

# Towards an economic analysis of taste: what philosophy of taste is teaching us

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## Abstract

A growing number of goods can today be considered as taste goods: wines, gastronomic services, fashion goods, and perfumes, cultural and artistic products. They appeal to tastes and their demands may be highly unstable. Today a lot of empirical things about the behaviours of taste goods consumers are known. We can define classes of consumers according to their willingness to pay. Nevertheless the accumulation of empirical data is not sufficient. Even if David Hume and Adam Smith have been interested in the question of tastes, the standard economic theory ignores these kinds of problems. Is an economic theory of taste possible? How to build it? As the philosophical enquiry is the precondition for the conceptual definition of the notion of taste it seems necessary to consider the main lessons of philosophy of taste for economic theory. The paper starts by considering how economic analysis is dealing with tastes. It studies the emergence of the theory of taste in philosophy and presents the classical theory of taste, elaborated by Kant, and the post-Kantian theories. Finally, it examines the lessons the philosophic debate on taste can bring for building an economic approach of taste.

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