Message on a bottle: the wine label’s influence

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The goal of the article selected was to provide some guidelines for marketers in the wine market. It examined the impact of two elements of wine labels – design genre and brand name – and how consumer perceptions of brand personality correlated specific brand personality attributes with intent to purchase.

Three fictional labels were designed to correlate to three wine brand personalities: traditional, contemporary, and novelty. Care was taken to create labels that appeared genuine, in that region, vintage, and naming conventions were considered and consistent throughout each design. The traditional layout is the oldest and most typical of high-end wineries, though it can be found on wines of all origins and qualities. A second, more contemporary design was artistic in nature with an emphasis on aesthetics rather than conveying the reputation of the winery. The novelty label took things even further and employed whimsy into the design. Each of the three personalities used has its own associations in the wine market.

This particular study recruited participants through strategic postings for wine consumers in blogs, chat rooms, and the use of Google AdWords. The introductory page presented the study as academic research, emphasized that knowledge of wine was not necessary, and explained that participants would answer questions about wine labels, themselves, and their shopping habits. A total of 527 surveys were completed by a largely homogenous sample of respondents around the country. The average participant was 37 years old, Caucasian, married, graduated from college, and had an income between $60,000 and $80,000. The number male and female participants were equally divided.

Image was the only design factor that produced a significant effect on all brand personality features. Because images are so frequently used as iconographic representations, they function as strong clues to meaning, through direct representations, examples, symbolic
imagery, and arbitrary images with culturally dependent meanings. Generally, grape motifs and images of chateaux or vineyards received the highest scores, and unusual animals the lowest.

The traditional label design had an advantage over the modern one in terms of consumer preference, perceived value, purchase intent, and perceived success. For most other facets, however, the traditional label received the highest scores, the contemporary label the second highest, and the novelty label the lowest scores, with the perception of the wine as being cheap and not suitable for sharing.

This is particularly important when the different products are to be presented as appropriate for different occasions or consumers or to evoke different brand personality types. Interestingly enough, the label design only came into consideration with the wine was a gift. Otherwise, the traditional appearance of the label was ultimately what impacted the consumer purchase decision.

The research was considerably complete. It allowed consumers around the country to participate in the study without influence on a particular region that may profit from local wine production. Similar studies have shown a consistent trend in the demographic and ethnographic profile of a wine enthusiast. The care taken to create fictional labels that could realistically represent a real winery from a lesser known wine-producing region inspired interest with the consumer. Of particular interest was the absence of other ethnic groups in the study. Had African American, Asian, or Hispanic consumers participated, the results may have been different.

For most wines, package design is one of the most important factors in stimulating consumer choice and product trial. To attract the consumer browsing wine store shelves, package design must make a product standout from hundreds of others to capture customers’
attention and stimulate purchase. The research supports the importance of packaging, and the reliance of wine consumers on the label to infer the quality of the bottle contents.

Packaging plays an important role as a medium in the marketing mix, in promotion campaigns, as a pricing criterion, in defining the character of new products, as a setter of trends and as an instrument to create brand identity and shelf impact in all product groups. A distinctive, unmistakable and eye-catching appearance is a signal at the point of sale to which consumers respond positively. Whatever stands out clearly in the monotonous competitive environment, whatever is surprising scores points with the consumer. Special effort makes a special impression - and is allowed to cost more too.

Packaging is an excellent way to communicate sophistication, class and value. This makes it an ideal strategic option for expressing premium positioning - as well as being the instrument of choice when a product needs to be upgraded or a brand needs to be revitalized. Products in classy packaging are particularly popular presents too.

In the wine market, bottle labels are particularly relevant to the decision-making process, especially for infrequent wine drinkers, who have been shown to rely heavily on labeling information. At the most general level, wine label designs tend to be described as either “traditional” or “modern/contemporary.” Building the brand is particularly important in the wine market, where consumers are increasingly overwhelmed by the volume of choice.

Wine is an extraordinary consumer product. It is hard to find a product with greater reach and range in so many dimensions. Branding is perhaps the most important factor in a winery’s success. To identify and differentiate a wine, the marketer must incorporate a combination of brand elements – name, symbol, design – all on the label of a bottle.
Branding serves many functions. Beyond identifying a product, branding can create perceptions of quality, reliability, and value in a product, as well as loyalty, confidence, and self-expression to the consumer. In this case, a wine label’s ability to convey a few select attributes perceived as particularly relevant for a product or segment could be sufficient for a consumer to form an impression of and preference for the brand.

References