

Polite Brits don't send back undrinkable wine, but pretend they do to look more sophisticated

New research from behavioural science experts Decision Technology (Dectech) shows that a much higher proportion of people claim to send wine back in restaurants than do in reality, as a social boast to demonstrate confidence and worldliness. It also reveals that Brits are drinking corked wine due to social embarrassment.

In the firm's survey, 18% of people said they have sent back wine in a restaurant, but further research showed that just 2% of them had really done so¹. Of those who claimed to have sent wine back, half of them (50%) said it was because they thought it was corked. However, the natural occurrence of corked wine is thought to be around 5%. This means that, despite their boasting, Brits are actually drinking corked wine simply to avoid the awkwardness of sending it back.

Henry Stott, Director at Dectech, commented: "This study shines a light on an amusing stereotype about the British temperament: even when we are faced with faulty goods, we are polite and are willing to pay to avoid an uncomfortable social interaction.

"Our research reveals that people are, consciously or not, carrying out a kind of cost-benefit analysis when it comes to claiming to send back wine versus doing so in practice. People see the benefit in claiming to have sent back wine. They think it may give the impression that they are sophisticated and discerning, and set high standards for the restaurants they go to. But in reality, many feel the social cost of actually sending back wine is too high. They would much rather avoid being impolite to the staff or creating an awkward moment, so they simply keep drinking."

ENDS

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Notes to Editors

1. To identify the true occurrence of people sending back wine, Dectech's research combined the "Unmatched Count Technique" (UCT) with a straightforward "Has this happened to you?" self-report approach. UCT involves showing respondents a statement inventory and asking how many statements are true for them, but not which specific statements. This protects their anonymity whilst allowing us to measure the incidence rate of taboo topics. Comparing the UCT incidence rate to the self-report incidence rate is a measure of a given behaviour's "embarrassment factor". Statistical analysis can also be used to examine how these incidence rates vary across the population. In this survey, UCT showed that only 2% of people had sent back wine in a restaurant, while 18% self-reported that they had.

About Decision Technology

Decision Technology (Dectech) is an innovative research consultancy that specialises in helping businesses and policymakers understand and manage customer decision-making, from acquisition through to retention and all the points in-between. It applies insights and techniques from behavioural science, such as randomised controlled field trials and online behavioural experiments,

rather than traditional market research surveys. It is a member of the Market Research Society and the Management Consultancies Association.