Vienna 2019 Abstract Submission

Title
JUDGING A BOOK BY ITS COVER: THE POWER OF WINE LABEL DESIGN IN SHAPING CONSUMERS’ PRODUCT PERCEPTIONS

I want to submit an abstract for:
Conference Presentation

Corresponding Author
Laura Ehm

E-Mail
laura.ehm@hwg-lu.de

Affiliation
University of Applied Sciences Ludwigshafen - Weincampus Neustadt

Co-Author/s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>E-Mail</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sergej von Janda</td>
<td><a href="mailto:vonjanda@bwl.uni-mannheim.de">vonjanda@bwl.uni-mannheim.de</a></td>
<td>University of Mannheim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebeca Dolan</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rebecca.dolan@adelaide.edu.au">rebecca.dolan@adelaide.edu.au</a></td>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pascal Wegmann-Herr</td>
<td><a href="mailto:pascal.wegmann-herr@dlr.rlp.de">pascal.wegmann-herr@dlr.rlp.de</a></td>
<td>Department of Viticulture and Enology, DLR Rheinpfalz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gergely Szolnoki</td>
<td><a href="mailto:Gergely.Szolnoki@hs-gm.de">Gergely.Szolnoki@hs-gm.de</a></td>
<td>University of Geisenheim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Keywords
Wine Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; Label Design; Product Perception

Research Question
How does wine label design affect consumers’ product perceptions with regard to taste, quality, and price?

Methods
lab and field experiments, online surveys, in-depth interviews

Results
preliminary results: identified three dimensions with regard to consumers’ wine taste expectations and perceptions that can be triggered by wine label design; further analyses not yet available

Abstract
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Sergej von Janda a), Rebecca Dolan b), Laura Ehm c) , Pascal Wegmann-Herr d), Gergely Szolnoki e)

a) Sergej von Janda, Ph.D.; Assistant Professor of Marketing; University of Mannheim; Business School; Email:
Wine Marketing; Consumer Behaviour; Label Design; Product Perception

Introduction and Background
Extant research shows that extrinsic product cues, such as packaging and branding influence consumers’ product evaluations (Mueller and Szolnoki, 2010). Wine represents a product category where consumers’ product evaluations are particularly impacted by extrinsic product cues (Lange et al., 2002). Wine consumption is a multi-sensory experience with interactions between different stimuli, such as packaging appearance, wine odor signature, or taste. Wine labels have been shown to play a significant role in consumers’ product evaluations and purchasing decisions (Rocchi and Stefani, 2006). Research has explored individual effects of label design on, for example, quality and price expectations (Orth and Malkewitz, 2008). However, the transferability of consumers’ wine label perceptions to actual perceptions of product quality, taste, and price remain underexplored. Consequences of these potential transfer effects on product evaluation in terms of attitude, purchase intention, and willingness to pay are largely neglected. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of wine label design on consumers’ product perceptions. The findings are based on data from the ‘Old’ and ‘New’ wine worlds, Germany and Australia, collected from one online survey, two lab experiments with experts, and several wine-tasting field experiments on-premises and at the point-of-sale.

Research Methodology
Our research design comprises three individual studies. Prestudy 1 aims at developing a measurement instrument for consumers’ wine taste expectations and perceptions that can be triggered by wine label design. First, we reviewed existing literature to adopt measurement items were possible (e.g., Moon and Kamakura, 2017). Second, we conducted in-depth interviews and a paper-pencil follow-up survey with 20 experts in the fields of label design and wine making to identify item pairs that could translate from label design perception to wine taste expectation and perception. Overall, our experts identified 36 item pairs (e.g., young - aged; simple - complex; sweet - dry) that were grouped in 7 preliminary dimensions. Third, we ran an online survey with consumers in Germany and Australia (n = 686) to assess 86 different wine labels with regard to the 36 item pairs from our previous research step. We conducted an exploratory factor analysis to extract 10 final items across three dimensions (i.e., intensity, fruitiness, and age). Furthermore, we selected wine labels from the original pool that evoke clear taste associations among study participants to use in our main study.

In Prestudy 2, we conducted a first lab experiment with wine experts in Germany. We were able to identify wines with significantly different sensory attributes (i.e., heavy, sweet, mature vs. light, dry, young) for further usage in our main study. Wine experts (n = 30) evaluated a total of eight wines in a blind tasting. First, experts assessed the wines’ odor and taste using Napping as sensory profiling method. This first assessment was complemented by an additional CATA (Check-all-that-apply) profiling with respect to the wines’ odor (e.g., fruity, floral, grassy, woody, buttery) and descriptive profiling of specific taste attributes (e.g., sweetness, acid, mouthfeel). We were able to identify two clearly contrasting wines suitable for further analyses: One wine described as grassy particularly fruity (green and tropical fruits) for the “light, dry, young” category and one wine described as particularly sweet with a taste of hay and ripe apples for the “heavy, sweet, mature” category. With these two wines we plan to conduct another lab experiment with wine experts to evaluate them on the three label design dimensions generated in our prestudy 1. It is the aim of this study to finally select wines for our main study. In the Main Study, we plan three independent field experiments with consumers in Germany and Australia (targeted total n = 500) to assess the actual effect of wine label design on consumers’ product perceptions in terms of quality, taste, and to the willingness to pay.

Conclusion and Implications
While research has shown that wine labels play a significant role in consumers purchasing decisions (Rocchi and Stefani, 2006), current findings lack generalizability, the ability to represent actual consumer behavior in real life settings, and conclusiveness in terms of mapping the complex interplay between wine label design and consumers’ product expectations, perceptions, and evaluations. To our best knowledge, our study is the first to address this lack in research.

Our preliminary data indicate that wine producers and wine label designers should collaborate to create the most effective wine-label pairings. Bringing consumers’ expectations triggered by wine label design and actual perceptions of quality and taste in line via a taste-congruent label design creates a more consistent and, thus, more favorable multi-sensory drinking experience.

References available on request

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a) Sergej von Janda, Ph.D.; Assistant Professor of Marketing; University of Mannheim; Business School; Email: vonjanda@bwl.uni-mannheim.de
b) Rebecca Dolan, Ph.D.; Lecturer of Marketing; University of Adelaide; Email: rebecca.dolan@adelaide.edu.au
c) Laura Ehm, Ph.D.; Professor of Marketing; University of Applied Sciences Ludwigshafen - Weincampus Neustadt; Email: laura.ehm@hwg-lu.de
d) Pascal Wegmann-Herr, Ph.D.; Department of Viticulture and Enology, DLR Rheinpfalz; Email: pascal.wegmann-herr@dlr.rlp.de
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