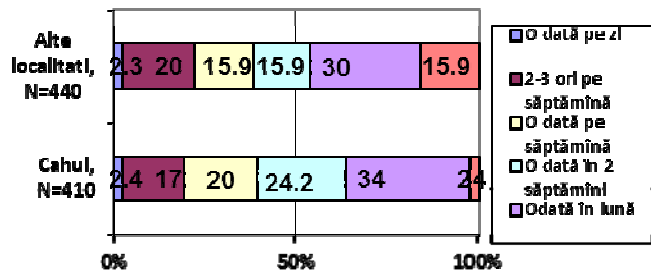


Figure 6. Frequency of wine consumption

Frequency of consumption (figure 6) - 9,5 % of respondents mentioned a rare wine consumption (maximum once a month), 31,8% consume table wine at least once a month, 20 % mentioned a consumption frequency of at least every two weeks, 18% consume table wine once a week and 19 % - twice /three times or more often a week. The weight of consumers with consumption frequency once a day is 2 % of the whole sample. The highest consumption frequency was recorded in Cahul. Most of respondents mentioned the consumption of table wine once a week, every two weeks or once a month. A higher difference is noticed at a consumption frequency more rarely than a month: Cahul -2,4%, compared

to other towns 15,9 %. Men consume table wine more often than women vin (33.4% compared to 22.5%). About 37.5% of women consume table wine once a month or more rarely, while only 8,8% of men consume table wine only once a month.

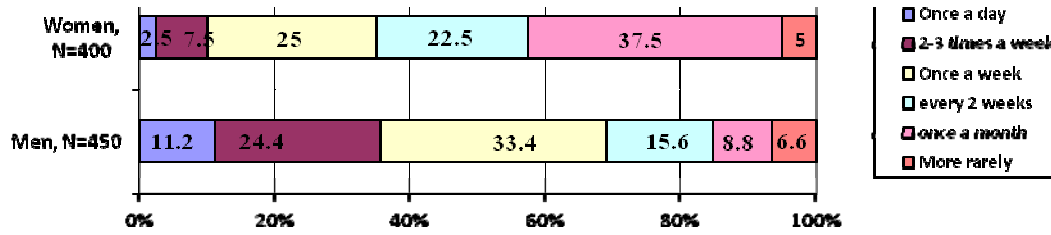


Figure 7. Consumption frequency of table wine by gender

By analysing the wine consumption frequency by age we can see that the participants aged between 26-35 and those over 45 years old often consume brewed table wine (26 % respectively 31%), with a frequency of 1-3 times a week. In the other age groups the weight is 13-18%.

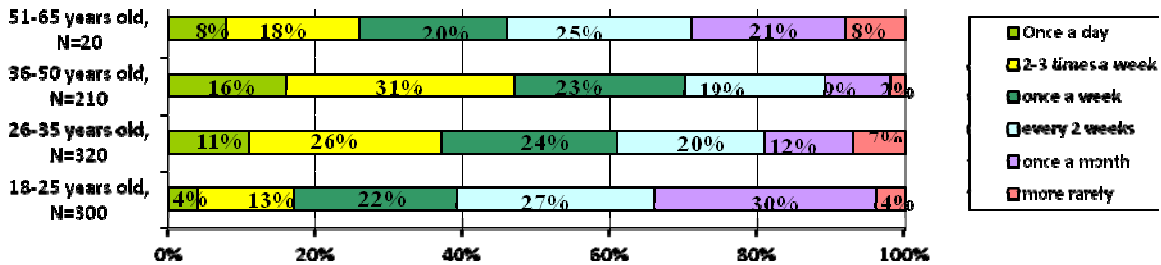


Figure 8. Consumption frequency of table wine by the age of respondents

Wine consumption frequency does not significantly depend on the education level. The persons with high school and higher education relatively have a higher frequency in the consumption of table wine.

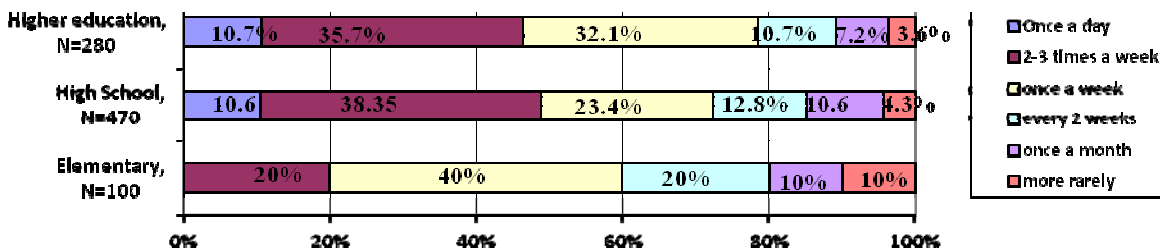


Figure 9. Consumption frequency of table wine by education level

The analysis of data presented in figure 10 leads to the highlighting of a correlation between the increase of incomes and the taste for table wines.

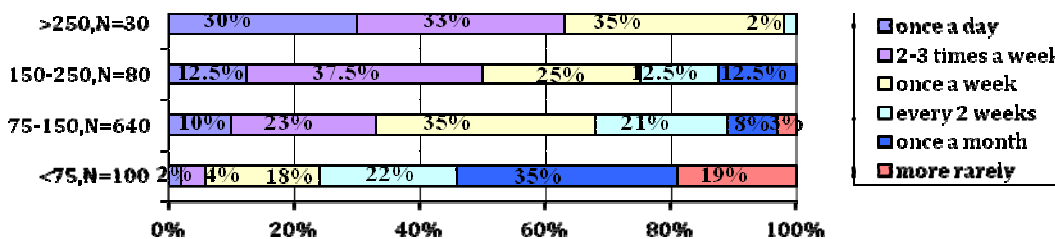


Figure 10. Consumption frequency (%) by level of income (euro)

**Place of consumption of table wine** About half of participants (53-54 %) usually consume wine at home, 32 – 36 % of respondents drink wine at friends' place, relatives, colleagues and only a small part

in bars and restaurants (10- 15%), the weights being close between villages and Cahul.

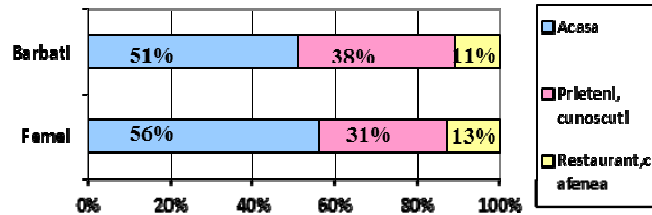
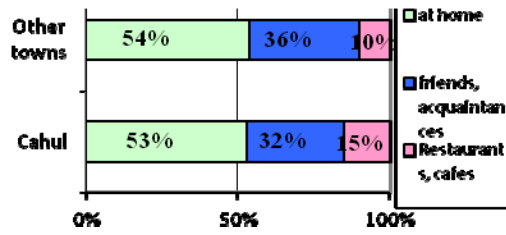


Figure 11. Place of wine consumption (%) by location and region Figure 12. Place of wine consumption, by gender

The wine consumption place does not significantly vary by gender of respondents. Both women and men mainly consume wine in the family, in relatively close proportions. By segments of age we can see the preference for wine consumption at home for most consumers, except for the middle age persons, who prefer to consume wine at restaurants (figure 13).

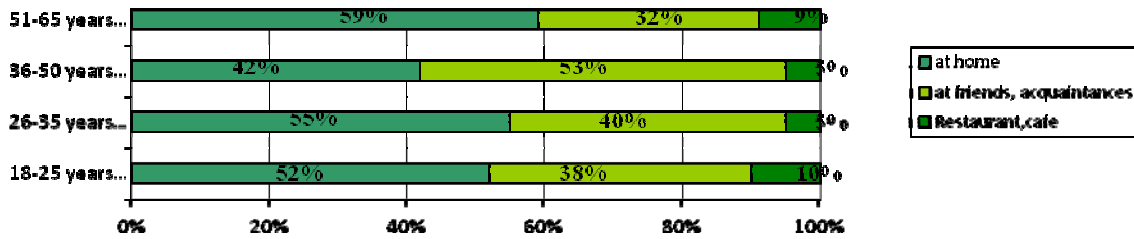


Figure 13 Place of wine consumption by age

As expected, the persons with higher incomes prefer to consume wine mainly in restaurants, (Figure 14)

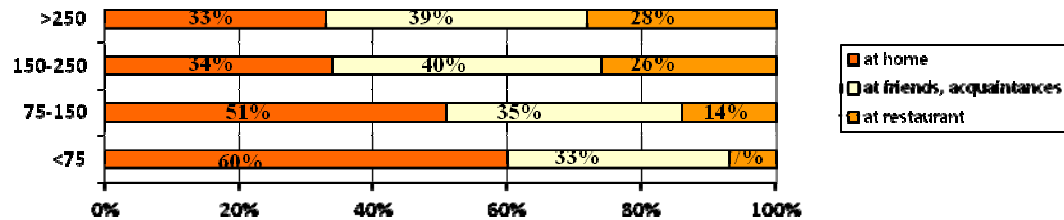


Figure 14 Consumer preferences for place of wine consumption (%), by income (euro)

**The place of procurement of table wine** Consumers buy table wine mainly from the supermarket (45% of respondents), specialized shops (35%), neighbourhood shops (19%) or the market (5%) - Figure 15, a).

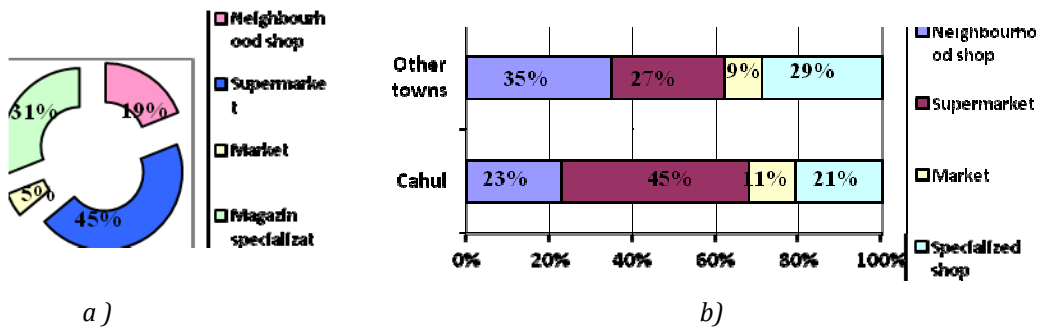


Figure 15 Place of wine procurement by shops (a) and differentiated by rural/urban (b)

In Cahul city the supermarket is preferred as place of wine procurement, followed by neighbourhood shops and specialized shops. In the other cities the consumers go more rarely to supermarket for wine, resorting to neighbourhood shops or specialized shops. We cannot see differences

in the choice of place of wine procurement by gender of buyer (figure 16). The persons with high school and higher education buy wine especially from the supermarket, while the persons with elementary studies or without education prefer neighbourhood shops or other points of distribution (figure 18).

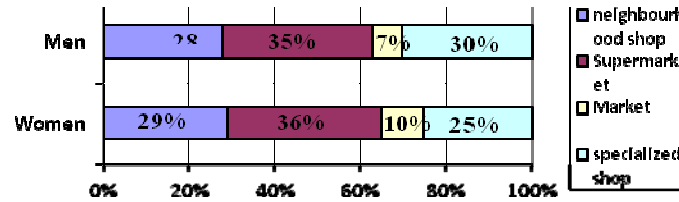


Figure 16. Place of wine procurement by gender of buyer

Most of consumers tend to buy table wine more rarely from the neighbourhood shop. The market is the least preferred place by consumers of table wine.

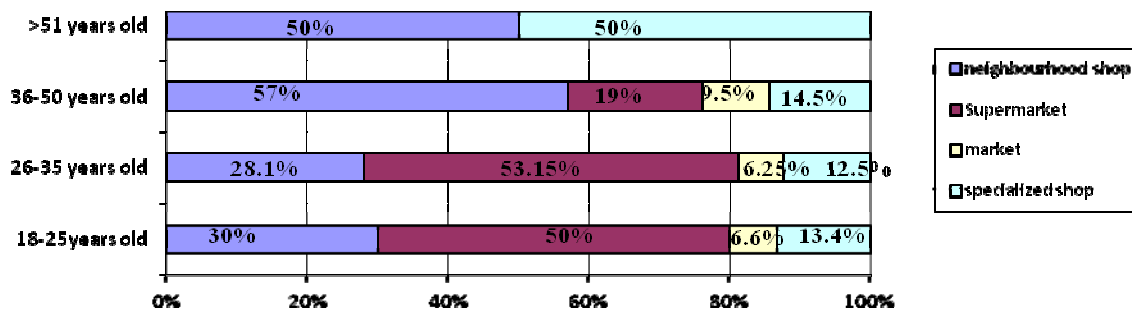


Figure 17 Place of wine procurement, by age

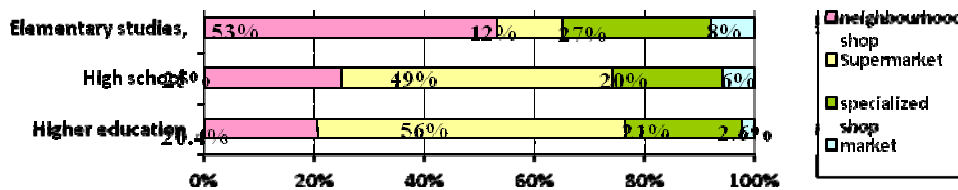


Figure 18: Place of wine procurement by studies

With the increase of income level, the preferences of consumers in wine acquisition go from neighbourhood shops to supermarket. In 80 % of cases the respondents who earn more than 250 euro prefer to buy brewed wine from the supermarket. There is also an increase in the preferences of persons with average studies for the supermarket.

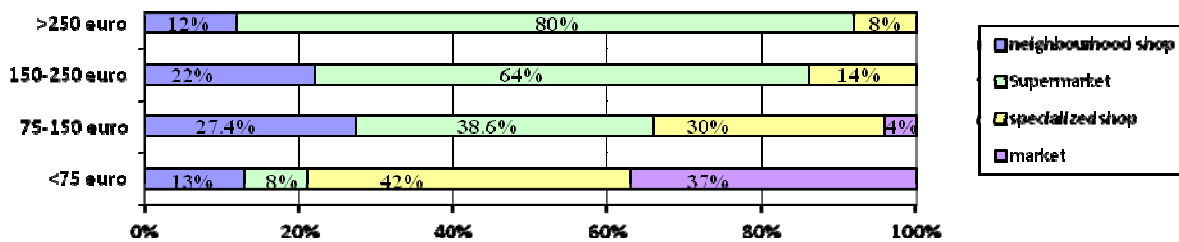


Figure 19 Place of wine procurement,

**Frequency of table wine procurement.** Over half of respondents buy wine more rarely than once a month, 36% buy wine every month, while 10% of respondents buy wine weekly. The highest frequency in wine purchase was determined in Cahul. About 40% of respondents from the city buy wine every month and 12% every week. In the other towns 74% of respondents mentioned that they procure wine more rarely than once a month.

The results showed a higher frequency of purchase in respondents aged between 26-35 and in those over 51 years old. About 55% of the persons who belong to these segments of age buy wine weekly

or monthly, while about 62% of participants aged between 18-25 and 36-45 buy wine more rarely than once a month (figure 21)

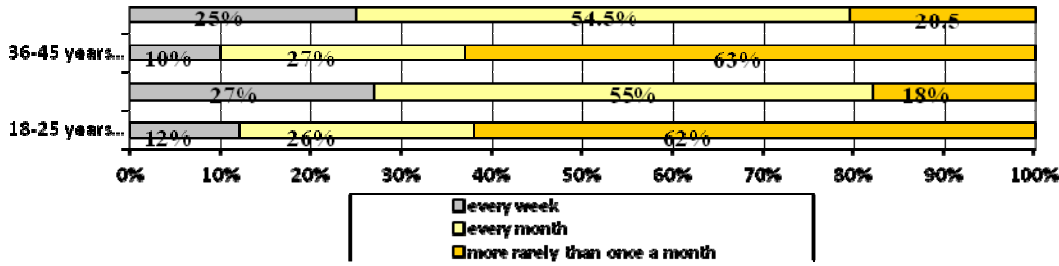


Figure 20. Frequency of wine procurement by age of consumer

Men buy wine more often than women. Thus, 14% of men buy wine every week, while the same frequency was recorded in 6 % of women. Most women (61%) notified that they buy wine more rarely than once a month, compared to 47 % of men.

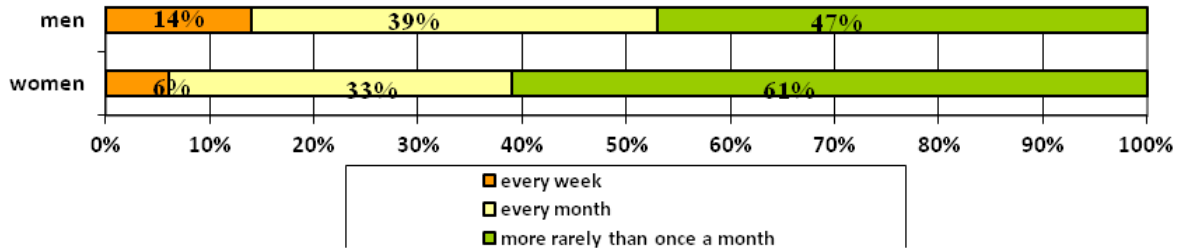


Figure 21. Frequency of wine procurement by gender of consumer

The frequency of wine purchasing is higher in respondents with an income exceeding 75 euro/month. The respondents with a lower income than 75 euro buy wine more rarely, maximum once a month.

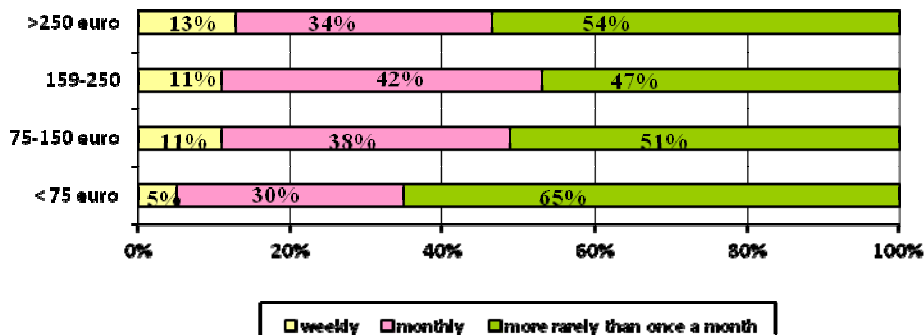


Figure 22 Frequency of wine procurement by income of consumer

**Occasions of purchasing table wine.** Most of participants in the survey buy wine on the occasion of holidays (New Year’s Eve, Christmas, Easter holidays etc.) (42%), for birthdays (30%), when they visit relatives/friends (18%) or for own consumption (8%).

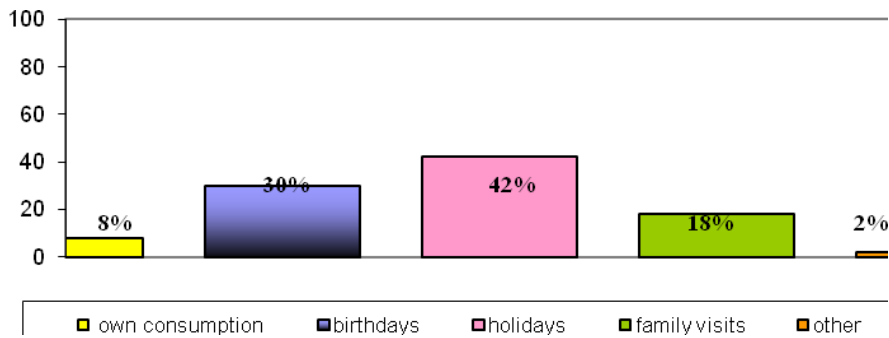


Figure 23 Special occasions for wine procurement

**Perception/offering of wine as a present.** To the question for whom they would buy wine as a gift, almost half of respondents (48%) said that the gender of the person for whom they would buy wine did not matter. However, 40% of the population subject to survey would buy wine as a gift for a gentleman and fewer for a lady (12%)

**The person who makes the decision regarding the purchase of wine.** During the research the persons were asked who made the decision in the purchase of wine. 45% of respondents indicated that both the husband and the wife equally participated in the purchase of wine, 43% said that the husband/boyfriend coordinated the purchase of wine, and the remaining respondents (12%) mentioned that wives/girlfriends handled the purchase of wine.

**Frequency of purchasing wine during the whole year.** Less than half of respondents (45%) buy wine equally every season, 22 % of participants buy wine in winter, every fifth respondent – in spring and summer and the remaining respondents in autumn (13%)

**Preferences regarding table wine**

**The factors that influence the wine-purchasing decisions.** The interviewed persons were offered the possibility to indicate the factors that influence their decisions of procuring table wine. The respondents attributed to each factor indicated in the questionnaire an importance coefficient, using a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (very important). The quality of products was appointed the most important criterion which influences the purchasing decision. Other important factors in the purchasing of products are the price, packaging, brand, method of presentation, the shop from where it is procured.

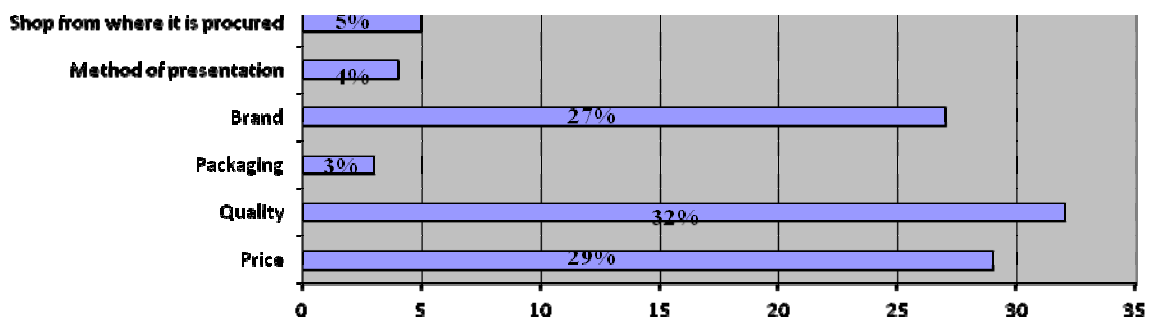


Figure 24 Factors which influence the purchasing decision

**Preferences regarding the colour of wine.** The respondents were asked about the colour of preferred wine. Red wines are the most preferred in the options expressed by the consumers (51%), followed by white wines 22 %, and the pink wines 9% of preferences. About 18% of respondents prefer all the wines, regardless of colour. Women prefer especially the white wines.

**Types of preferred wines.** The preferences of consumers for a type of wine were analysed by the region where the interview was carried out. The semi-sweet wines are appreciated close to Cahul and in the other towns (39-36 % of respondents). The least preferred wines are desert wines (10 - 14% of respondents). A third of respondents from Cahul choose dry wines, almost equally to rural environment (30%). Semi-dry wines are preferred by 16% of respondents from Cahul and by 20 % of respondents from the other towns.



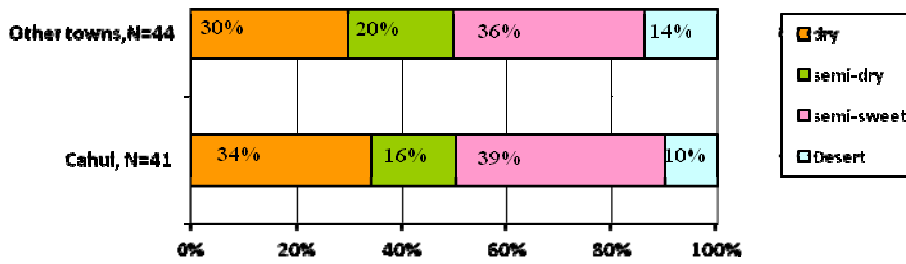


Figure 25 Preferred taste of wine, by region

Depending on the age of respondents, the preference for dry wines increases with the age. While only 26 % of respondents of the youngest age segment prefer dry wines, over 50% of old respondents (over 51 years old) choose dry wines. The semi-sweet wines and dessert wines are preferred by young consumers.

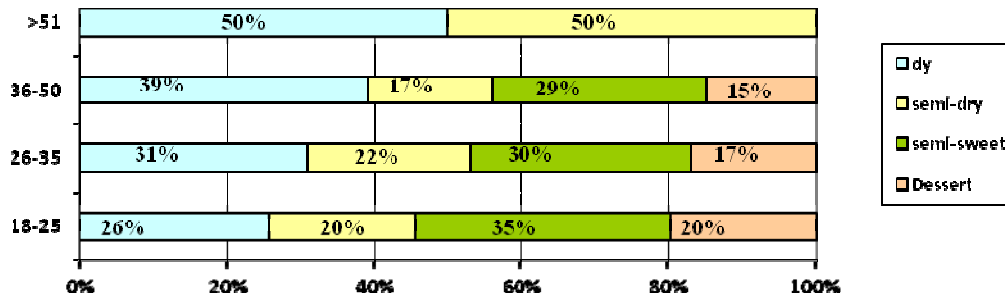


Figure 26 Preferred taste of wine by age of respondent

The gender of respondent does not significantly influence the preference for the taste of wine

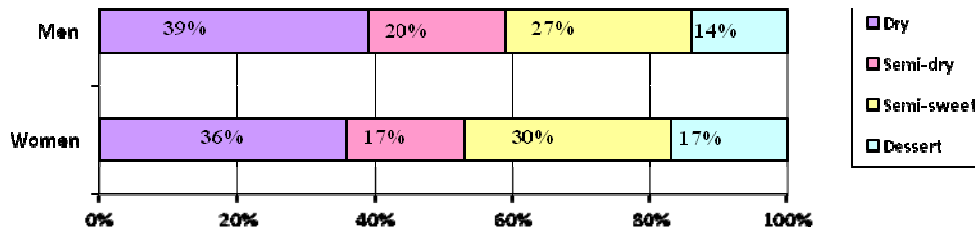


Figure 27 Preferred taste of wine and gender of respondent

Divided by income of respondents, the preferences of consumers for dry wines do not significantly vary, except for respondents from the category of higher incomes above 250 euro. Semi-sweet wines are preferred to a larger extent by those with lower incomes (33%). The preferences for the other two types of wines, analysed by categories of income, do not vary considerably.

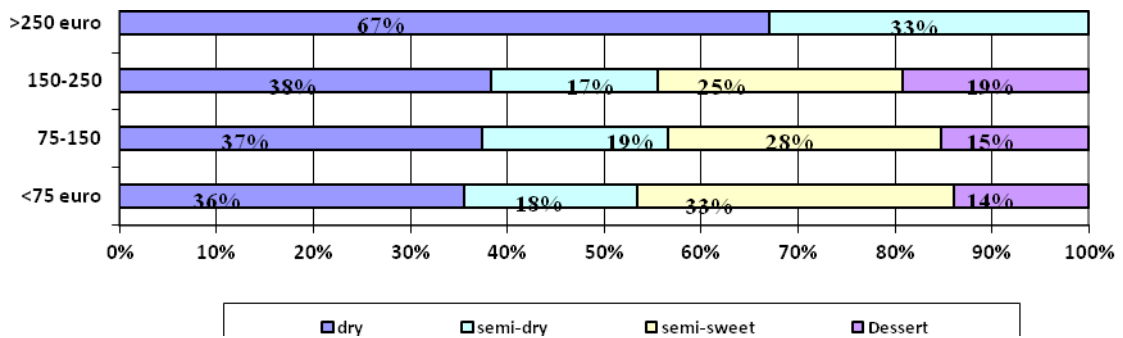


Figure 28 Preferred taste of wine, by income level

**Types of preferred wines.** The interviewed persons were asked to indicate the preferred type of wine. About a half of respondents prefer Cahor, followed by Cabernet and Chardonnay (39 % -40%). Every third respondent showed preference for the type of wine Muscat White and less than a fifth prefer the wines Aligote, Sauvignon and Merlot.

Other types of wines mentioned were: Isabella, Reçateteli, Feteasca, Struguraș, Buchet Moldavii.

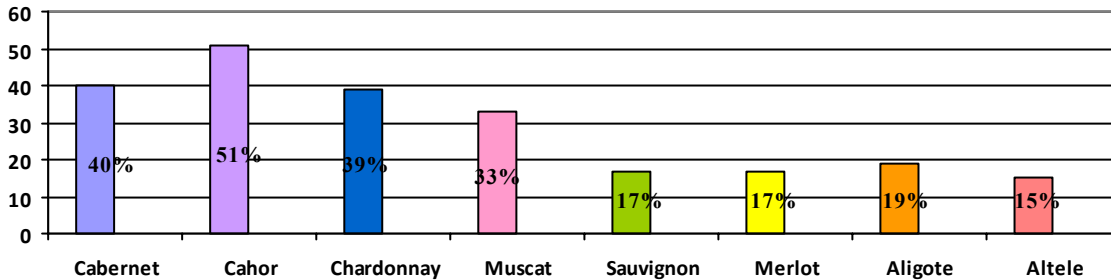


Figure 29 Preferred type of wine

The preferences regarding the types of wine do not significantly vary by region. Cahor holds the largest quota in both regions. In Cahul this type of wine, with 45% of the preferences expressed is followed by Cabernet (33%), Muscat (21%) and Chardonnay (21%). On the third place there is Merlot wine (17%) and Sauvignon (17%). A similar situation can be seen in the other towns, the difference between the preferences of consumers is 1-4 percentage points.

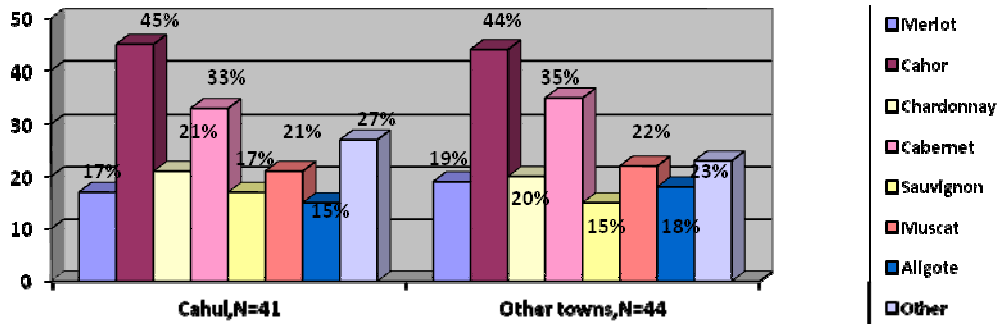


Figure 30 Preferred type of wine, by region of respondent

According to figure 31, we can see that respondents aged between 26-35 prefer more the brand Cahor and Cabernet Sauvignon (58% and 49%). As age increases, the weight of consumers who prefer other types of wines increases from 48% to 55%.

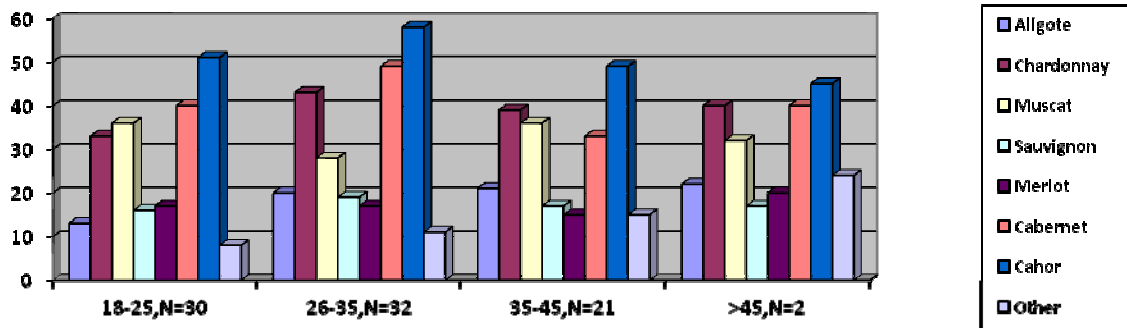


Figure 31. Preferred type of wine by age of respondents

In the analysis of preferences of consumers by gender there were no significant variations.

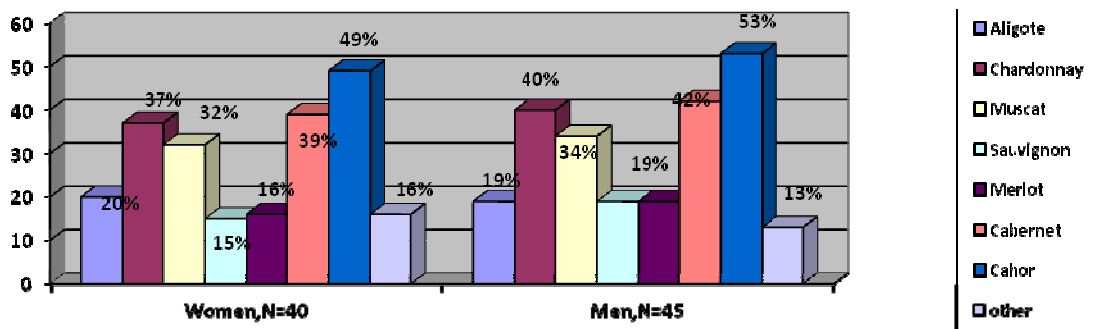


Figure 32. Preferred type of wine by gender

Most of respondents with an income of over 250 euro prefer Cabernet (66%) while among persons with other categories of incomes this wine holds 29-40%. The consumers with average income prefer the wines Chardonnay, Merlot and Sauvignon.

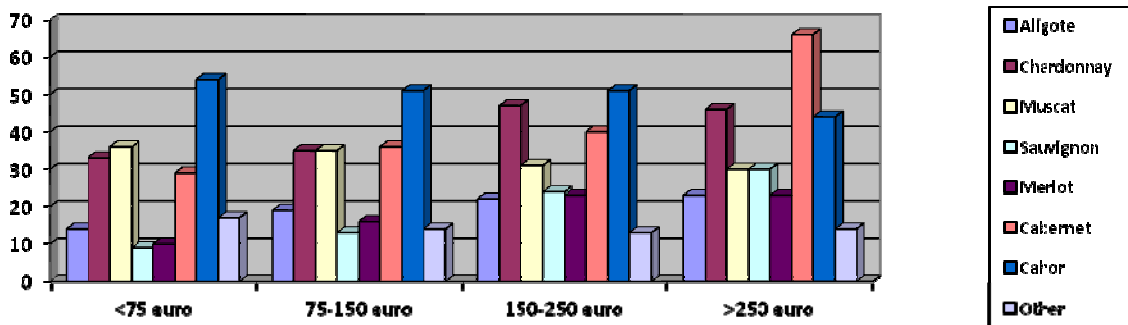


Figure 33. Preferred type of wine by income level

**Preference level for local and import wines.** The interviewed persons were asked to indicate in percentage the level of preference for the local and import wines. 93% of respondents prefer the wines produced in the country and only 7% prefer import wines. Most of respondents consume only wines produced in Moldova (85%), a part (12%) prefer both Moldavian wines and imported wines and only 3% prefer only imported wines. Those who prefer both local and imported wines choose especially local wines (67%) and less imported wines. The respondents were asked what were the reasons for choosing a local or an import wine, and the majority answer received was the lower price (65%) and the confidence in national products (25%). Those who prefer import wines buy them according to the higher quality criterion compared to the local wines (78%) or the confidence in brand (22%).

**Preferences for wine producers.** Over half of respondents indicated Cricova as preferred wine producer (54%), 40% of respondents mentioned Mileștii Mici, 20% Purcari, 7% Bostavan, and 29% of

interviewed persons indicated other producers: Kvint, Vismos, Călărași, Vartely, Acorex. The preferences of consumers for producers do not significantly differ by region.

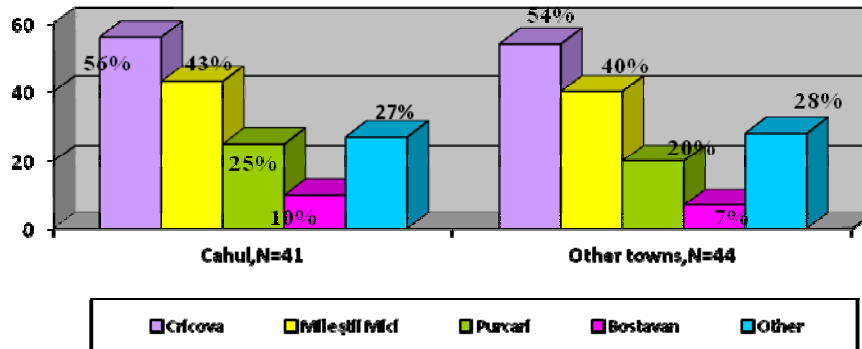


Figure 34. Preferred wine producers

**Preferences for the packaging and labelling of wine.** To the question whether they pay attention to packaging, 86 % of consumers answered positively, while 14% do not pay importance to packaging.

To the question about the most important factors regarding the choice of product, most respondents are attracted to the appealing design of packaging (45%), the agreement of information on the label with the content (28%), clarity of information on the packaging (20%) only 7% pay importance to the language in which the information is displayed on the label.

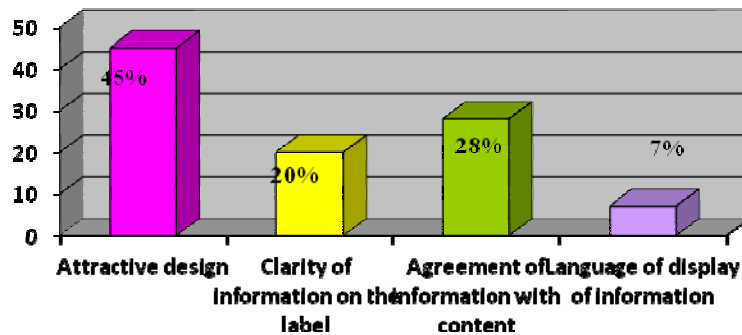


Figure 35. Factors influencing the choice of product

**Requirements of consumers for quality of wine.** The consumers were asked whether they have ever bought an altered/expired product, they repeated the purchase of that product. 87% of respondents answered that they bought again that product, but were careful at the validity term, while 13 % of respondents were so disappointed that they did not buy that product again.

To the question "Have you ever made a complaint if you bought an altered/expired product", 77% of respondents answered that they made complaints and 23% never made a complaint.

Most of the respondents who made complaints (81%), made them at the shop where they bought the product, 14% complained to the producer and only 5% to the competent bodies (Consumer Protection Authority). Most of respondents are not satisfied with the resolution of complaint.

**The degree of satisfaction of consumers in relation to wine market of Cahul.** The opinions of consumers regarding the wine market in Cahul are good, most of them considering that regarding assortment range the situation is very good (45%), 38% are satisfied with the quality of the products ("good" grade) and only 3 % are dissatisfied with the offer, 3% are totally dissatisfied with the method of presentation and 2 % are dissatisfied with the quality/price ratio.

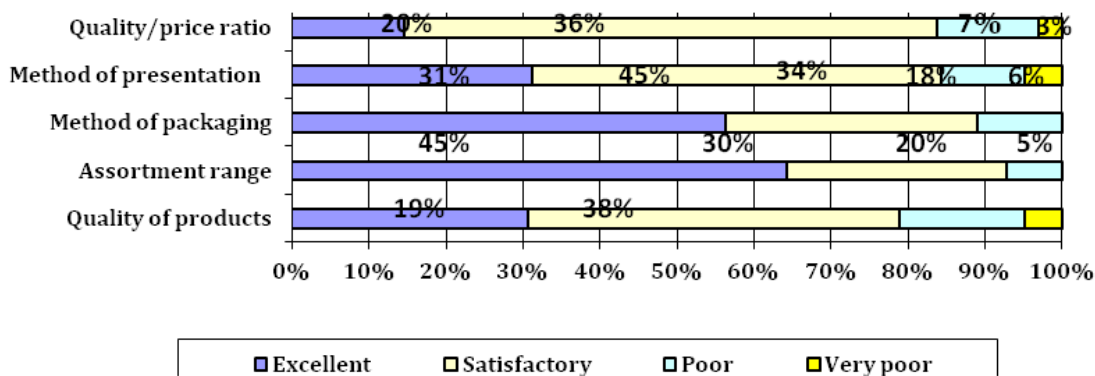


Figure 60. Degree of satisfaction of consumers with the wine market of Cahul

## Conclusions

Most of the interviewed persons consume table wine, especially local wine. There are no significant differences between men and women in relation to consumption. The wine is consumed mainly at home or at friends' house, at relatives' places, on special occasions – holidays or birthdays. Most of consumers in Cahul prefer red wines, demi-sweet or dry wines. The assortments Cahor, Cabernet, Chardonnay and Muscat are the most known and appreciated wines on the local market. Most of respondents prefer the wines made in Moldova, especially the brands Cricova (leader on local market), Mileștii Mici and Purcari. Over 85 % of the sample consume only wines made in Moldova. The main reasons of purchase are the quality and the price of products. For 86 % of the interviewed persons the packaging has a major importance. Other requirements are related to the information on the label, the agreement of specifications with the content and less important is the language of drawing up the label. Over three quarters of the interviewed persons made complaints when they bought incompliant products, most of them at the shops from where the product was bought. Most of those who made complaints were dissatisfied with the resolution of the problem. The general recommendations suggested by the interviewed persons are that the local producers should pay attention to the quality of products, there should be a better communication with consumers and a policy of accessible prices for local consumers should be created. It would be welcome that the local producers elaborate more attractive packaging for their products, launch new products and make more advertising.

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