

It's time to wine

By [Jason \(Frich\) Frichol](#)

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One of my greatest frustrations is shopping for wine. I, like most *winers*, have my favourites but I'm also a variety seeker. And in a self-service environment, I can go to a number of stores/channels in close proximity that stock my favourites. But as a variety-seeking wine shopper, no one store is *speaking* to me.



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I've been told that one of our major liquor retailers has over 9,000 SKUs available across its stores nationally. That's nearly half of the SKUs available in a typical supermarket. With [too much choice](#) and clutter, it's no wonder so many shoppers exit the category without making a purchase or defaulting to what they know. This dilutes the possibility of cross- or up-selling or even delivering an experience that will delight the shopper and make the store a frequented destination.

So, what is the wine category getting right? There have been some pedestrian attempts to assort via varietal and offer some rudimentary food pairings. And if you want to shout about price or highlight a bargain bin, retailers are definitely doing this well. This is overwhelming and an assault on the senses, especially for the most lucrative wine shopper, the explorer. Explorers account for over 25% of the South African liquor universe and have the highest disposable income.

Some retailers overseas have launched some incredibly beautiful formats but often at the expense of product presentation (the heart and soul of merchandise presentation) and easy shopper navigation.

So what can be done?

The first is changing the mindset and approach to the category. Retailers, their buyers and their store managers must see themselves as curators versus the conventional role of sale packers and stackers. They need to also adopt a complementary omni-channel platform. Shoppers want help especially in a higher consideration category. Part of this help is saying, "Hey, we know you, trust us, we've narrowed the burden of choice for you."

The second is migrating the perception of self-service to one of personalised service by increasing the ease of shop. This is easily done through a combination of colour, navigation, semiotics and other shopper marketing gambits to reposition the experience. This can be done so subtly and subliminally, you don't even have to engage with the [conscious shopper mind](#). The outcome is simply a quicker and more delightful experience that will keep the shopper coming back for more.

Lastly is balancing arousal levels and *infotainment*. Explorers don't want to be screamed at; one needs to open the channel of discovery without overtly hitting the hard sell. These shoppers want vindication but also the recognition of discovery. If you're lucky enough to have caught the shopper on the broad-scan (exposure), make sure that you have the information - quick digestible relevant bite sizes - in the narrow-scan (impression) to help close the sale.

Based on till data and behavioural research in the category, I estimate that stores could easily enjoy 15% incremental growth if some the recommendations above were implemented consummately.

There's a lot more one can do that I haven't covered in this post, but hopefully this will be start of some great debate and discussions. [If liquor is going dark](#), there's probably never been a better time to get this category right.

Please note: These views and opinions are my own and not those of my employer or customers.

ABOUT JASON (FRICH) FRICHL

My passions are shopper marketing, consumer packaging, visual merchandising, ideation, bankable innovation, integrated marketing, tangible ROI, and execution efficacy. My motto is, "Passion and persistence will get you everywhere." I strive for simplicity, practicality and information frugality.

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