

How to make sense of wine labels? Exploring quantitative and qualitative conceptualizations and operationalizations

Work in Progress

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Abstract:

Packaging's importance is undisputed in general marketing. For the wine industry, packaging may play an even more crucial role within the choice process. More than in any other product category, wine packages have to cut through the clutter of numerous other competing products on the shelf. Above that, there is a social component. The packaging acts as a reflector of brand-identity as well as the self-image of the host or giver within social settings. Consequently, there is more to packaging than just information processing and the communication of attributes. Obviously, one also has to account for the social level of communication involved between producer and consumer as well as among consumers. Packaging in general and wine packaging in particular have been researched from manifold perspectives, reaching from consequent information processing to social anthropologic approaches. However, these studies have produced limited knowledge toward the particular effects of certain design variables like colour, typeface or logos and their contribution to the holistic packaging perception. Part of the problem resides in an insufficient conceptualization and operationalization of underpinning design variables.

This paper presents PhD work in progress with the aim of shedding more light on these issues in relation to wine marketing. It proposes qualitative and quantitative approaches toward a more detailed engagement with wine packaging. Within a quantitative framework relying on general economic assumptions shaping the packaging perception process, the paper explores the various approaches to quantify the different cues wine packaging offers. These are henceforth compared to existing qualitative approaches. Situated in a semiotic and literacy approach framework a competing, more holistically orientated understanding of perception is discussed.

The aims of this research are threefold: (1) to find feasible solutions for quantitative and qualitative packaging analyses; (2) test the correlation between country of origin and package design; and (3) produce two categorizations (quantitative and qualitative) for wine packages based on their design attributes or rather their semiotic characteristics. This research is expected to contribute to the theoretical underpinnings of packaging design and the manifestation of country of origin in visual cues. Furthermore, it will be of practical value for future researchers engaging in packaging design studies simplifying survey procedures and cue composition.