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Wine Packaging for the Expectations of New Consumers

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## **Wine Packaging for the Expectations of New Consumers: A Comparative Case Study of Consumers' Perceptions in Macedonia, Germany and Japan**

*Toni Vasic, Ilijana Petrovska, Indji Selim*

### **Abstract**

*This paper analyzes the customer's behavior towards wine design in three different countries: Macedonia, Germany and Japan, which are countries with different cultural specifics. This research question has already been analyzed in developed countries, thereby presenting a customer profile which has been influenced by today's social, psychological and global factors. This triggered the inquiry into analyzing how wine packaging is perceived in Macedonia and to see if there are any similarities with EU customers, such as those from Germany and if there is a bigger difference with the customer from Japan. This research will provide advice on European customer integration and if it is appropriate to design the same branding and packaging for these two countries in Europe or for the branding of a European product on the global market. The basic research methods of this paper are developed according to theoretical studies from the marketing literature. The research method for this study is a quantitative online survey of a sample of 70 Macedonian consumers. The questionnaire is adopted from German and Japanese authors, providing a continuation of the study developed in 2012. The Macedonian survey was conducted in November 2013. The determination of the preferences of wine consumers in Macedonia, Germany and Japan helps in the improvement of the design of wine packaging. Moreover, developing a packaging design according consumers' requirements leads to better communication between the consumer and the product by creating a long lasting relationship, as well as better economic results. This research will provide valuable information not only for the industry, but also by presenting valuable scientific feedback in the area of packaging and showing how different the customer perception in EU countries is by comparison with non EU countries.*

*Keywords: Wine, package, design, consumer, brand, product, social, psychological, global factors.*

## Introduction

The European market and the European Union emphasize the importance of creativity and innovation as an important precondition for competitive advantage on the world market. Macedonia as part of the European market and as an EU candidate country should follow this strategy and “trend” for being competitive, taking into consideration the influence of globalization on product design and creative strategy. Wine production is among the most important and strategic export products of Macedonia, and in order to be competitive in global and European markets, Macedonia must develop final products which are accepted on foreign markets, rather than just exporting wine in bulk. So far Macedonia has focused on the geographical aspect of wine, but this research should analyze other factors that may have an influence on the better acceptance of Macedonian wine by European and foreign customers. The fact that Macedonia produces high quality wine creates opportunities for expanding in the global market. Moreover, Macedonian wineries should reorganize their branding strategies according to the needs of the global market. Therefore, this chapter researches the design of wine packaging which is the key part of the branding process. Also, it is the tool that leads to the popularization of product quality. The design of a product is a major communication and positioning aspect that could differentiate the Macedonian product on the global and European market and have a great influence on better competitive advantage.

The main research question focused on whether or not universal wine packaging could represent both the origin and quality of the wine through contemporary design for the future global customer, by taking into consideration three different consumer types. The consumers who have been chosen for this research were targeted according to the contemporary trends of wine purchasing. In addition, wine consumers from Macedonia, Germany and Japan differentiate according to their social-cultural values. However, the influence of globalization changes the life-styles of consumers around the globe by determining new ways of wine purchase. Hence, the comparison of wine preferences of these three consumer types provides more qualitative research in the quest for finding the universal consumer.

## Literature Review

### Defining Wine Packaging Design

The literature on packaging design mostly stresses the importance of good design, and a well-shaped product for distinguishing products on the global market. This part of the research defines the packaging design as a key factor in creating the connection between the consumer and brand. There are many statements in the literature about packaging design, based on the field that is used. In addition, this kind of classification of packaging design usage in the literature helps to determine the characteristics of the design concept. This improvement of the design process on the production line presents the importance of the design process in wine consumer behavior. Therefore, this part of the study is helpful in revealing the value of the wine packaging design in the process of wine purchase.

From a psychological aspect, Obraz (1975) stresses that when launching a new product on the market, the function of the packaging design is to emphasize the characteristics of the product and to distinguish the product from the other competitors by establishing a visual connection with consumers. From an emotional aspect, Southgate (1994) argues that product design creates long-term relationships between the brand and its consumers. Southgate (1994) adds that the packaging characteristics of the product stimulate an impulse in the decision making process in purchasing behavior rather than a phase in the branding process. Moreover, Southgate (1994) explains that apart from its functionality the design of the packaging carries out the role of a seller who builds up a stable connection between the brand and the consumer. From a rational perspective, Pildtich (1973) recognizes the need for `soft-sell` marketing which contains the values of rational and emotional packaging design. According to him the design of the package should `shout for attention` so as to attract the consumer and afterwards create a relationship with the product itself.

Also, package design is defined as a phase in the branding process. However, there are many debates in the wine industry about the possibility of defining wine as a branded product. Micklethwait (1999) claims that the branding process in the wine industry is a debate that has been going on for some time. According to his report published in *The Economist* (1999) the global market does not have a popular wine brand because wine experts suggest that wine is a product in which a consumer should enjoy its diversity.

On the other hand, Westling (2001) argues the importance of the wine brand, stressing the service and delivery experience for the consumer, as important factors in the consumer's decision to buy. Moreover, the author suggests many features on promoting a wine in order to give a wine a unique position. These features are just a small part of the characteristics which would improve the concept of the packaging process. But the most important feature of this process is to define the user profile and establish the packaging concept according to his needs by targeting the consumer with a good survey.

### **Defining the Purchasing Factors**

A targeting process should investigate the literature based on the marketing mix factors which influence the decision making process while purchasing a branded product. Basic elements that influence the consumer in his purchase decision are defined in the marketing terminology as demographic, economic, social-cultural and psychological factors. However, due to the different characteristics of the wine product, consumer preferences are analyzed according to the influence of socio-cultural, psychological and global factors. According to Obraz (1975) this kind of classification of the consumer is important in the field of marketing because it provides a more accurate picture of the statement on the market.

In addition, determined factors are analyzed in order to reveal the basic characteristics of the wine consumer. Information from the literature provokes a new debate about the preferences of the new wine consumer because social, psychological and global factors bear influence in different ways. This debate over the factors triggering the question about the existence of a universal wine consumer since the research focuses on what is essentially an agricultural product.

- **Social-cultural Factors**

Resnick (2008) claims that in order to understand the relationship between socialization, culture and wine consumers, the study should focus on the observation of the time and place when people actually consume the wine. A particularly important feature when researching a nation's culture for example is the observation of food consumption. This is due to the fact that there is a strong link between the food and wine that is being consumed. Furthermore, the culture of nutrition can also answer many questions about the wine

consumption of a particular market. Contemporary implications and changing lifestyles determine new ways of nutrition which are very important in wine purchasing behavior.

From a design perspective, an understanding of socio-cultural factors is of great benefit beneficial in determining the starting point of a designer's concept. For instance, Resnick (2008) points out that a good example would be to predict whether the brand name, slogan and package design would fit in well with the targeted market. There are many examples in the global market, where a branded product is launched using different names due to differences in market culture. This part of the branding process is implemented by designer teams who research the social and cultural backgrounds and language characteristics of certain markets in different countries. The name of the product and the package design should not only attract the consumer, but also be accepted by the targeted market at the same time.

Resnick (2008) debates the contradictory statements of the modern package design of branded wine products. This is because the social and cultural factors contain variable predictions for every designer. In other words, wine is a product that is intertwined with traditional values, culture and language. However, the development and advancement of technology creates new dimensions in the creation of the product in accordance with the needs of the modern consumer. For every successful designer, the task of designing variable products that adhere to the different social and cultural values of its intended markets is much more of a daunting task than actually designing a single universally acceptable product for all markets.

- **Psychological Factors**

The first contact with the product is a direct function of the consumers' initial interaction with it. This research is focused on branded wines; therefore the places where these emotions are manifested during that interaction should be observed and studied. This part of the study attempts to show that learning is the most reliable consequence in the psychology of the consumer, which as a result is implied by the "learn by experience" phenomena. Additionally, promotions and commercial campaigns play an important role in the perception of a consumer's part of learning and deciding. For example, wine producers have noticed an increased consumption of wine products among the female population. Resnick (2008) explains that increased wine consumption among women is based on the influence of promotional campaigns of the modern

cinema. Therefore, the author, has called the women wine consumers the `Bridget Jones generation`. From a psychological perspective, this chapter analyzes the examples of successfully branded wine products from the three companies pictured below, which are designed according the needs of a targeted consumer group.



Graphic.1.1 Wine packaging for women

Moreover, Resnick (2008) gives examples of three different wine companies that have specifically targeted female consumers and have designed a package according to their preferences. According to the campaigns of these three companies, wine is treated as a refreshing drink with the ability to be consumed throughout the whole day, nicely fitted into a practical design package.

- **The Effects of Globalization**

In accordance with the above example, this chapter reveals that the globalization process also influences the aspects of the design of a branded wine product. Additionally, this part of the research is focused on pointing out the benefits of globalization in the wine industry. Therefore, globalization affects the development of technology, influencing the characteristics of the design concept of a particular product. Furthermore, this development connects different cultures around the world, thereby imposing a new way of nutrition and lifestyle. Resnick (2008) prolongs the debate about the preferences of the wine consumer as continuously changing values which are affected by changing trends in everyday life. According to this author, the main force that leads in this socio-cultural transformation is the power of globalization and its persistence in creating a universal consumer. This kind of transformation in the consumer's behavior reveals that the globalization process affects the wine industry by changing the trading methods of wine products. Therefore, wine production companies create new concepts for the design of packaging, in order to be able to fit into the new ways of promoting the wine product.

### **Wine Packaging in The Global World and in European Union's Market**

In addition, the gathered literature about the preferences of wine consumers so far reveals the characteristics of the user profile from different wine markets. This part of market research determines the target group, influenced by the basic elements of the marketing mix of activities. As mentioned before, the intensity and characteristics of the external marketing mix factors are the elements that influence the wine consumer's motivation for buying. In order to determine the target group, the companies should reorganize their branding strategy according to contemporary marketing principles. In this phase of the research, the purchase behavior of Macedonian consumers can define the position of the organizational marketing concepts of the Macedonian wineries.

Therefore, this research aims to reveal the key elements of the branding process of successful companies that have been operating in the wine industry sector for a long time. This is done by comparing purchasing behavior in markets such as Macedonia, Germany and Japan. As a result, the design phase of the whole branding process has actually become a leading trend in the policy of manufacturing, which creates educated, professional team builders. These then have the potential to coordinate the whole process of activity in companies, as well as increasing the sales of the newly designed products.

So far, the main findings in the literature provide beneficial guidelines in the field of research methodology as well as in the process of designing a wine package for today's consumer. According to Spence (2013), drinking wine from a glass bottle leaves a better taste in consumers' minds because, the brain makes a positive correlation between the weight of the product and its value. Moreover, his findings reveal that wine consumers prefer glass bottle and a wooden cork because for many drinkers, consuming wine is a ritual rather than just drinking an ordinary drink. Therefore, the later part of this research is interested more precisely in the design of the wine label rather than the actual bottle.

### **Research Methodology**

A quantitative questionnaire was used for this research as in the Japan Wine Market Landscape Report (2012) and the Kamminga Report (2012) on the German consumer. The questionnaire was translated, tested and adopted for the Macedonian consumer. The survey analyses were implemented in October

2013, mainly in Skopje, but also covering other cities in Macedonia in order to have a better picture of the Macedonian consumer. The questionnaire was implemented online, using the surveymonkey survey site for creating, and completing the questionnaire. As such, this survey provided results from Macedonia which were comparable with results for Germany and Japan. Due to the limitations of this study, the survey findings of German and Japanese wine preferences were selected from wine companies which had recently performed their survey of the afore- mentioned consumers. Hence, the results of the completed surveys are categorized and presented according to the needs and structure of the study's development process.

The first requirement of the survey used the method of multiple answers and the Best-Worst method of analysis, which is a defined according to the method used in the Thach and Olsen report (2013). In the following section, the study determines the visual preferences of consumers towards the presented wine package designs. Moreover, this part of the survey contains visual examples of branded wine products, in order to have the respondent compare and assess its design qualities.

This survey covered a sample of 70 Macedonian consumers. The question about wine consumption was presented in the first part of the questionnaire in order to filter out the respondents who are not interesting for this study. Therefore, the further process of the research is focused on a sample of 60 respondents who consume wine. The gender representation in this sample is 57% male and 43% female. Due to the focus of this study, it was also necessary to create age categories which are listed as 40% of the respondents being within the ages 18-29, 35% within the ages 30-49 and 25% under 50.

### **Determining the Visual Characteristics of the Product**

In this part of the survey the descriptive sample used was selected according to the different characteristics of their design. The Best-Worst method provided an evaluation of user emotions towards the designed branded wine products. The results of this part of the survey confirmed the answers of the previous questions about consumer design package preferences. In addition, results pointed to the fact, that the most preferred wine package was the choice marked B, with 4.5 points from a scale of 1 to 6. The wine label design was from 2013 by the `Shefa Profusion Wines` company. Actually, the main aim of this winery is to target a younger generation by using a product with trendy characteristics. The figure below presents the average results concerning the



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Best-Worst wine package design. According to the calculated results, the highest ones were those ones marked with letters B, C and D. When analyzing the characteristics of the preferred wine designs mentioned, it has been noted that the beneficial sides of the labels are the facts, that they can be placed in various positions on the bottle. Indeed, the paper used is very efficient material, which allows for experimenting in the application of the design elements of the package. This type of material efficiency is beneficial for designers because it provides the opportunity for product integration into the design concept. As mentioned in the literature review, wine package design is the key segment in creating the bridge of communication between the designer and the consumer.

Moreover, if the designer succeeds in expressing the message and the idea of the product to the consumer, then the design of the wine package is usually successful. On the other hand, the wine bottles which are graded with the lowest points are the ones with a traditional square label with a lot of information on it. In addition, those traditional wine labels not very interesting to new consumers since they do not communicate visually.



	A	B	C	D	E	F
	2.6	4.5	3.9	3.9	3.1	2.9
	1.5	1.3	2.6	4.5	3.9	3.9
	58%	29%	68%	116%	125%	134%
1	17	3	4	4	15	17
2	15	2	7	7	13	16
3	15	4	19	8	9	5
4	4	16	9	21	4	6
5	4	21	4	11	11	9
6	5	14	17	9	8	7

Analyze>Descriptive statistics>Frequencies  
Frequency

Graphic.1.2 Visual preferences of respondents

## Discussion of the Results

Today, the development of product design gathers together all segments of the production process and also builds the bridge between the producer and the consumer. Therefore, in this process the designer should rationally plan the budget, materials and production opportunities in order to be in balance with the expected financial effect. In this part of the study the key statement is to define the strategy that leads to a rational design solution by creating a product which will become a global brand.

This part of the study compares the results of the established survey from Macedonian consumers with results taken from the German and Japanese wine companies. In addition, the results of the preferences which belong to three different types of wine consumers are gathered and selected according to the needs and development of this study. The questions determined below are the key basic parts of this study, therefore their classification provides a better perspective of the discussion process.

- What is the wine consumption frequency in Macedonia, Germany and Japan?
- On which occasions is wine consumed most in Macedonia, Germany and Japan?
- According to which criteria is wine purchased in Macedonia, Germany and Japan?
- What are the visual preferences of global consumers towards the wine package designs?

**Q1: What is the Wine Consumption Frequency in Macedonia, Germany and Japan?** The frequency of wine consumption in Macedonia is low because 70% of the respondents answered that they consume wine only once a month or only in special occasions, whilst 28% consume wine once a week or regularly that creates a group of high frequency consumers which is mostly to be found among the younger population. According to the survey carried out by Kamminga (2012) from the German wine institute, 31.7% of the respondents stated that they consume wine once a week or regularly, 36.2% answered that they consume wine only on special occasions while 32.1% answered that they do not drink wine at all. The data presented defines that there is only a small difference between the two frequencies but additionally, the research study defines that the younger German population creates the lower frequency and the older population creates the higher frequency. Also,

according to the Japan Wine Market Report (2012) in estimation, half of the population of Japan consumes wine. The frequency of wine consumption in Japan is low, because it is presented by a group of 86% of consumers who consume wine only once a month or on special occasions, on the other hand a higher frequency is determined by 14% of the population who consume wine once a week or regularly. Hence, the gathered results from the three different types of consumers reveal that the average global consumer creates the low frequency group. Therefore, the next part of the study analyzes the different occasions in which the wine is consumed in these three countries.

**Q2: On Which Occasions is Wine Consumed in Macedonia, Germany and Japan?** In this part of the study, the occasions of wine consumption are compared between Macedonian, German and Japanese wine consumers. This information is beneficial in order to organize the promotional activities of wine companies. According to the survey presented in the first part of this chapter, 30% of the Macedonian respondents answered that they consume wine in restaurants and 23% of them answered on special occasions. Also, according to the Japan Wine Market Landscape Report (2012) 90% of the respondents consume wine during lunch or dinner at a restaurant or special occasions. The further part of the study reveals that German wine consumers also mostly prefer drinking wine at a restaurant or on special occasions. Kamminga (2012) claims that going out to dinner is the best reason for drinking, however “66% of the German respondents answered that they mostly prefer consuming wine in a `private` environment, which means socializing during dinner, on the other hand 29% prefer to drink wine with their partner at home” (Kamminga, 2012). The results of the preferred occasions of three different types of wine consumers reveals the influence of globalization on user preferences in the wine market.

**Q3: According to Which Criteria is Wine Purchased in Macedonia, Germany and Japan?** As mentioned in the previous part of this chapter, Macedonian respondents purchase their wine according to its quality, package design and type. This kind of information reveals that the average Macedonian consumer purchases a familiar wine of high quality. However, according to the results of the survey, the design of the package and the type of wine is also important in purchasing a wine. Accordingly, the basic information about the age of the wine consumer, most of the respondents are from the young generation who are psychologically prepared to try new products. Furthermore, the key factor in purchasing a new brand of wine on the market is its package design

which communicates with the consumer. In this segment of the survey according to the German Wine Institute and Japan Wine Market Landscape Report, because of global effects and the influence of new life styles, the younger generation has become the new wine consumer group. "The younger population is more and more involved purchasing [sic.] wine purchase in Japan, this group is getting bigger and loves to spend time in selecting wine [sic.] because they are ready to try new tastes" (Japan Wine Market Landscape Report, 2012). Hence, targeting the younger population means having to attract their attention with the correct packaging design and strengthening this communication by creating a long lasting brand.

**Q4: What Are the Visual Preferences of Global Consumers with Regard to Wine Package Designs?** Because of the geographical limitation of this research, the visual preferences of German and Japanese consumers are not included in this survey. Therefore, the results of the visual preferences of Macedonian wine consumers are treated as the preferences of young global wine consumers. In addition, this kind of discussion is beneficial for the quality of the survey. As mentioned before, the average wine consumer is presented as a male between the age of 18-29 with a university degree. Moreover, this type of consumer belongs to a young group of population which means that he is ready to purchase a new product on the market. In the presented visual samples for the Macedonian respondents, the average answer is a trendy product which means an innovative communication with the consumer. Through this communication, the design of the label should attract the attention of the consumer revealing the story which stands behind its creation. Consequently, young consumers want innovation, new trends and stories about the wine product.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter is based on a literature review and survey analysis performed on Macedonian respondents, comparing findings of the key wine preferences with German and Japanese consumers. In addition, market research, product development and its design and promotional processes provide accurate steps that lead to successful strategy in launching a product brand in the global market. Moreover, this analysis emphasizes the fact that wine companies in Macedonia should build their brand in the global market by targeting their consumer profile. Therefore, the design phase in the branding

process should benefit from achievements in the production industry, especially using the technological accomplishments in the field of graphic design. Also, in this part of the process, the designer has to be aware of the different aspects of material usage, since in this case the product is wine, paper is used as a label material because of its efficiency and ecological properties.

The discussion of the comparative results between the Macedonian, German and Japanese consumers, determines that the main function of the design phase also outlines the branding process. Additionally, this main segment is generally influenced by the globalization process, socio-cultural and psychological factors. However, the design process is also provoked by a new generation of designers who develop new ideas and create new trends in the production industry. This kind of imposed creativity in trends, affects the young generation of consumers, thereby helping the product to evolve according to the influence of identities that are both the consumer and the designer. The wine product itself gains more valuable attributes and differentiates from its competitors in the field of design, owing to the influence of this two-way relationship. So, in order to distinguish from other competitive wine products in the global market, the designed wine product should combine ideas of the factors that influence the consumer preference with the benefit of globalization.

Furthermore, the materials revealed in this study and the results of combining research give an estimated picture of the preferences of new wine consumers. The materials presented show that the new consumer is mainly influenced by global factors but still retains social and psychological characteristics in his purchasing behavior. Therefore, this research has the opportunity to continue analyzing the purchasing behavior of the new wine consumer by introducing wine labels designed according its findings. Further study that can be developed from this research provides for new research methods in analyzing the preferences of new wine consumers. Therefore, in the last part of this paper, the proposed material is introduced in order to present a brief starting point for the further study.

So, in order to compete in the global wine market, the proposed wine package design as shown below, should communicate with the consumer by providing the opportunity to explore the cultural values of Macedonia. These values are influenced from the different elements based on architecture, art, history, tradition and culture which exist in the Macedonian region. In order to create a unity and a story around these elements, the wine label integrates

them into one solar system, since this region has the most sunny days during a whole year and moreover, the sun is the universal symbol of all cultures. This approach presents the imposed traditional values of one culture, onto the universal values of globalization. Hence, this research reveals that today's universal wine consumer is characterized by mixed preferences of traditional values and contemporary trends. As mentioned before, this research project has analyzed the preferences of three different cultures which are Macedonian, German and Japanese. Therefore, the proposed wine package designs include the preferences of the analyzed consumer profiles of these three markets. Moreover, the design concept is the same for the proposed branded wines, however as mentioned in the previous sections, each red and white wine label may be differentiated by their names and alphabet according the intended market.



Graphic 1.3 Proposed red and white wine labels for Macedonian, German and Japanese markets

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