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## **Emerald Article: Message on a bottle: the wine label's influence**

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# Message on a bottle: the wine label's influence

The wine label's  
influence

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The choice facing a wine consumer is one of dizzying options with thousands of wine brands available. Packaging and labeling are among those cues consumers use when choosing wines. The purpose of this paper is to better understand the influence of two labeling variables – design genre and brand naming convention – on perceptions of wine and wine choice by occasion. In particular, three types of label design and naming conventions (traditional, contemporary, and novelty) are examined.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A 3\*3 (three versions of visual design and three brand naming conventions) factorial design was used to expose participants to a set of three wine label design variations. Participants viewed wine labels online at [www.ratethelabel.com](http://www.ratethelabel.com) and then completed a web-based survey designed to measure the influence of label design and brand name on wine perceptions, purchase intent by wine use occasion, and the relative importance of factors affecting wine choice.

**Findings** – Despite the popularity of novelty designs and names, participants preferred traditional labels and names. Label design and name were not as influential as wine type, brand familiarity, and price for wine choices made across four wine use occasions. Label design and brand name likeability mattered only for gift choices.

**Practical implications** – For wineries developing or revising labels, traditional designs should be considered despite the current trend to use novelty labels.

**Originality/value** – This study assessed consumer response to a trend in the wine industry – the use of novelty designs and names.

**Keywords** Wines, Brands, Consumer behaviour, Labelling, Packaging

**Paper type** Research paper

If laundry detergent is on the shopping list, a consumer can choose Tide, Cheer, All, Wisk, or any of the other 48 options for laundry detergent available at supermarkets across the country. Need some mayonnaise and ketchup? There are around 27 choices for different types of mayo, and seven brands of ketchup. Of carbonated soft drinks there are about 140 offerings to quench consumers' thirst. There are around 135 different options for the beer consumer. Typically each product category gives consumers many brand options. It is also typical that each product category has a powerhouse brand or two with which everyone is familiar. Beer has Budweiser, Miller, and Coors. Soft drinks have Coke and Pepsi. Laundry has Tide; the hamburger has Hellmann's mayo, and a hot dog has Hunt's and Heinz catsup. Wine is a different case all together.

Choosing a wine is an especially complex decision for most consumers (Lockshin and Hall, 2003; Barber and Almanza, 2006) for several reasons. First, there are nearly 10,000 brands in the wine product category available in the USA (Franson, 2006) – far more brands than in most product categories. About 3,000 of these brands are available in the typical supermarket (Tinney, 2006). Second, there are several national,



mass-marketed wine brands, but none has the brand equity of the top-of-mind, powerhouse brands that dominate other product categories. No wine brand has market share greater than 4 percent. Despite the presence of major wineries, the market is extremely fragmented (Brandes, 2005). Third, wine brands advertise less than brands in other product categories found in supermarkets (Rauber, 2004). Fourth, wine, like other consumable products, represents somewhat of a high-risk decision because the quality of the product cannot be assessed until it is consumed (Barber and Almanza, 2006). The perception of risk is intensified for public consumption occasions in that wine is the only product or food item (when properly served) that comes to the dinner table in its commercial packaging for all to see.

Given the complexity of the wine choice decision, consumers rely on multiple sources of information when evaluating wine including their own knowledge and experience, the input of others, and information from other impersonal sources such as wine guides, reviews, advertising, point of sale materials, and labels (Barber and Almanza, 2006). Several studies have further found that labels, label design, and product information delivered via the label (grape varietal, brand name, and price) are among the most important cues consumers use in the wine choice decision (Thomas, 2000; Thomas and Pickering, 2003; Chaney, 2000; Lockshin and Rhodus, 1993). Consumers seek out wine labels when choosing wine by going through retail aisles of wine, reading labels, rather than seeking guidance from other information sources (Olsen *et al.*, 2003; Barber and Almanza, 2006). Though wine packaging is made up of several component variables, this study set out to better understand two specific aspects of labeling – the design genre and the brand naming convention – on consumer perceptions of wine and purchase intent across wine use occasions.

### Literature

Clearly, wine choice is complex, even for relatively inexpensive bottles. It is also a relatively risky decision in that the quality of wine and one's satisfaction with the choice cannot be assessed until the product is consumed. Consequently, wine consumers will use risk reduction strategies to decrease the likelihood of making a bad choice (Rasmussen and Lockshin, 1999). Several strategies are possible including selecting a brand known for quality, relying upon a peer recommendation or retail aide, developing advanced knowledge of the product category, using price as a quality indicator, and using the package and label design as quality cues (Spawton, 1991; Rasmussen and Lockshin, 1999). These risk reduction strategies are consistent with constructs identified in the consumer wine buying decision model, proposed by Dodd *et al.* (2005), and refined by Barber and Almanza (2006). The model suggests that the consumer wine buying decision is influenced by consumer perceptions of the wine label design, information, and bottle package, which is likewise affected by the consumer's knowledge, usage experience, and various sources of information (impersonal, personal, and self). This study focuses on one aspect of the model, specifically, the influence of the label as an impersonal source of information on consumer perceptions of the wine and purchase intent.

The label is a key source of information for wine consumers, providing details on both intrinsic and extrinsic quality cues (Lockshin and Rhodus, 1993; Chaney, 2000; Thomas and Pickering, 2003). Intrinsic cues relate to the product's characteristics such as grape varietal, region, producer, and wine style. Extrinsic cues are those within the marketer's

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control including price, style of packaging and labeling, and brand name (Quester and Smart, 1996). Though the label's design and the name associated with the label are themselves external cues, they reside as but one of many quality indicators available on the label. Boudreaux and Palmer (2007) noted that label design is a core component of a wine's brand image, saying "bottle labels are particularly relevant to the decision-making process, especially for infrequent wine drinkers". As Barber and Almanza (2006, p. 85) wrote, "consumers shop with their eyes", explaining the consumers' preference to peruse wines personally, reading labels as they consider the possible selections. Thus, we can conclude that the label is a critical opportunity for branding and purchase influence with aesthetic factors such as label design and naming convention among the few components of the label within the marketer's control.

#### *Wine design genres and naming conventions*

The consumer wine buying decision model (Barber and Almanza, 2006) specifies a direct relationship between consumer perceptions of wine label design and the wine buying decision. The attributes of a label are among the primary factors affecting consumer perceptions of wine with consumers using them to infer more abstract constructs like traditionalism while assessing alternatives (Rocchi and Stefani, 2005). Visual design aspects include the typography used on the label and the label's layout, colors, and use of visual imagery. These aspects of design lead to a gestalt view of the wine offering, the overall perception of the wine. For instance, a study by Boudreaux and Palmer (2007) investigating the role of brand personality on wine purchase intent found that brand personality, as depicted by a wine's label, was a strong predictor of purchase intent, and that the personality characteristics of success, charm, spirit, and currency were the most influential. Thus, the design of a label is at once complex and simple.

Label designs can be categorized into three genres: traditional, contemporary, or novelty. Traditional designs typically include images of coats-of-arms, chateaux, and vineyards (Batt and Dean, 2000). Popular brands featuring a traditional label design include Bogle, J. Lohr, and Acacia. During the 1960s, contemporary designs joined traditional ones on retail shelves. In the forward to Caldewey and House's (2003) book, *Icon, The Art Of The Wine Label*, Robert Mondavi wrote about the transition toward contemporary label design. Contemporary designs provided less information about the wine's origin and more of a sense of style. No longer did wine labels only show images of the vineyard or stately visuals that represent the winemaker (i.e. a family crest). With contemporary design, labels were free to explore and espouse art. Some popular examples of contemporary wine label design include the brands Yellow Tail and Luna di Luna. Finkelstein and Quiazon (2007) identified a third wine label design: the novelty label. They noted that novelty labels tend to feature images of caricatured animals (e.g. frogs, roosters), while contemporary designs utilize images of art or animals more recognizable to consumers (e.g. deer). While the contemporary genre of labels expressed the label as art, the novelty label promoted the label as fun. These labels use humor to capture the hearts of the consumer. Popular novelty label design brands include 3 Blind Moose, Old Fart, and Arrogant Frog.

Another aesthetic component of the wine label is the naming convention used. Naming conventions follow those of design and include traditional, contemporary, and novelty variations. Traditional names are based on the wine's maker (e.g. Robert Mondavi, Rodney Strong). The contemporary naming convention is modern in nature, but one

strong trend among contemporary names is to name the wine after a “critter”. Little Penguin, Blue Fish, and Tall Horse are all examples of the critter wine brand name phenomenon. Lastly, wine names may fall into the novelty category. Novelty wine names, like their humorous design counterparts, surprise the consumer. Examples of popular novelty wine names are Smoking Loon, Fat Bastard, and Cardinal Zin.

Because design and naming convention are extrinsic cues, thought to subjectively influence consumer perceptions, we address the following research questions, “how are the various combinations of design genre and naming convention perceived by wine consumers?” and “are there advantages associated with specific formulations of design and name in terms of overall attitude?” Doyle and Bottomley (2004) found that preference and purchase intent for a wine was strongest when the design and name are congruent in style. Thus, we also ask whether perceptions are most positive when congruence exists between name and design genre.

#### *Purchase intent and wine use occasions*

The consumer wine buying decision model (Barber and Almanza, 2006) also proposes a relationship between consumer perceptions and the wine buying decision. However, the buying decision may vary based on the occasion for which the wine is purchased (Quester and Smart, 1998). Wine is a social beverage and the occasions at which it may be consumed vary widely. Drinking a bottle of Chianti at home alone with a frozen pizza is a far different occasion from ordering a bottle of Veuve Clicquot at a celebration dinner. What makes the situation even more complex is that the very same consumer may be in these situations and many more (Finkelstein and Quiazon, 2007). We cannot easily segment the wine consumer by characteristics of wine consumption, as all wine consumers may participate in a variety of wine consumption patterns over time. Thus, it is imperative to consider the context of wine consumption if we are to understand wine choice. Consequently, we propose the following research question, “how does intent to purchase a wine vary based on the wine’s label design genre and name?”.

Finkelstein and Quiazon (2007, p. 19) suggested that:

[. . .] apart from the connoisseur or highly sensitive drinker, it would be fair to say that details such as the wine’s volume, the wine producer’s name and address, alcohol content, or allergens [. . .] matter little, if at all, to the average wine consumer.

What then does matter to the average wine consumer when selecting a wine for a specific type of consumption experience? Thus, our final research question is “what factors are important when choosing a wine for specific wine occasions and how do label design and name rank among those factors?”.

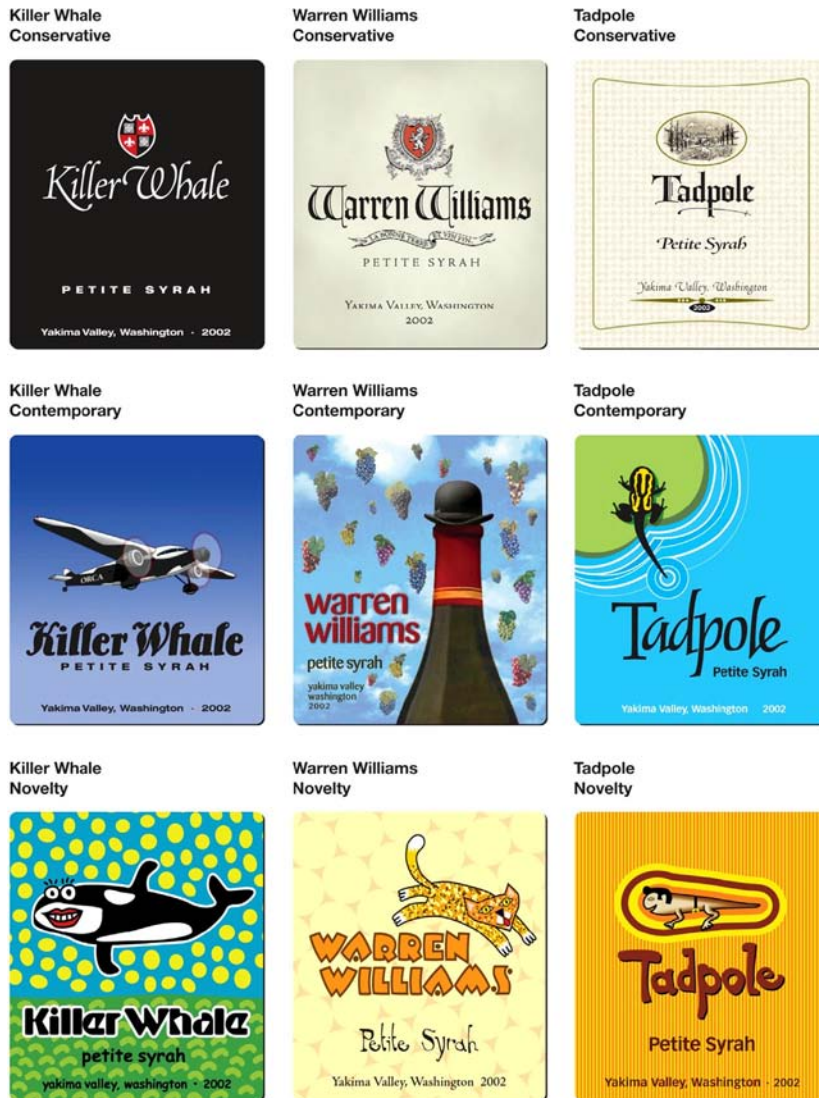
## **Methods**

### *Overview*

The study utilized a web survey ([www.ratethelabel.com](http://www.ratethelabel.com)) and factorial design to examine the influence of brand name convention and design type on several dependent variables. Participants were recruited online and randomly assigned to one of three groups (each group viewed three test labels). After viewing the test labels, respondents answered several questions and were thanked for their participation. The survey site was available for six weeks. The development of the test labels representing the two independent variables and the procedures followed are described below.

*Research design*

The survey was designed to measure attitudes toward wine label design. A factorial design enabled the examination of three naming conventions and three design types, for a total of nine variable conditions. Labels for fictitious wine brands were created. To control for the possible effects of region, vintage year, and variety, each label contained the same information: region (Yakima Valley, Washington), vintage year (2002), and variety (Petite Syrah). The variations in wine label were confined to the brand name and the label design. The label designs used in the study are shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Wine label designs: name and label design experimental conditions

In choosing the region, year, and variety, care was taken to ensure the choices would be realistic without overly influencing consumer perceptions. The first choice was to pick a region for the make-believe wines to grow. California regions are the best known in the USA. To be more discreet another region was selected. According to [www.thewinedoctor.com](http://www.thewinedoctor.com), Yakima Valley, Washington is regarded as having great wines, but it's still not as recognizable as many of the Californian regions. The Yakima Valley appellation (area) had an excellent year in 2002, and the area is well known for Petite Syrah.

The brand names used in the fictitious wine labels were selected to represent the naming conventions commonly found among wine brands. As noted, one common naming convention is to name the brand for the wine's maker (e.g. Rodney Strong). The experimental name selected to represent this naming pattern was Warren Williams. The alliteration of the first and last name gives the Warren Williams name a hook with a strong, American feel. Williams is a common surname; thus, it provides familiarity. Warren is just unique enough to personalize the brand without making it too alien.

The second naming convention popular among wine brands is to name the wine after a critter. Killer Whale was selected as the critter wine test name. The killer whale (or orca) is the state marine mammal for Washington State (the location where the fictitious wine is made). It is an exotic-looking animal with an intimidating name. However, the killer whale is very popular thanks in part to the movie *Free Willy* and other mainstream media exposure. Many people recognize the species yet relatively few have ever seen one in person in the wild.

Lastly, wine names may fall into the novelty category. The name Tadpole was selected as the novelty brand name choice. Secondary research was conducted to be sure the fictitious winery names were not similar to other wine brands or to companies in any related industries (like other beverages, restaurants, and resorts).

In addition to developing brand names for the three naming conventions common to wines, labels were created to represent the visual imagery common to traditional, contemporary, and novelty designs. To enable an estimation of the influence of label design and brand name, each name was matched to each label design for a 3\*3 factorial design. The designs and names were presented to a group of art directors along with the rationale for their choice. Based on feedback from the session, the designs were finalized for use in the study.

As participants visited the survey site, they were randomly assigned to one of three groups. Each group was shown three labels, each of which included one of the test brand names and one of the test designs. Group 1 was shown:

- (1) Warren Williams brand name with a conservative design.
- (2) Killer Whale brand name with a contemporary design.
- (3) Tadpole brand name with a novelty design.

Group 2 was shown:

- (1) Warren Williams brand name with a contemporary design
- (2) Killer Whale brand name with a novelty design.
- (3) Tadpole brand name with a conservative design.

Group 3 was shown:

- (1) Warren Williams brand name with a novelty design
- (2) Killer Whale brand name with a conservative design.
- (3) Tadpole brand name with a contemporary design.

### *Measures*

The site contained an online survey with questions designed to measure attitude toward sample label designs and sample names, likelihood of purchasing the wine represented by the experimental labels, and the factors important to wine choice given specific wine use occasions. The survey assessed four wine use occasions: private evenings at home, dinner at home with guests, dinner at a restaurant, and gifting. The survey also evaluated the importance factors affecting wine purchases including country of origin, familiarity with brand, wine ranking, label appearance, region, brand name appeal, year bottled, price, wine varietal, wine vintner, and wine distributor. Perceived importance was measured following Quester and Smart (1998) using a five-point Likert scale with scale points ranging from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important). Attitudes toward the test labels were measured with a five-point Stapel scale: good, desirable, complex, cheap, high quality, common, and pleasant (Mitchell, 1986). Purchase intent (for each wine use occasion) was measured with a four-point scale (definitely would not buy to definitely would buy) (Morrison, 1979). Demographic data were also collected.

### *Sample recruitment and characteristics*

A convenience sample recruited using advertising, online promotion of the survey web site on blogs and chat rooms, and snowballing resulted in 527 participants. To encourage responses from general consumers of drinking age without geographic boundaries, ads were placed on Google using its Adwords program. A total of 27 keywords related to wine were purchased (e.g. wine, wine labels, design wine label). When these words were searched during the recruitment period, the survey URL was presented in the search results on Google. In addition, traffic was driven to the survey by posting the survey URL on blogs, chat rooms, and web forums. The blogs, chat rooms, and forums shared the characteristic of wine interest to increase the likelihood that members would consider visiting the survey URL and responding to the survey. Consequently, the participants should include wine consumers, albeit with varying levels of involvement. The demographics of those who took the survey show that the "average" survey participant was overwhelmingly Caucasian. The group was split fairly evenly between male and female. The average participant was married, had a household income between \$60,000 and \$90,000, and had a bachelor's degree. He/She was about 37 years old. Psychographically, the average person completing the survey could be described as someone who has a moderate interest in wine, someone who believes that there is a difference in quality between one wine and another, and one whose friends, for the most part, also have some product knowledge of wine.

### **Results and discussion**

We approached this from an exploratory perspective, seeking to find answers to the research questions posed. The results of the study are presented and discussed below:



*RQ1.* How are the various combinations of design genre and naming convention perceived by wine consumers?

Individual components of perception were measured for each label (“This label suggests that this wine is – (good, desirable, complex, cheap (reverse-scored), high quality, common (reverse-scored), and pleasant)”). Table I provides the mean scores for the individual measures used in assessing how the labels were perceived. The results suggest that traditional labels are more associated with the adjectives good, desirable, high quality, and pleasant while novelty and contemporary styles tend to be associated with the descriptor, cheap:

*RQ2.* Are there advantages associated with specific formulations of design and name in terms of overall attitude?

To answer this research question, overall scores of attitude toward the wine (as represented by each label design) were created from the individual measures of attitude toward the wine. Analyses of variance (ANOVA) allowed for a test of significant differences between the groups. Thus, we were able to assess the extent to which the naming convention and designs affected perceptions of the wine. Table II reveals that there were significant differences in the attitudes for every design examined. The attitudes were most positive for the traditional label designs, regardless of name. For each name, the traditional design fared better than contemporary or novelty. The novelty design scored the lowest on overall attitude toward the brands, which can be explained in part by the perception of novelty labels as an indicator of cheap wines. Attitudes toward the contemporary design labels illustrate that the design approach can be desirable though it does not score as well overall as the traditional design.

For naming conventions, the traditional Warren Williams name performed best under all three label design conditions. Tadpole, our novelty name, was the next best performer (for all designs). Killer Whale, the contemporary naming convention which utilized a recognizable critter, performed least well and particularly so for the novelty Killer Whale. This could be a reaction to the choice of critter for the brand, but in particular, the negative attitude score for the novelty Killer Whale label should give warning to the many wine marketers now utilizing novelty names and labels:

*RQ3.* Are perceptions most positive when congruence exists between name and design genre?

Label	Good	Desirable	Complex	Cheap	High quality	Rare	Pleasant
Traditional Warren Williams	4.26	3.98	3.83	2.86	4.26	3.02	4.09
Traditional Killer Whale	3.66	3.58	3.53	3.27	3.58	2.96	3.38
Traditional Tadpole	3.99	3.91	3.80	3.04	4.02	3.34	3.88
Contemporary Warren Williams	3.72	3.55	3.27	3.86	3.38	2.88	3.71
Contemporary Killer Whale	2.80	2.58	2.29	4.90	2.28	2.27	2.95
Contemporary Tadpole	3.31	3.05	2.34	4.43	2.69	2.10	3.51
Novelty Warren Williams	2.70	2.58	2.34	4.54	2.38	2.20	3.01
Novelty Killer Whale	2.14	2.02	1.65	4.81	1.73	1.59	2.37
Novelty Tadpole	2.64	2.37	2.14	5.01	2.25	2.30	2.92

**Note:** Scale of 1-5

**Table I.**  
Mean scores on  
perception toward label  
designs and names

	Mean	<i>n</i>	The wine label's influence
<i>Design treatment/Warren Williams (traditional) brand name</i>			
Traditional	3.34 *	160	
Contemporary	2.89 *	123	
Novelty	2.14 *	120	
<i>Design treatment/Killer Whale (contemporary critter) brand name</i>			
Traditional	3.59 *	131	
Contemporary	2.56 *	126	
Novelty	2.12 *	159	
<i>Design treatment/Tadpole (novelty) brand name</i>			
Traditional	3.96 *	118	
Contemporary	2.92 *	154	
Novelty	2.51 *	134	
<i>Brand name convention/traditional design label</i>			
Warren Williams (traditional)	4.07 *	159	
Killer Whale (contemporary)	3.96 *	118	
Tadpole (novelty)	3.59 *	131	
<i>Brand name convention/contemporary design label</i>			
Warren Williams (traditional)	3.48 *	122	
Killer Whale (contemporary)	2.56 *	126	
Tadpole (novelty)	2.92 *	154	
<i>Brand name convention/novelty design label</i>			
Warren Williams (traditional)	2.63 *	119	
Killer Whale (contemporary)	2.12 *	159	
Tadpole (novelty)	2.51 *	134	

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**Table II.**

ANOVA for differences in the overall mean attitude scores by group

**Notes:** \*Significant differences at the 0.05 level; scale of 1-5

All traditional labels earned overall attitude scores over 3.5 with the highest mean score for the traditional label design combined with the Warren Williams traditional name (mean of 4.07). This suggests that Doyle and Bottomley (2004) were right in their claim that the best wine labels have congruence between name and design. However, this is quickly dismissed when one views the mean scores for the other naming conventions – traditional designs scored better across the variety of naming conventions. The traditional Tadpole scored better than the novelty Tadpole and the traditional Killer Whale fared better than the contemporary one. The traditional Tadpole design scored an overall mean of 3.96 while the contemporary Tadpole scored 2.92 and the novelty Tadpole scored 2.51 (all differences are significant at a 0.05 level).

Analyses of variance was used to determine differences in the likelihood of purchasing the wines for the four wine occasions. These results also showed significant differences among the groups and mimicked the findings regarding consumer perceptions of the fictitious wines (Table III).

For all four wine consumption occasions, participants are significantly more likely to purchase the wine with a traditional label design. Within the traditional label designs, interestingly, the Tadpole scored well on likelihood to purchase across all wine occasions. It even topped the traditional Warren Williams' brand when considering purchases for a party (mean of 2.66 for traditional Tadpole vs 2.51 for the traditional Warren Williams on a scale of 1-4). Thus, it seems that any naming convention can perform well if given a traditional label design.

Killer Whale was not as desirable a brand name, regardless of wine use occasion but it performed as well as other brands when combined with the traditional label design. Participants were significantly less likely to purchase the novelty Killer Whale brand than the others for a private evening at home, a dinner party, at a restaurant, or for a gift. This suggests that if a brand is utilizing a novelty or critter name, it is best to combine it with a traditional design label. Novelty labels overall did not perform well in terms of purchase intent:

*RQ4.* What factors are important when choosing a wine for specific wine occasions and how do label design and name rank among those factors?

The process of choosing a wine can be influenced by the occasion for which the wine will be served and consumed. Wine is one of few products that is served with its label visible to those to whom it is being served. At a dinner party at home, at a restaurant, or when given as a gift, the wine's brand and label remain seen. Mean importance scores for several factors relevant to wine choice for each occasion considered are provided in Table IV.

It appears clearly that the first decision made regardless of occasion is the type of wine desired. Familiarity/experience with the brand and price are also consistently

**Table III.**  
Mean scores on the likelihood of purchasing wines for specific use occasions

Label	Home alone	Dinner party	Restaurant	Gift
Traditional/Warren Williams	2.54	2.52	2.46	2.48
Traditional/Killer Whale	2.59	2.41	2.22	2.22
Traditional/Tadpole	2.78	2.66	2.51	2.50
Contemporary/Warren Williams	2.78	2.53	2.32	2.39
Contemporary/Killer Whale	2.14	1.79	1.70	1.72
Contemporary/Tadpole	2.45	2.13	1.89	2.01
Novelty/Warren Williams	2.18	1.92	1.87	1.88
Novelty/Killer Whale	1.83	1.54	1.47	1.48
Novelty/Tadpole	2.18	1.75	1.56	1.63

**Note:** Scale of 1, definitely would not buy to 4, definitely would buy

**Table IV.**  
Importance factors for wine choice by occasion

Importance factors	Home alone	Dinner party at home	Restaurant	Given as a gift
Familiarity/experience with brand	3.5	3.9	3.5	4.1
Country of origin	2.9	3.0	3.0	3.2
Wine's ranking (wine spectator)	2.4	2.7	2.5	2.9
Look of the label (appeal of the label)	2.8	2.8	2.0	3.4
Region in which grapes were grown	3.1	3.1	3.0	3.1
Appeal (liking) of the brand name	3.0	3.1	3.0	3.4
Year bottled	2.9	2.9	2.8	3.0
Price	3.7	3.5	3.9	3.8
Type of wine	4.4	4.3	4.4	4.0
Wine vintner	2.7	2.6	2.5	2.5
Wine distributor	1.7	1.7	1.6	1.7

**Note:** Scale of 1, not at all important to 5, extremely important

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found among the most important decision factors, although they shift in rank among the occasions. Price is second only to type of wine chosen for consumption at home or in a restaurant. It is third, following type and familiarity/experience for choosing a wine for a dinner party at home and gifts. Thus, when it is primarily the buyer who will also serve as primary consumer, the choice model will focus on type and price, followed by familiarity/experience but when the wine choice may be judged by others (dinner party at home, gift exchange), familiarity/experience with the wine trumps price. Interestingly, the look of the label and appeal/liking of the brand name are among the most important factors only when the wine is intended as a gift. The importance of both variables is significantly higher when choosing wine as a gift than for the other three occasions. As Finkelstein and Quiazon (2007) anticipated, factors such as vintner, distributor, year bottled, and region were of less concern to wine consumers. Surprisingly, the wine's ranking from a source like Wine Spectator was also deemed less than important when choosing a wine.

### Conclusion

One of the key elements in successful marketing is understanding the target audience. The target audience must be the focus for the overall marketing message, including the packaging. This applies to all wine marketing. The wine consumer is a rather unique consumer. An understanding of the wine consumer requires knowledge of his/her motivation to buy the bottle of wine. Is it purchased for personal consumption at home, or is it to serve to guests at a dinner party? Often this motivation is a more important factor in the purchase decision than the shopper's demographics or psychographics. What makes marketing wine so volatile is that one's motivation drastically changes one's buying behavior. For example, consumers customarily spend 200 percent more for a bottle to give as a hostess gift than they do for a bottle intended for personal consumption at home. Wine consumers are not necessarily the same consumer from day to day. The multitude of consumer tastes and motivations helps explain why there are 10,000 wine brands.

This contributes to the fragmentation of the wine product category and helps explain why the ad budgets for wine brands are a tenth of that for beer brands. At the same time, the multitude of flavors and brands in the wine category contribute to the fragmentation of the wine consumer. The design of wine labels is getting more sophisticated. Labels are getting better at talking to specific consumers (as opposed to the masses), and this conversation is scattering the market even more. Thus, the cycle of fragmentation continues to escalate.

Wine labels have been commonplace since the 1860s. For virtually 100 years there were not major changes in wine label design. During the 1960s the influence of the new California wines changed wine label design by introducing more color, personality, and individuality. However, the labels that have come out since the late 1990s have made major strides in evolving what is put on the outside of a wine bottle. The marketing of wine will continue to explore new strategies at a pace that the wine industry has not seen since its inception.

Importantly, this research suggests that the evolution of wine labels has not changed the consumer's perception of what a wine label ought to look like. Though novelty and contemporary names scored well, novelty designs with contemporary and novelty names were less desirable. Further, novelty wines were perceived as cheap

and of low quality. They are considered perhaps more appropriate for novelty occasions rather than occasions studied in this research. As anticipated by the consumer wine buying decision model, the label design does serve as an extrinsic cue in the development of perceptions about a wine, and these perceptions affect the intent to purchase.

In terms of what matters when selecting a wine for different occasions, we learned that for the most part, the occasion is not as critical as once thought. The same factors were important whether choosing a wine for a private evening at home, a dinner party at home, a gift, or for a meal at a restaurant. Consumers consistently choose a type of wine and then rely upon familiarity and experience with the brand and price considerations. Likability of the name and label were influential only for wines chosen to serve as gifts.

There are limitations to this study. Most importantly the sample was a self-selected convenience sample rather than one based on a list of wine consumers. In addition, the sample was somewhat homogenous which likely limited the ability to identify differences that might exist for age, income, and gender. For instance, wine consumers with lower incomes may prefer the seemingly cheap novelty wines, as may younger consumers who seek out a wine image more congruent with their own lives. In this study, fictitious wine label designs and names were utilized to ensure no brand effects extended to the responses. However, perhaps the designs and names chosen were not the most accurate depictions of the three label designs and naming conventions. This in part could have been addressed had the study included a pre-test with manipulation checks.

Still, despite these limits to the study, the results do provide some clear managerial implications for marketing managers in the wine industry. The likability of the wine brand name and label matters only when the wine is given as a gift. Then the label and name relay information on the gift's value and intent. Labels and brand names provide a price and quality cue to consumers. Traditional label design is most associated with a desirable wine.

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### Further reading

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