

Prof. Dr. Andreas Scharf | Dipl. BW (FH) Stephanie Glassl
Advanced Students of Master Course ICM

1. Introduction

With many brands from the food and beverage sector the brand's origin affects the consumers' subjective quality rating more or less positively. Even 20 years after the German reunification in 1989/90 the separation of the two German states in 1949 does not appear to be overcome. Numerous studies prove that part of the West German population is consciously or unconsciously prejudiced against East Germany and East German products respectively. The aim of this study was to reveal preconceptions West German consumers may have about East German food and beverages.

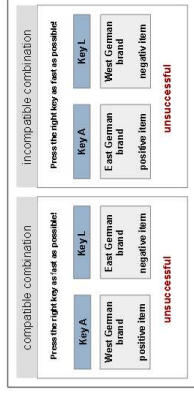
2. Main Objectives

Test Step	Hypothesis
1. Implicit Association Test (IAT)	West German consumers with prejudices against East Germany react faster to combinations of "East German product/negative item" than to combinations of "East German product/positive items".
2. Forced Choice Association Test (FCA)	West German consumers with prejudices against East Germany tend to associate rather negative items with East German brands and positive items with West German brands.
3. Affective Consumer Test	West German consumers with prejudices against East Germany update the sparkling wine sample when it is presented along with the information "origin: West Germany" as opposed to "origin: East Germany".

3. Test Design

➔ Implicit Association Test (IAT)

- 8 West German brands
 - 8 East German brands
 - 8 positive/8 negative items
- Two measuring phrases supplied varying reaction times depending on compatible/incompatible combinations of target concepts (n=183).



➔ Forced Choice Association Test

Subjects (n=300) had to assign temporary on-screen associations with a positive or negative valence to 12 brands of different origin. Apart from typical East and West German products several fictive brands were also included (Split-half design with East and West German designation of origin).



Respondents had to decide within the period of 3.5 seconds whether an item fits to the brand stimulus. This procedure runs for East German (left figure above) and West German products (right figure above). The faster the decision is made, the more the item fits/does not fit to the brand.

➔ Affective Consumer Test

The aim was to examine how the information that the product (sparkling wine) to be evaluated was produced in East and West Germany respectively affects the evaluation of the sensory product quality by West German consumers.

It was necessary to evaluate the sensory overall quality as well as separate sensory dimensions (n=240) in a monadic sensory test. The impact of the product's origin was achieved through a concept description (sheet with picture of bottle, map with origin and product description) and three subsamples (each n=80):

experimental group 1	experimental group 2	control group
 sensory test with product A concept description with origin East Germany	 sensory test with product A concept description with origin West Germany	 blind test without any information

4. Key Findings

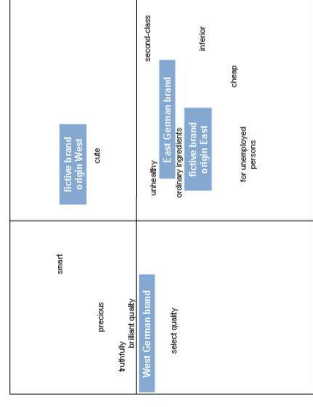
➔ Implicit Association Test (IAT)

	compatible East German brand/negative	incompatible East German brand/positive	IAT-effect in msec	IAT-score	prejudice	score
IAT (n=183)	926,89	1234,54	-308,65	.69	slight moderate	> 0.15 > 0.35 ≥ 0.65

The participants reacted 300 msec faster in phase 3 (East German brand + negative item → compatible) than in phase 5 (East German brand + positive item → incompatible). The IAT-Effect -308 msec verifies a negative implicit attitude in the sample of West German consumers. Furthermore an IAT-score of 0.69 points out a strong prejudice against East German food and beverage brands.

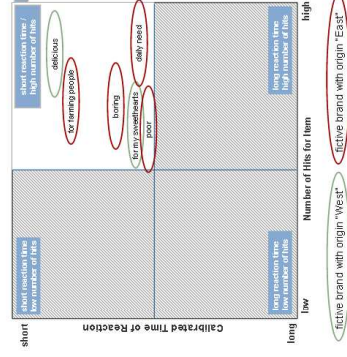
➔ Forced Choice Association Test - Mapping consumer associations

The two-dimensional space (correspondence analysis) of the products combined with the associations gave indication of a prejudiced perception of East German brands (negative items near to them). Despite identical product descriptions and product illustrations the two subsamples were positioned wide apart from each other and thereby also ascribed different associations to the fictive brands only due to the different designation of origin.



excerpt: correspondence analysis, F (98%)

The calibrated time of reaction and the number of hits are plotted in a x-y-figure for each sample. Important quadrant:



- top right, where all associations with a short reaction time and a high number of hits are located ⇒ that means a strong associative linkage between the product and the presented items
- the figure shows items of different valency connected to the fictive brand

➔ Affective Consumer Test - Acceptance Data

The evaluation of the sensory product quality subject to the information on the product's origin supplies significant differences grouped according to the subjects' age. Older persons tend to be more prejudiced against East German products than younger ones.



5. Conclusion

Prejudices of West German consumers on the appreciation of the sensory quality of East German food and beverage brands can be proven empirically. As a result, we can assume that products of East German origin are rejected or get a worse ranking by West German consumers because of a conscious or unconscious prejudice.

In most cases consumers are not able to state their prejudice or do not want to comment on this matter. Therefore it is important to use techniques which consider the implicit parts of a prejudice.

Implicit Association Test, Forced Choice Association Test and sensory methods are suited to reliably measure the impact of consumers' prejudices against products and brands.