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**The Role of Wine Label Design in  
Shaping Consumer Preferences**

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## **Abstract**

This study examines the link between consumer preferences and habits with different styles of wine labels. The wine industry is a highly competitive market where differentiation is key to capturing consumer attention and sustaining brand loyalty. Wine labels, as a critical extrinsic cue, play a pivotal role in influencing consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. The study investigates the impact of different label design styles—traditional, modern, and bold—on consumer preferences for red, white, and sparkling wines. The research explores how visual cues on wine labels shape preferences and purchase likelihood. The study also examines the effects of sociodemographic factors and wine knowledge on consumer choices. It was found that most participants were aged 25-34 (38.27%) and female (64.20%), with higher education levels. Wine consumption varied by type and occasion, with red wine preferred at meals outside the home, white wine at casual gatherings, and sparkling wine at special events. Most participants reported spending 10 to 20 € per bottle of wine, and wine knowledge was generally limited. Age and gender demographics did not significantly impact preferences. Label perception significantly influenced consumer preferences. Traditional labels were most associated with tradition (5.54), while bold labels were viewed as modern (4.92). A linear regression analysis showed that stronger alignment between a label's style and perceived wine characteristic increased both liking (0.12 points,  $p = 0.042$ ) and willingness to buy (0.15 points,  $p = 0.009$ ). Traditional labels were the most liked, with purchasing intent highest when labels matched expectations. These findings highlight the importance of aligning label design with consumer perceptions to enhance appeal and sales. This study provides insights for winemakers and marketers, emphasizing the strategic role of label aesthetics in driving consumer engagement and maximizing price premiums in an evolving global wine market.

**Keywords:** Label design, consumer perception, wine marketing

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1. Wine Industry and Innovation**

The wine market is a competitive arena for all players, each having to satisfy a unique consumer segment. Key dynamics shaping the market include the contrast between small and large firms, New World versus Old World producers, and the balance between traditional methods and modern technology. Even within each of these categories, there is competition to reach the target segment. With perfect information, the consumers can precisely choose the wine that matches their needs or wants. However, even a single wine shop is inundated by countless labels with varying levels of information, different styles, certifications, etc. It becomes impossible for consumers, especially naïve ones, to assess the options and choose a wine. Because of the saturation of the market, consumers often make purchase decisions based on extrinsic cues. These cues, including the wine label, transmit information about the product and the quality of the product (Piqueras-Fiszman & Spence, 2015). The emergence of new styles of wine labels in recent years demonstrates one kind of innovation firms are taking to differentiate their products.

Such a large global market requires innovation, and in the wine industry this can range from growing practices, grape varieties, and production processes to marketing strategies (Chamorro et al., 2021). That being said, there can be resistance of some producers to change, or even the lack of means to do so. While innovation can be beneficial, retaining the elements that define the brand are important for certain firm identities. Winemakers must mix innovation and tradition to remain competitive (Vrontis et al., 2016). A firm may preserve the existing image or alternatively, respond to consumer preferences, which is known as market-driven innovation (An, 2022).

It is of great interest to all winemakers to market their product to stand out from the rest, as it can foster a relationship with the consumer or allow for a price premium (Barber & Almanza, 2007; Bernabéu et al., 2016; Gofman et al., 2009; Hollebeek et al., 2007). Brands with the goal of standing out prioritize innovation in logos and label designs (Elliot & Barth, 2012). Similarly, Cabrera-Flores (2024) noted the importance of the label as a point of contact with the consumer, as it must persuade the consumer to buy that specific product over a competitor's. In order to achieve this, differentiation is needed. Differentiation can be defined as developing unique product qualities to achieve a competitive advantage (D. Banker et al., 2014). Banker (2014) found both cost leadership and differentiation strategies to be beneficial to firms. However, sustaining performance long term was easier done with differentiation compared to cost leadership. With the use of differentiation strategies, niche markets are created, and smaller producers can thrive (Dimara et al., 2001). In general, the wine industry can be considered a fragmented market consisting of many brands, meaning that product attributes are the key to the consumer's choice (Chrysochou et al., 2012). In these niche markets, firms have to be highly market-oriented and creative in developing their products in order to captivate and sustain consumer interest (Jenster, 2008).

Wine labels play an important role in consumer decisions, serving as both an informational tool and a marketing strategy. As the wine market becomes increasingly saturated, labels function as a primary point of differentiation. Labels influence perceptions of quality, style, and brand identity. The visual appeal, typography, color scheme, and overall design contribute to the perceived value of the wine, often guiding purchasing decisions. Given the competitive nature of the industry, label innovations are a way to attract attention, foster brand loyalty, and distinguish the product from competitors.

## **1.2. Aims of Thesis**

This thesis aims to explore the role of wine labels in consumer perception and purchasing behavior, primarily focusing on traditional, modern, and bold label styles. By examining the relationship between label design, preferences, and purchase intent, this research seeks to provide insights into effective marketing strategies within the wine industry. The findings aim to contribute to both academic discussions on consumer behavior and practical applications for wine producers looking to enhance their market positioning.

## **1.3. Thesis Structure**

Section 2 presents the literature review, which explores previous research on winery branding and positioning, with a particular focus on wine labels. It examines both verbal elements and visual design, as well as semiotics. Furthermore, consumer behavior theories are reviewed to assess how label design influences purchasing decisions, as well as economic impact, prior findings, and conflicting results in the field. Section 3 outlines the research gap and objectives, defining goals of this study based on existing gaps in literature. It emphasizes the importance of understanding how specific label features impact consumer choices, particularly in a saturated and highly competitive market. Section 4 details the methods used to conduct the study, including participant selection, questionnaire design, and the stimuli presented to respondents. The section also describes the research procedure, data collection process, methods of analysis, and ethical considerations. Section 5 presents the results, summarizing key findings related to participant demographics, wine consumption habits, and wine knowledge levels. It also examines how participants perceive different label styles, their associations with specific designs, and how labels influence purchasing preferences and willingness to buy. Section 6 provides the discussion, analyzing the findings in relation to existing literature. It evaluates the significance of the results, discusses their implications for

wine branding and marketing strategies, and identifies potential applications for wineries seeking to enhance their product differentiation. This section acknowledges the limitations of the study and suggests areas for future research. Finally, the conclusion, summarizing the study's key contributions and providing final insights into how wine labels can serve as a powerful marketing tool. The section reflects on the broader implications of label design in shaping consumer choices and the potential strategies wineries can adopt to strengthen their market position.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Wine Branding and Positioning**

An important objective of a winery is to create a strong brand to attract and retain consumers (Ducman, 2023). The winery's vision must be reflected in every aspect of its product, especially on the bottle in retail settings. The label plays a crucial role in conveying the brand identity, as it is potentially the only form of contact that the consumer will have with the firm. Producers must identify the key indicators that will effectively communicate their identity, whether that be through unique label design, quality certifications, or other elements. At the same time, the winemakers have to position their brand in a unique place in the market in order to stand out from competitors.

Mora (2016) depicted some notable changes in the industry. In main markets such as Italy, France, and Spain, wine moved from an everyday staple to be consumed occasionally. Because of this, there was a decrease in loyalty to traditional territories. Emerging producers were able to enter the existing markets and also expand to new markets. In these spaces where consumption was growing, such as the United States and Asia, innovation was welcomed. This spans from winemaking practices to packaging and labeling. The combination of both new producers and new consumers created new spots in the market, allowing for new experiments with branding and positioning.

### **2.2. Wine Labels**

#### *2.2.1. Verbal elements*

Verbal cues are the way a package describes its contents through labels and product descriptions, while visual cues are the design and images of the package (Krishna et al., 2017). The label is able to relay information and quality indicators to the consumer (Piqueras-

Fizman & Spence, 2015). Information such as the origin or vintage year and quality indicators such as the DOC and DOCG labels (van Tonder & Mulder, 2015). The effect of these elements on consumers has been studied. For example, European consumers perceived the product to be of high quality when nutritional information and health claims were stated on the label (Annunziata et al., 2016). While the impact has been seen, certain barriers stand in the way of verbal cues, such as knowledge and time. A different study found respondents throughout France, Spain, and Italy had some difficulties in understanding the nutritional label information and also stated that they do not spend much time to read the label carefully (Annunziata et al., 2015). Some consumers value information like appellations of origin while others place greater importance on attributes such as price, brand, and recommendations from others (de Magistris et al., 2011).

### 2.2.2. *Visual design*

While the content of a wine label is important, another useful aspect is the visual design of the label. This is because certain label styles and colors warrant a price premium (Larry et al., 2009; Mueller Loose & Szolnoki, 2010). In the wine industry, the label is a main visual element portrayed to consumers (van Tonder & Mulder, 2015). There can be a clear push for winemakers to use this marketing tool to better target consumers, as the label is the first point of contact for the consumer (van Tonder & Mulder, 2015). Winemakers can draw from different studies that link the meaning of visual elements with the specific product image they want to portray. Celhay found connections between label elements and the meanings interpreted by consumers. For example, the illustrations and themes of the label: a château signifies culture and aristocracy, while a landscape emphasizes nature and terroir (Celhay & Remaud, 2018). The latter was also mentioned by Barbierato, that terroirs, landscapes, wineries, and grapes icons allow the consumer to grasp the area of origin (Barbierato et al.,

2023). In another study, it was found that a ‘strong’ label design with bold lettering even made the consumer believe that the taste of the product would be more potent. Along with that, the low-saturated color variant had higher price expectations compared to the high-saturated variant (Becker et al., 2011). Boudreaux found that label illustration had the strongest impact on the intent to purchase and the perceptions of the brand personality (Boudreaux & Palmer, 2007). Consumer research can provide guidelines for marketers to select the design that evokes the specific personality type wanted and avoid undesired characteristics. It is clear that there is an impact on brand perception and product quality derived from the visual appearance of the label (Ares et al., 2011; Boudreaux & Palmer, 2007; Orth & Malkewitz, 2008; Pantin-Sohier, 2009; van Rompay & Pruyn, 2011). However, it is still a complex subject, as visual attributes do not correspond to only one meaning (Celhay & Remaud, 2018). It is beneficial for marketers to test in real life and in preliminary settings in order to evaluate their product. In wine marketing, visual elements like label design, color, and style play a crucial role in shaping consumer perception and selection of wine. These elements must be aligned with the preferences of a well-defined consumer segment to create effective marketing strategies. By understanding what makes consumers in a particular segment alike, firms can craft visual marketing that resonates strongly and influences purchase decisions.

### 2.2.3. *Semiotics*

Expanding on the consumer’s interpretation, semiotics is known as the study of how individuals assign meaning to visual signs (van Tonder & Mulder, 2015). Van Tonder studied consumers of South African wines and found that visual elements and the design of the front label are not only an important source of information, but also a persuasive force in purchasing (van Tonder & Mulder, 2015). In a study on Bordeaux wine, specific visual codes

were linked to distinct package designs. Findings such as this allow marketers to predict associations and design packaging that conveys the desired message (Celhay & Remaud, 2018). One facet of semiotic research is eye-tracking behavior. Barbierato conducted a study with wine labeling, specifically tracking eye movements. Label design affected preferences, aesthetic judgements, and oculomotor parameters (Barbierato et al., 2023). Laeng found a strong positive relationship between visual attention and wine label preference. In particular, naïve consumers fixated on visual cues such as pictorial information (Barbierato et al., 2023; Laeng et al., 2016).

### **2.3. Purchase Behavior**

Consumers can use both extrinsic and intrinsic cues to inform their purchase decisions (Oude Ophuis & Van Trijp, 1995). Extrinsic cues consist of brand name, price, and packaging while intrinsic cues are grape variety, taste, mouthfeel, age of wine, alcohol content and production system (Chamorro et al., 2021; Rocchi, 2006; Tang et al., 2015). Before the first purchase of wine, extrinsic cues are the sole method of evaluation (Barber & Almanza, 2007; Galati et al., 2018; Pantin-Sohier, 2009). Extrinsic cues are used to infer the characteristics and qualities of the wine (Elliot & Barth, 2012). Being an extrinsic element, labels are a way of persuading consumers to buy the product (Cabrera-Flores et al.). Different segments of the market are uniquely affected by the outer appearance of a product, meaning that simply changing the packaging of the product could affect purchasing behavior (Dimara et al., 2001). Consumers rely on visual cues to infer abstract traits, which then guide their evaluation and preferences (Rocchi, 2006). Research on wine consumers in Greece revealed that extrinsic and intrinsic factors appealed to completely opposite consumer groups. Specifically, the extrinsic factor of packaging and the intrinsic factor of aroma were found to have contrasting effects. This

contrast allows marketers to use cues to target distinct segments of the market (Dimara et al., 2001).

### **2.3.1. Impact of Wine Label Design**

For wine, a key extrinsic factor studied is the label of the bottle (Barber & Almanza, 2007; Barbierato et al., 2023; Celhay & Remaud, 2018; Chamorro et al., 2021; Dimara et al., 2001; Mueller & Lockshin, 2008; Tang et al., 2015; Todd et al., 2021; van Tonder & Mulder, 2015). The wide variety of wine labels influences the way consumers perceive the product. Dimara described a label that depicts a rural landscape with ‘values such as authenticity, wholesomeness and tradition’ (Dimara et al., 2001). Orth and Malkewitz defined five holistic styles—massive, contrasting, natural, delicate, and nondescript—each influencing consumer perceptions. For example, massive designs suggest excitement but low quality, while natural designs evoke sincerity and high quality (Orth & Malkewitz, 2008). Van Rompay stressed that matching design elements, like shape and typeface, enhance brand credibility and product value, with more attractive labels leading to higher price expectations (van Rompay & Pruyn, 2011). Design styles clearly impact the brand and product perception and can be leveraged to make decisions that resonate with consumers. Mueller and Szolnoki (2010) studied the impact of extrinsic attributes on the market price of wines. The origin of wine had the greatest impact on price, followed by packaging characteristics such as label style. Similarly, a choice experiment with Australian wine consumers found that certain label styles and colors warrant a price premium (Larry et al., 2009). Research that focuses on the difference between the target consumers is beneficial for winemakers to make the most profit. Chamorro found that the label was the most influential attribute affecting consumer preference, with 45% of respondents identifying it as the most important factor. Among the various label designs, minimalist, modern labels were favored, especially among high- and

medium-frequency consumers. Interestingly, despite preferring modern designs, consumers often favored traditional brand names, revealing a complex interaction between modern aesthetics and brand legacy (Chamorro et al., 2021). Boudreaux further examined how traditional visual elements, like illustrations of grapes, castles, or vineyards, shaped consumer opinions. Traditional designs were preferred over modern ones, with bold color combinations helping to establish brand identity (Boudreaux & Palmer, 2007). Galati supported these findings, revealing that clean and artistic graphic styles, in addition to origin cues, warranted price premiums (Galati et al., 2018). Silayoi and Speece researched consumer communication through packaging. In their study, the most important influence on purchase was packaging technology. However, specifically when looking at the label design, the classic design was preferred over the colorful option (Silayoi & Speece, 2007).

### **2.3.2. Consumer Perception and Wine Labels**

In addition to information about wine, the label also conveys an idea to the consumer through their emotions and expectations (Krishna et al., 2017). The acceptability of the product from the consumer also changes with different packaging (Tang et al., 2015). A study by Mueller and Lockshin (2008) found that label design was the most important attribute in a discrete choice experiment with Australian wine consumers. Bernabéu studied consumers in the wine selection process, finding that ethnocentric consumers put emphasis on local products, while other consumers make decisions based on the inherent qualities of the product, not the origin (Bernabéu et al., 2016). Consumer behavior is influenced by economic, cultural, psychological, and lifestyle factors (Dimara et al., 2001). Differences in purchasing decisions can also be seen between different levels of wine knowledge (Barber & Almanza, 2007; Hollebeek et al., 2007). In a comparison between specific and generic wine labels, consumers with a higher level of wine knowledge preferred the specific varietal wine label (Todd et al.,

2021). When consumers do not have expert knowledge or previous purchases, they rely on the visual appearance to infer what attributes the product has (Becker et al., 2011). In particular, wine consumers with different levels of expertise vary in their perception of products and brands (Perrouy et al., 2006). Personal experiences and cultural background are also seen to impact the consumer's response (Bloch, 1995).

Celhay found no significant differences in how visual codes were interpreted based on gender, generation, or expertise level, indicating a consistent perception of packaging across consumer groups (Celhay & Remaud, 2018). In this case, a firm must find alternative ways to select their target segment. This is supported by Eco, who describes mass media texts as 'closed texts.' With product packaging being included in this, it can be said that labels are generally interpreted in similar ways by people (Eco, 1979).

Other research shows variability in consumer responses, suggesting that multiple factors can affect how people evaluate wine labels. Several studies have focused on the impact of label design and other visual elements on consumer choices. In a study conducted in the United States, Mueller and Szolnoki found that origin was the most influential cue on price premium. Label styles, label colors, bottle forms, and closures were also significant factors influencing the price premium. Notably, two label styles, 'nondescript' and 'clean uni-color', were associated with higher prices (Mueller Loose & Szolnoki, 2010). Supporting these findings, Jarvis emphasized the importance of label symbols to young consumers on their purchase decisions, outweighing indicators like region and grape variety (Jarvis et al., 2010). Similarly, Elliot and Barth noted that millennial consumers valued extrinsic factors, with the label being the most influential aspect in their purchase choices. The three most influential package factors were image, design, and color (Elliot & Barth, 2012).

Differences in purchasing decisions can also be seen between different levels of wine knowledge (Barber & Almanza, 2007; Hollebeek et al., 2007). In a comparison between specific and generic wine labels, consumers with a higher level of wine knowledge preferred the specific varietal wine label (Todd et al., 2021). When consumers do not have expert knowledge or previous purchases, they rely on the visual appearance to infer what attributes the product has (Becker et al., 2011). In particular, wine consumers with different levels of expertise vary in their perception of products and brands (Perrouty et al., 2006).

As consumers gain more wine knowledge, their attention shifts to different packaging elements. Perrouty observed that novice wine drinkers focused on origin cues like the bottler, while more experienced consumers prioritized brand and price (Perrouty et al., 2006). Similarly, Madureira and Nunes found that consumer involvement levels influenced which packaging elements were valued, with occasional consumers paying more attention to the overall design (Fernandes Ferreira Madureira & Simões de Sousa Nunes, 2013). The relationship between consumer knowledge and visual elements was also explored by Tempesta, who discovered generational differences in wine preferences. Younger consumers were more influenced by marketing strategies and label aesthetics, whereas older consumers were more focused on the wine's quality and found traditional labels with landscape graphics to signify higher quality (Tempesta et al., 2010). Tang noted that while traditional designs were generally favored, 95% of young consumers preferred contemporary labels (Tang et al., 2015). In another study, it was noted that more knowledgeable consumers valued intrinsic cues like grape variety and less informed consumers valued to extrinsic factors, such as packaging and branding (Mueller & Szolnoki, 2010). When studying cognitive and emotional responses evoked by wine labels, Laeng found that non-expert consumers displayed larger

pupils when viewing labels of more expensive wines, suggesting that label design can trigger specific psychological responses based on perceived value (Laeng et al., 2016).

#### **2.4. Label Styles**

Celhay (2018) conducted a semiotic analysis of wine labels, two of which were chosen as the labels for this questionnaire. First, the label associated with modernity, it is a simplistic design with non-script font and no imagery. The categories with the highest perception were modern (29.5%), sober (20.7%), and simple (20.3%). Next, the label associated with traditionality, a more complex graphic design style with vineyard etching. For this, the categories with the highest perception were classic (22.3%), tradition (16.1%), and ancient (14.1%). There were very similar perceptions when comparing based on gender as well as age, so these factors were not seen to affect the perceived meaning of the label. When analyzing the effect of combinations of label design and bottle shape, Chamorro (2021) characterized bold as having an abstract design. This research found that the label had the greatest influence (45%) on forming consumer preferences. Specifically with the bold label, consumers with a low level of wine knowledge preferred the bold label over the modern and classic options. For frequency of wine consumption, the high and medium consumption segment preferred the modern label, while the low consumption segment preferred the bold label. These findings emphasize the importance and the opportunity for innovation, such as a bold label, to attract a new target audience.

#### **2.5. Conflicting Results**

Not all studies agree on the importance of visual elements. Lockshin researched Australian wine brands and concluded that brand and price were the main drivers of choice, with region, label style, and color playing less significant roles (Lockshin et al., 2009). Similarly, in a

comparison of verbal and visual elements, Mueller and Lockshin found that while visual cues like label style and color were important in one part of their study, they were among the least important attributes in another. These discrepancies suggest that consumer preferences are multifaceted, shaped by factors such as cultural background, level of wine knowledge, and individual psychological responses (Mueller & Lockshin, 2008).

### **3. Research Gap and Objectives**

#### **Research Gap**

There is a lack of information regarding the specific impact that different label designs have on various types of wine, such as red, white, and sparkling wines. Previous research has demonstrated that wine labels serve as a critical extrinsic cue in shaping consumer preferences (Barber & Almanza, 2007; Mueller & Lockshin, 2008). Studies have examined the role of elements like label information (Annunziata et al., 2015), color (Joshi et al., 2024), or typography (Elliot & Barth, 2012), but few have analyzed how distinct design styles influence consumer perception based on wine type. Given that red, white, and sparkling wines are associated with distinct consumption occasions and traditions, it is likely that consumer expectations for label design vary by wine category. However, there is little evidence to support how these expectations interact with label aesthetics.

Additionally, some studies have explored consumer segmentation by demographics, wine knowledge, and purchasing behavior (Celhay & Remaud, 2018; Chamorro et al., 2021), there is a gap in understanding whether label preferences remain consistent across different consumer profiles. While younger consumer may be more receptive to modern or bold label designs, traditional aesthetics might still hold strong associations with quality and authenticity across age groups (Elliot & Barth, 2012; Mueller & Szolnoki, 2010). Similarly, experienced wine consumers may rely more on intrinsic cues such as grape variety and region, but their perceptions could still be influenced by visual elements on the label (Becker et al., 2011; Perrouty et al., 2006). Identifying these patterns will allow wineries to develop more effective marketing strategies that align with consumer expectations while maintaining a distinct brand identity.

As consumer preferences evolve over time, it becomes essential for producers and marketers to continuously adapt their strategies to meet these changing demands (Chamorro et al., 2021; Vrontis et al., 2016). One effective way to track and understand these shifts is through consumer-based research. To better understand the relationship between wine labeling and consumer behavior, this study will examine the specific effects of traditional, bold, and modern label designs on consumer responses to red, white, and sparkling wines. By doing so, it aims to offer valuable insights into how different design elements can be leveraged to enhance brand perception and increase consumer engagement.

This study employs a structured methodology to assess consumer responses to traditional, modern, and bold label designs for red, white, and sparkling wines. By utilizing a questionnaire-based approach, the research aims to quantify the impact of label aesthetics on consumer preferences and purchase intent. The following section outlines the study's methodological framework, detailing participant selection, survey design, and data analysis techniques.

## **Objectives**

The primary aim of this study is to examine the role of wine label design in shaping consumer preferences. To achieve this, the research focuses on the following specific objectives:

- I. To investigate the impact of label styles on consumer perceptions across wine types
- II. To understand willingness to buy for each label style
- III. To evaluate the influence of sociodemographic information on consumer preferences

## 4. Methods

### 4.1. Participants

The study recruited participants aged 18 and older through online platforms to ensure accessibility and anonymity. A total of 81 participants completed the questionnaire, providing data on wine label preferences and consumption patterns. The sample included a range of education levels, household sizes, and financial situations. Participation was voluntary, and respondents provided informed consent before beginning the survey.

### 4.2. Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was structured to explore consumer preferences for wine associated with “modern”, “traditional” and “bold” labels, defined in previous studies by Celhay and Chamorro (Celhay & Remaud, 2018; Chamorro et al., 2021).

The questionnaire consisted of five sections.

#### I. Label Associations

Participants rated the degree to which they associated the terms “modern”, “traditional” and “bold” with different types of wine (red, white and sparkling) using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from “not at all” to “extremely.”

#### II. Wine Evaluation

For each type of wine (red, white, sparkling), respondents selected a number from 1 to 3 and were directed to an image of a wine bottle that had a traditional, modern, or bold label. They rated one label per type of wine for how much they liked the bottles and their likelihood of purchasing them, using the same seven-point Likert scale.

#### III. Consumption Habits

For the three types of wine, participants detailed their consumption frequency, typical occasions for consumption, and average price they spend per bottle. The consumption

frequency ranged from “daily” to “never.” The occasions listed were “at home, during meals”, “at home, out of meals”, “during meals, out of home (e.g., at the restaurant)”, “during casual gatherings with family or friends (e.g., aperitivo)”, and “during special events or celebrations”.

IV. Demographics

Sociodemographic questions collected age, gender, level of education, household size, and financial situation.

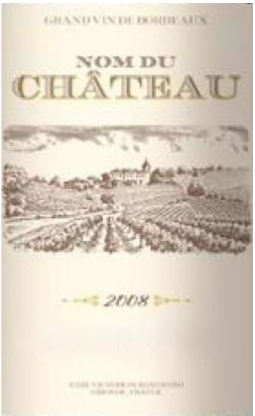


V. Knowledge

Participants self-assessed their wine knowledge using categories ranging from “no knowledge” to “expert knowledge.”

4.3. Stimuli

The visual stimuli for the study included images of wine bottles that were adapted using labels previously defined. The modern and traditional labels were defined by a study conducted by Celhay, and the bold label was defined by Chamorro (Celhay & Remaud, 2018; Chamorro et al., 2021). The labels images were taken and placed onto blank images of red, white, and sparkling wine bottles and modified according to the bottle shape.

Table 4.1 Label Images

Traditional	Modern	Bold
		

#### *4.4. Procedure*

The questionnaire was administered online via Google Forms with a completion time of 5 to 7 minutes. For informed consent, Regulation (EU) 2016/679, GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), and Legislative Decree 196/2003 were declared in order to express confidentiality and privacy of responses. After providing consent, participants proceeded with the questionnaire. Responses were automatically recorded upon submission, ensuring accuracy and completeness.

#### *4.5. Data Collection*

The data collected included:

1. Ratings of wine type associations with “modern”, “traditional”, and “bold.”
2. Preferences for wine bottle designs, including liking and purchasing likelihood.
3. Consumption habits, including consumption frequency, consumption occasions, and spending patterns.
4. Sociodemographic information.

#### *4.6. Data Analysis*

Data were analyzed using Excel and R to ensure accurate statistical computations.

Descriptive statistics, including means, were calculated for all Likert-scale responses. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to compare differences in label preferences across wine types and participant demographics. A linear regression model analyzed the impact of wine type, label type, and participants’ association scores on likeness and willingness to buy.

#### 4.7. *Ethical Considerations*

The study adhered to ethical standards outlined by Regulation (EU) 2016/679 GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation). All responses were anonymous, and data were reported only in aggregate form. Participants were informed of the voluntary nature of the survey and their right to withdraw at any time.

## 5. Results

### Participants' Age

The age distribution of the 81 participants showed that the majority were aged 25–34, representing 38.27% (n = 31) of the sample, followed by those aged 18–24, who made up 24.69% (n = 20). Participants aged 55–64 accounted for 18.52% (n = 15), while smaller proportions were observed among those aged 45–54 (8.64%, n = 7), 35–44 (4.94%, n = 4), and 65 and older (4.94%, n = 4).

Age groups	Number of respondents	Share (%)
18-24	20	24.69
25-34	31	38.27
35-44	4	4.94
45-54	7	8.64
55-64	15	18.52
65+	4	4.94

### Participants' Gender

Among the 81 participants, most were female (64.20%, n = 52), followed by male participants (32.10%, n = 26). A small proportion identified as “Other” (2.47%, n = 2) or preferred not to answer (1.23%, n = 1).

	Number of respondents	Share (%)
Female	52	64.20
Male	26	32.10
Other	2	2.47
Prefer not to say	1	1.23

### Participants' Education Level

Regarding education levels, most participants had completed higher education. Nearly half of the participants held a master's degree (46.91%, n = 38), while 45.68% (n = 37) held a bachelor's degree. A small proportion reported having a higher education degree (3.70%, n = 3). None of the participants reported having completed only primary or middle school education or having no formal education.

	Number of respondents	Share (%)
None	0	0.00
Primary school	0	0.00
Middle school	0	0.00
High school	3	3.70
University – Bachelor	37	45.68
University – Master	38	46.91
Higher (e.g., PhD)	3	3.70

### Participants' Household Size

The distribution of household sizes among participants was varied. The most common household size was two people (34.57%, n = 28), followed by four people (19.75%, n = 16). Single person households accounted for 18.52% (n = 15), while households with three people made up 16.05% (n = 13). Households with five or more members were the least common, representing 11.11% (n = 9).

	Number of respondents	Share (%)
1 person	15	18.52
2 people	28	34.57
3 people	13	16.05
4 people	16	19.75
5 or more people	9	11.11

## Participants' Financial Situation

Participants predominantly reported positive perceptions of their financial situation. A majority rated their financial situation as “good” (32.10%, n = 26) or “definitely good” (25.93%, n = 21). Additionally, 22.22% (n = 18) considered their financial situation “moderately good,” and 16.05% (n = 13) selected “neither good nor bad.” Only a small percentage reported “moderately bad” (3.70%, n = 3), with no participants rating their financial situation as “bad” or “definitely bad.”

	Number of respondents	Share (%)
Definitely bad	0	0.00
Bad	0	0.00
Moderately bad	3	3.70
Neither good nor bad	13	16.05
Moderately good	18	22.22
Good	26	32.10
Definitely good	21	25.93

## Wine Consumption Occasions

### *Red Wine*

The most frequent occasion for red wine consumption was during meals outside the home (56.79%, n = 46). Special events or celebrations accounted for 48.15% of responses (n = 39), followed by at home consumption during meals (43.21%, n = 35). Red wine was also reported to be consumed during casual gatherings (39.51%, n = 32) and less frequently at home outside of meals (22.22%, n = 18).

### *White Wine*

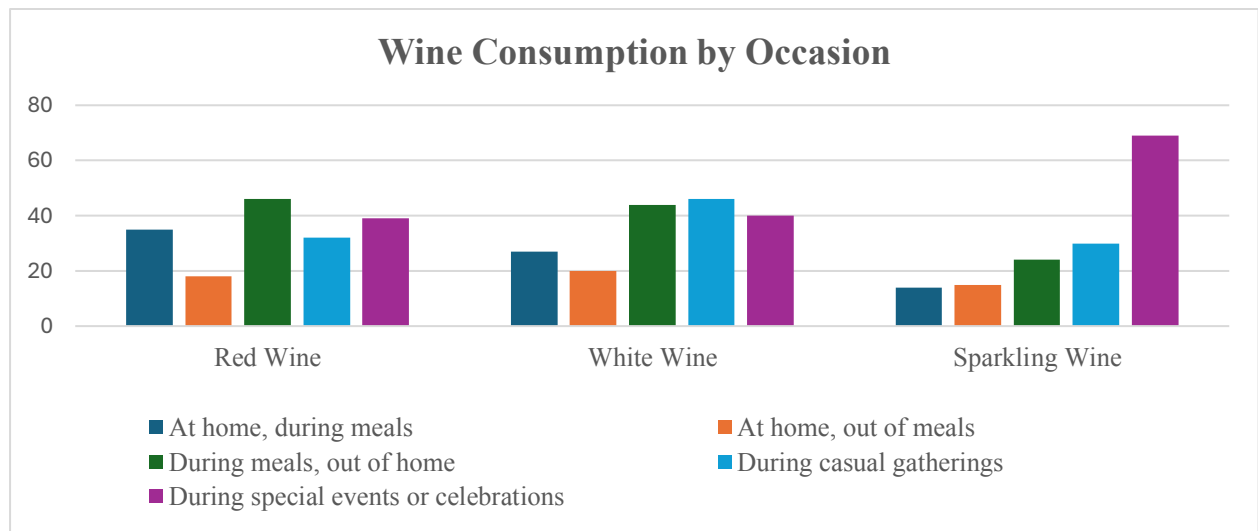
White wine was reported to be most commonly consumed during casual gatherings (56.79%, n = 46) and special events or celebrations (49.38%, n = 40). Consumption was also indicated

during meals outside the home (54.32%, n = 44). At home consumption of white wine was reported during meals (33.33%, n = 27) and outside meals (24.69%, n = 20).

### *Sparkling Wine*

Sparkling wine was predominantly reported to be consumed during special events or celebrations (85.19%, n = 69). Consumption was also reported during casual gatherings (37.04%, n = 30) and meals outside the home (29.63%, n = 24). At home consumption was less frequent, with 17.28% (n = 14) during meals and 18.52% (n = 15) outside meals.

Figure 5.1 Wine Consumption by Occasion



### **Wine Consumption Frequency**

Participants were asked the frequency of wine consumption for each type of wine (red, white, and sparkling) from “daily” to “never.”

#### *Red Wine*

The most frequent response for red wine consumption was “a few times per year” with 21 occurrences (25.93%). Following that, the responses “a few times per month” (20.99%, n = 17) and “a few times per week” (16.05%, n = 13). “Once a week” was reported 9 times (11.11%) and “never” was reported 7 times (8.64%). With 6 responses each “once a month” (7.41%) and “once a year” (7.14%). The lowest reported consumption frequency was “daily” with 2 responses (2.47%).

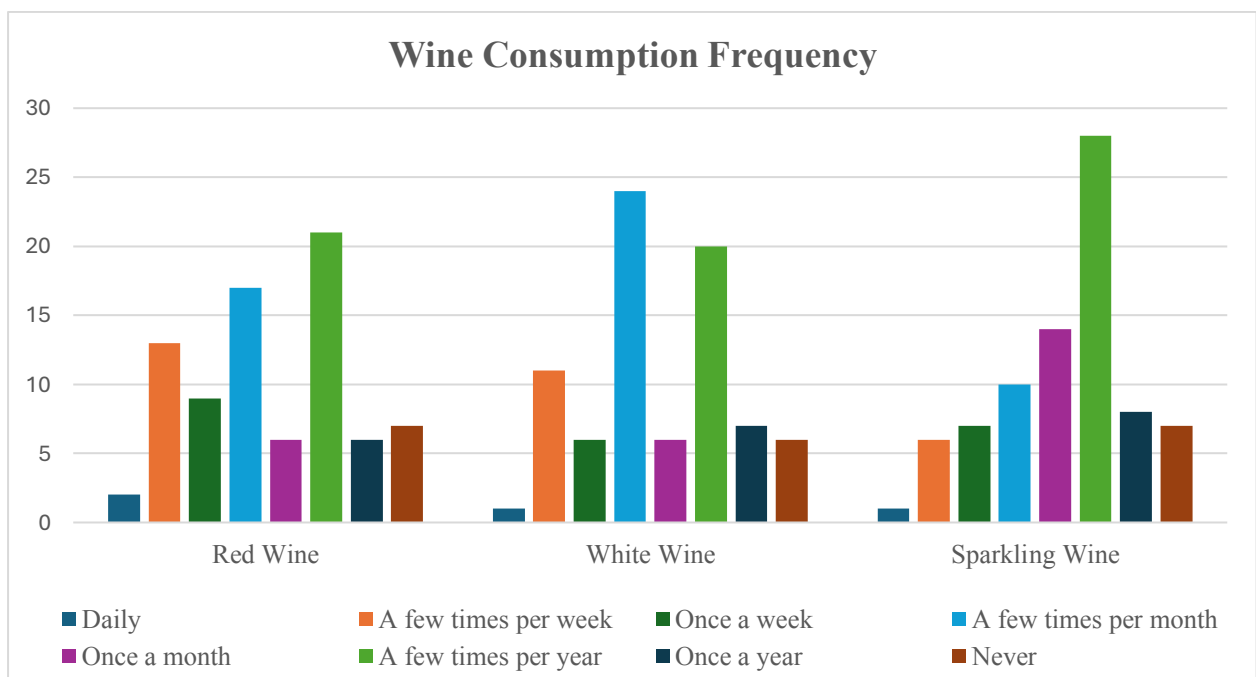
### White Wine

The most common frequency of white wine consumption was “a few times per month,” with 24 responses (29.63%). The next largest group consumed white wine “a few times per year” (24.69%, n = 20). Additionally, 11 participants (13.58%) reported “a few times per week,” while 6 participants (7.41%) reported “once a week.” The same percentage, 7.41% (n = 6) reported “once a month” and “once a year” (7.41%, n = 6). One participant reported “daily” consumption (1.23%), and 6 participants (7.41%) reported “never” drinking white wine.

### Sparkling Wine

The most common frequency of sparkling wine consumption was “a few times per year,” with 28 responses (34.57%). Next, consumption “once a month” was reported (17.28%, n = 14). Additionally, 10 people (12.35%) drank sparkling wine “a few times per month,” while 7 participants (8.64%) reported drinking it “once a week.” The same percentage, 8.64% (n = 7) consumed sparkling wine “once a year,” and “a few times per week was selected by 6 participants (7.41%). Lastly, “daily” sparkling wine consumption (1.23%, n = 1) and “never” (8.64%, n = 7).

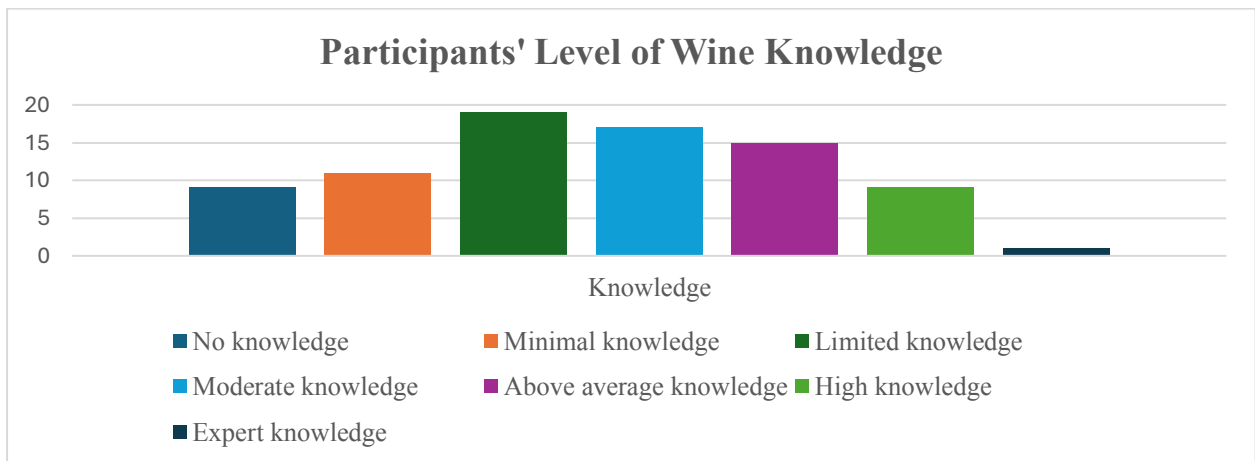
Figure 5.2 Wine Consumption Frequency



## Level of Wine Knowledge

When participants were asked to define their level of wine knowledge, the most frequently reported categories were “limited knowledge” (23.46%, n = 19) and “moderate knowledge” (20.99%, n = 17). A smaller proportion of participants identified as having “above average knowledge” (18.52%, n = 15) or “minimal knowledge” (13.58%, n = 11). Additionally, 11.11% (n = 9) indicated “no knowledge” of wine, while the same percentage (11.11%, n = 9) reported “high knowledge.” Lastly, “expert knowledge” was indicated by 1.23% (n = 1) of the sample.

Figure 5.3 Participants' Level of Wine Knowledge



## Average Spending Per Bottle of Wine

### *Red Wine*

The most common spending range for red wine was between 10 and 20€ (29.63%, n = 24). This was closely followed by the 20 to 30€ range (27.16%, n = 22). Next, 5 to 10€ with 19.75% of responses (n = 16), while 8.64% (n = 7) reported spending between 30 and 50€. Following this, 12 participants (14.81%) indicated spending less than 5€ on red wine. Finally, over 50€ was never selected (0.00%, n = 0).

### *White Wine*

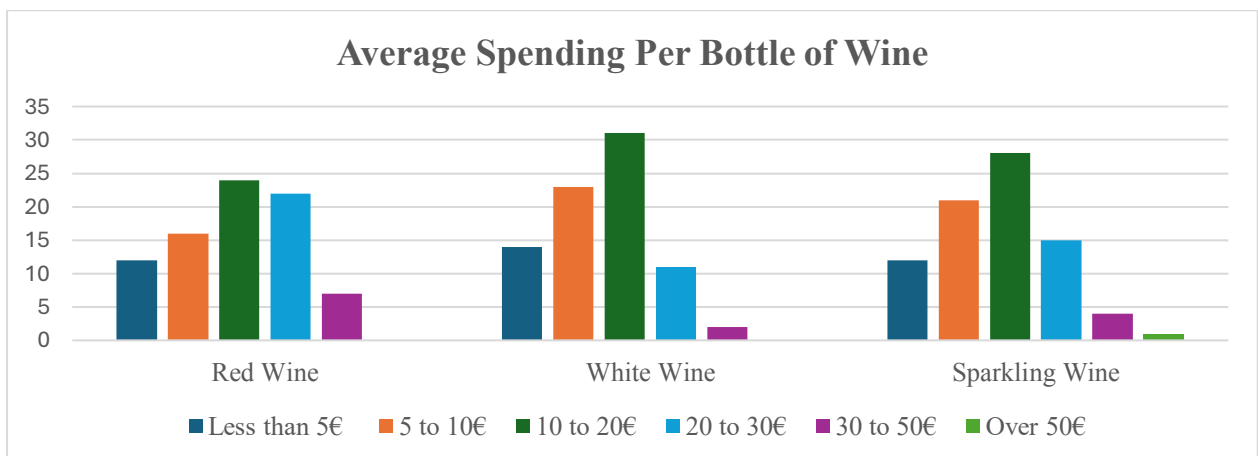
For white wine, the spending range between 10 and 20€ was most frequently reported (38.27%, n = 31). After this, was the 5 to 10€ range (28.40%, n = 23) and the less than 5€

option (17.28%, n = 14). A smaller group indicated spending between 20 and 30€ (13.58%, n = 11). Only 2.47% (n = 2) of participants indicated spending between 30 and 50€ for white wine, and no respondents (0.00%, n = 0) reported spending over 50€.

### *Sparkling Wine*

The spending range from 10 to 20€ was the most commonly selected answer for sparkling wine (34.57%, n = 28). Next was the 5 to 10€ range (25.93%, n = 21) and the 20 to 30€ range (18.52%, n = 15). The group spending less than 5€ on sparkling wine made up 14.81% (n = 12). Following this, there were smaller groups who spend between 30 and 50€ (4.94%, n = 4) and over 50€ (1.23%, n = 1).

Figure 5.4 Average Spending Per Bottle of Wine



### **Word Association**

Participants were asked to rate each wine (red, white, and sparkling) for how much they associate it with the three key words (traditional, modern, and bold). When evaluating whether the wines are considered traditional, modern, or bold, distinct differences emerged across the categories. For the word “traditional,” red wine was rated significantly different from sparkling wine, with mean scores of 5.37 and 3.84, respectively. Also for “traditional,” red wine was rated significantly different from white wine, with mean scores of 5.37 and 4.46, respectively. However, there was no significant difference between white and sparkling in the “traditional” association (4.46 vs. 3.84). For the “modern” word association, the

significant differences were between sparkling wine and red wine (4.60 vs. 3.19), and between white wine and red wine (4.17 vs. 3.84). Between sparkling wine and white wine, “modern” ratings were not significantly different, with mean scores of 4.60 and 4.17, respectively. Lastly, in rating for the word “bold,” red wine and sparkling wine were significantly different (5.22 vs. 2.73), as were red wine and white wine (5.22 vs. 2.83). No significant difference in rating was observed between white wine and sparkling wine for “modern” (2.83 vs. 2.73).

Attribute	Comparison	Difference in Mean Score	p-value
Traditional	Red vs. Sparkling	1.53	0.000*
	Red vs. White	0.91	0.019*
	White vs. Sparkling	0.62	0.339
Modern	Sparkling vs. Red	1.42	0.000*
	White vs. Red	0.99	0.007*
	Sparkling vs. White	0.43	0.796
Bold	Red vs. Sparkling	2.49	0.000*
	Red vs. White	2.39	0.000*
	White vs. Sparkling	0.10	0.999

(\*) Indicates significance (p-value less than 0.05)

### Perception of Traditional Label

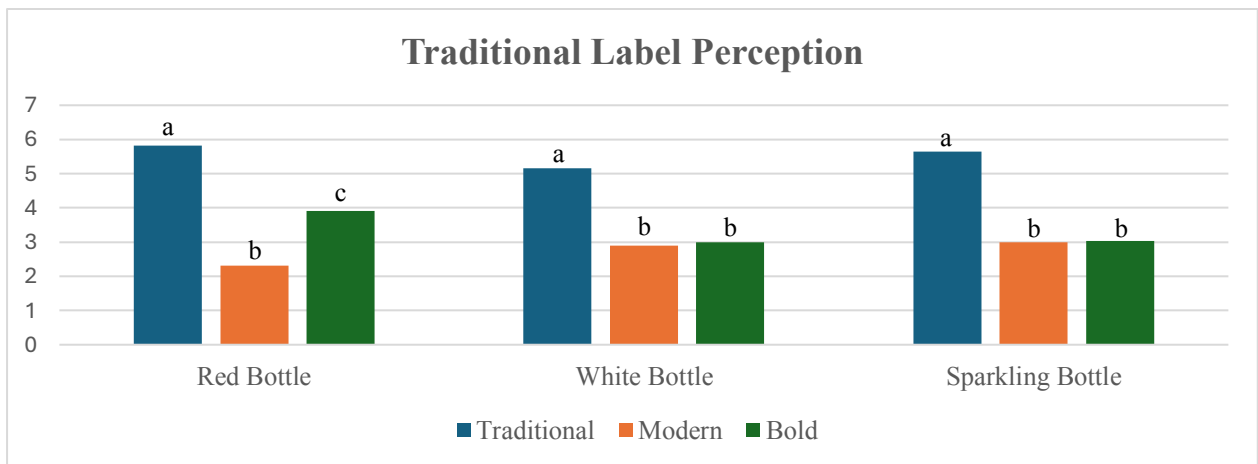
The red bottle with a traditional label was significantly different for the ratings of “modern” versus “bold”, for “bold” versus “traditional”, and “traditional” vs “modern”. The average score for traditional was 5.82, for modern was 2.32, and for bold was 3.91.

The white bottle with a traditional label was significantly different between ratings of “traditional” and “bold” as well as between “traditional” and “modern.” However, there was

not a significant difference between the words “modern” and “bold.” The average score for traditional was 5.17, for modern was 2.89, and for bold was 3.00.

The sparkling bottle with a traditional label was significantly different between ratings of “traditional” and “bold” as well as between “traditional” and “modern.” There was no significant difference between the words “modern” and “bold.” The average score for traditional was 5.64, for modern was 3.00, and for bold was 3.03.

Figure 5.5 Traditional Label Perception



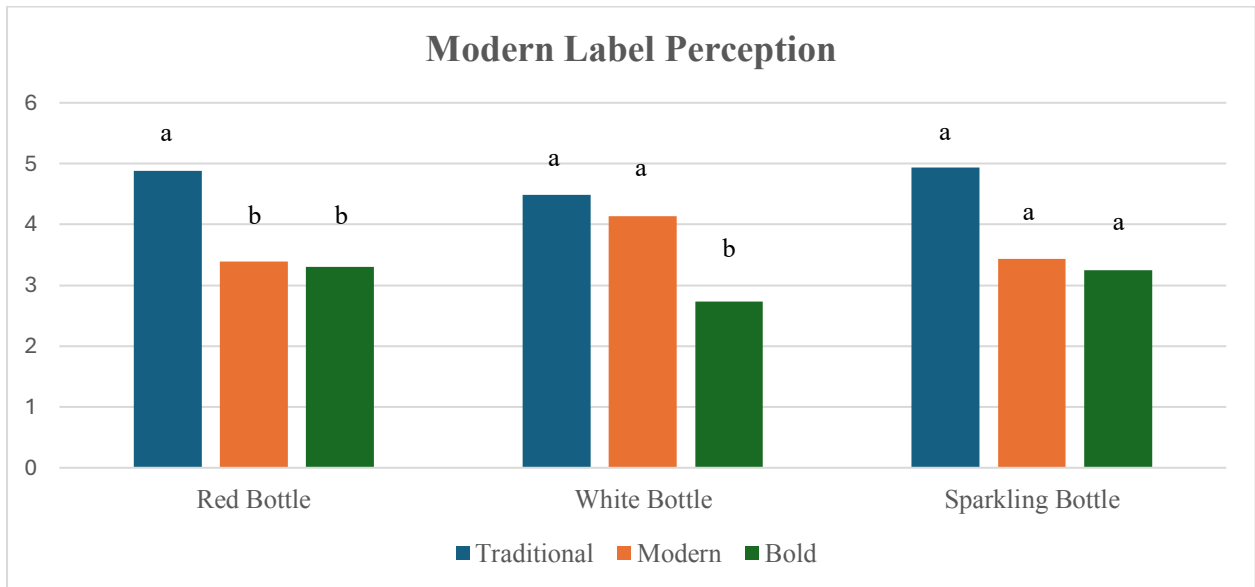
### Perception of Modern Label

With the modern label on the red bottle of wine, the significant differences were between “traditional” and “bold” as well as “traditional” and “modern.” Between “modern” and “bold” there was no significant difference. The average score for traditional was 4.88, for modern was 3.39, and for bold was 3.30.

The white bottle with the modern label had significant differences between ratings for “modern” and “bold” and between “traditional” and “bold.” There was no significant difference between ratings for “traditional” and “modern.” The average score for traditional was 4.49, for modern was 4.14, and for bold was 2.73.

The sparkling bottle with the modern label had no significant differences between any word combinations. The average score for traditional was 4.94, for modern was 3.44, and for bold was 3.25.

Figure 5.6 Modern Label Perception



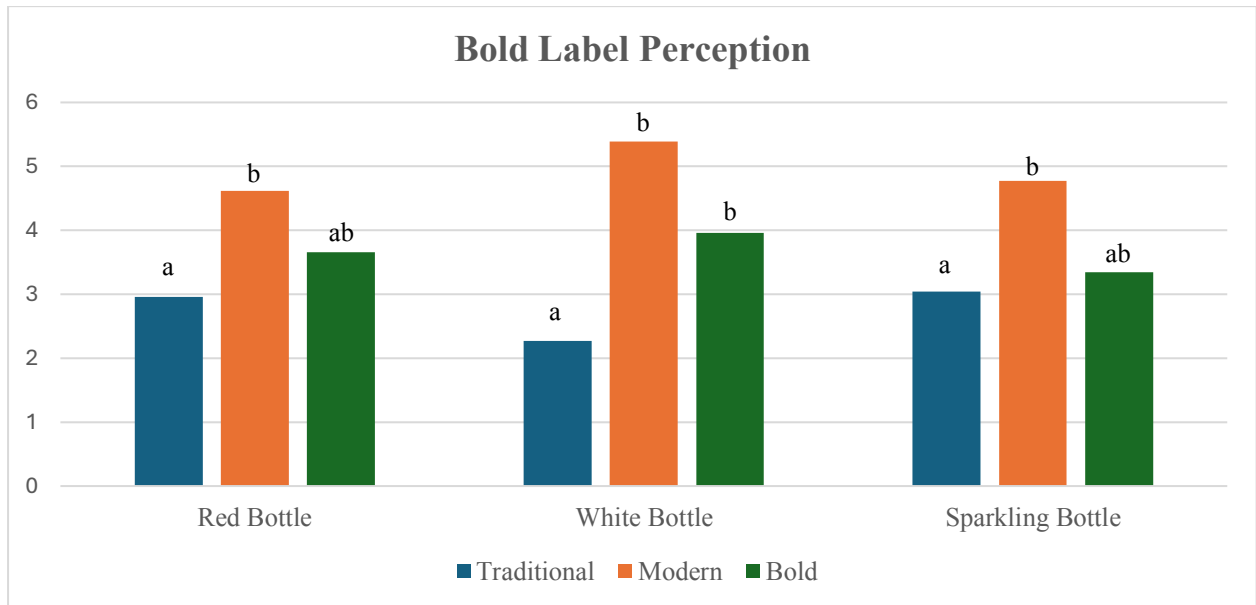
### Perception of Bold Label

For the red bottle with the bold label, significant differences were seen between “traditional” and “modern.” Between “modern” and “bold” and between “traditional” and “bold,” there were no significant differences. The average score for traditional was 2.96, for modern was 4.62, and for bold was 3.65.

The white bottle with a bold label showed significant differences between “traditional” and “modern” as well as “traditional” and “bold.” However, ratings between “modern” and “bold” were not significantly different. The average score for traditional was 2.27, for modern was 5.38, and for bold was 3.96.

The sparkling bottle with a bold label only showed a significant difference between “traditional” and “modern.” Between “modern” and “bold” and “traditional” and “bold” there were no significant differences. The average score for traditional was 3.04, for modern was 4.77, and for bold was 3.35.

Figure 5.7 Bold Label Perception



### Participant Understanding of the Label Styles

The defined label styles, from previous literature, were interpreted by participants in the following way. The traditional label style was clearly associated with the word traditional, the rating average across red, white, and sparkling was 5.54. It was the easiest for participants to match the traditional label with the word traditional. The modern label style was less clear to participants, it seemed to them that it was more traditional. When rating the modern label, the average score was 3.66 for the word modern, and 4.77 for the word traditional. Even less clear was the bold label. It was more associated with the word modern. The average modern rating for the bold label was 4.92 while the bold rating average was 3.65.

## Word Association Influence on Perception

When a wine type (red, white, sparkling) matched the characteristic being rated (traditional, modern, bold), the effect of the label was smaller. For example, red wine being rated for traditionality (8.4%). However, when the label contrasted with the word being rated, there was a sort of compensation effect. For example, red bottles with a bold label being rated for modern had a high label effect (44.8%). When labels aligned with the characteristic being rated, the label's effect was weaker. But when the characteristic being rated and labels were mismatched, a higher effect of the label was seen. Meaning the characteristic being out of place would have a greater impact on the consumer, working in a negative way if the type of wine being searched for does not align with the characteristic (e.g., sparkling wine with traditional label).

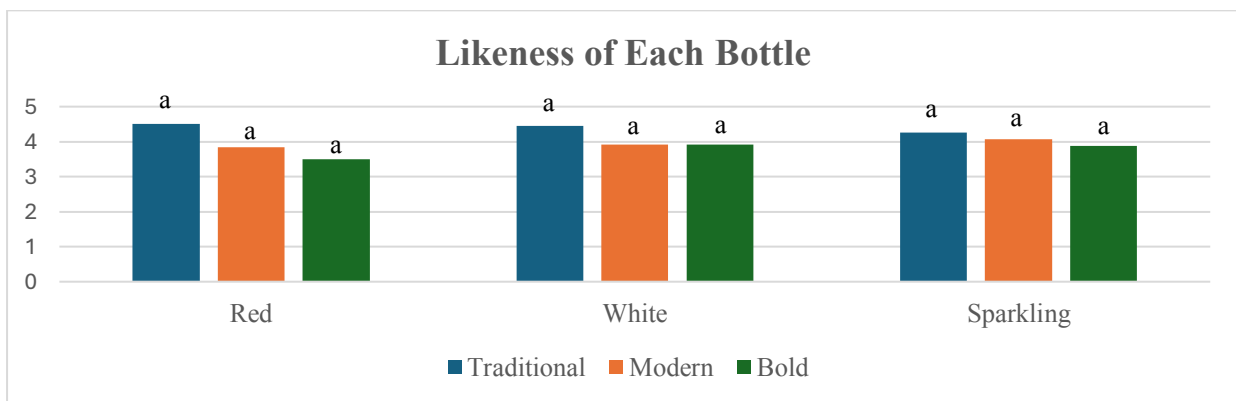
Table 5.7 Influence of Word Association on Perception

	Red Wine		
	Traditional Label	Modern Label	Bold Label
Traditional	8.4%	-9.1%	-44.9%
Modern	-27.3%	6.3%	44.8%
Bold	-25.1%	-36.8%	-30.1%
	White Wine		
	Traditional Label	Modern Label	Bold Label
Traditional	15.9%	0.7%	-49.1%
Modern	-30.7%	-0.7%	29.0%
Bold	6.0%	-3.5%	39.9%
	Sparkling Wine		
	Traditional Label	Modern Label	Bold Label
Traditional	46.9%	28.6%	-20.8%
Modern	-34.8%	-25.2%	3.7%
Bold	11.0%	19.0%	22.7%

### Likeness of Each Bottle

For each type of wine (red, white, and sparkling), the mean scores were calculated and are shown in the figure below. Across the types of wine, the traditional was the highest liked. Within red wine and sparkling wine, the order of likeness is traditional, modern, and lastly bold. For white wine, the order is traditional, bold, and then modern. For each wine, the liking scores were not significantly different.

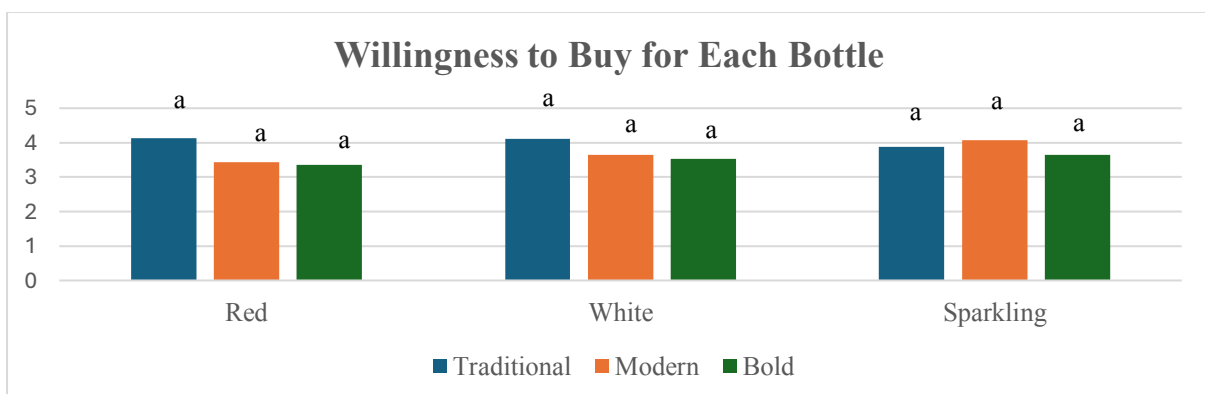
Figure 5.8 Likeness of Each Bottle



### Willingness to Buy

The summary scores for willingness to buy can be seen in the figure below. Red and white wine from highest to lowest willingness to buy were traditional, modern, and then bold. The order for sparkling wine was modern, traditional, and then bold. For red, white, and sparkling wine, the willingness to buy was not significantly different from traditional to modern to bold.

Figure 5.9 Willingness to Buy for Each Bottle



## **Age and Gender Comparisons**

The results of the two-way ANOVA analysis for likeness and willingness to buy ratings across different label types (traditional, modern, and bold) provide a clear view of preferences and purchase intentions.

### *Traditional Labels*

For likeness ratings, none of the factors (age, gender, and wine type) significantly influenced the participant's preferences. Age had no statistically significant effect ( $p = 0.317$ ), gender also did not have a significant impact ( $p = 0.203$ ), and wine type did not contribute significantly ( $p = 0.704$ ). In terms of willingness to buy ratings, the factors showed similar patterns. Age ( $p = 0.109$ ), gender ( $p = 0.158$ ), and wine type ( $p = 0.570$ ) did not significantly affect participants' willingness to purchase wines with traditional labels.

### *Modern Labels*

For likeness ratings, none of the factors showed a significant effect. Indicating that participants' preferences were not influenced by age ( $p = 0.307$ ), gender ( $p = 0.574$ ), or wine type ( $p = 0.195$ ). For willingness to buy ratings, the results were somewhat comparable. Age did not show a significant effect on purchase intentions ( $p = 0.111$ ), nor did gender ( $p = 0.244$ ), or wine type ( $p = 0.134$ ).

### *Bold Labels*

For likeness ratings, none of the factors were statistically significant. Age ( $p = 0.606$ ), gender ( $p = 0.112$ ), and wine type ( $p = 0.616$ ) all failed to show significant effects, suggesting that participants' preferences for bold labels were not influenced by these factors. Similarly, for willingness to buy ratings, no significant effects were found for age ( $p = 0.986$ ), gender ( $p = 0.243$ ), or wine type ( $p = 0.836$ ).

Table 5.8 Two-Way ANOVA Results for Likeness

Factor	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F Value	Pr(>F)
<b>Traditional</b>					
Age	1	2.15	2.150	1.014	0.317
Gender	3	10.02	3.339	1.574	0.203
Wine Type	2	1.49	0.747	0.352	0.704
Residuals	72	152.69	2.121		
<b>Modern</b>					
Age	1	10.45	10.450	4.587	0.307
Gender	3	7.04	2.346	1.030	0.384
Wine Type	2	2.96	1.481	0.650	0.525
Residuals	79	179.98	2.278		
<b>Bold</b>					
Age	1	0.83	0.826	0.268	0.606
Gender	3	19.12	6.373	2.067	0.112
Wine Type	2	3.00	1.502	0.487	0.616
Residuals	71	218.90	3.083		

Table 5.9 Two-Way ANOVA Results for Willingness to Buy

Factor	Df	Sum Sq	Mean Sq	F Value	Pr(>F)
<b>Traditional</b>					
Age	1	6.18	6.181	2.639	0.109
Gender	3	12.54	4.179	1.784	0.158
Wine Type	2	2.65	1.325	0.566	0.570
Residuals	72	168.83	2.342		
<b>Modern</b>					
Age	1	5.72	5.722	2.603	0.111
Gender	3	9.35	3.115	1.417	0.244
Wine Type	2	9.07	4.535	2.063	0.134
Residuals	79	173.69	2.199		
<b>Bold</b>					
Age	1	0.00	0.001	0.000	0.986
Gender	3	11.72	3.906	1.424	0.243
Wine Type	2	0.99	0.494	0.180	0.836
Residuals	71	194.78	2.743		

### Impact of Word Association Score on Liking and Willingness to Buy

A linear regression model was performed to examine the effects of wine type, label type, and the score of how much the participants associated the wine type for the three characteristics on likeness and willingness to buy.

The results of the analysis highlight the importance of perceived alignment with a wine bottle's label and its personality in shaping consumer preferences. The consumer's rating of the characteristics to each type of wine emerges as the strongest predictor of both likeness and willingness to buy. There is a positive effect of having a label that matches with their perception of that wine type. For every one unit increase in their rating of the correspondence, likeness increases by 0.12 points on average ( $p = 0.042$ ). This indicates that the more the consumers perceive a label as fitting the wine's identity, the more they tend to like the wine.

Table 5.10 Regression Model on Likeness

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
(Intercept)	3.21	0.33	9.79	0.000 ***
Sparkling Wine	0.20	0.26	0.78	0.436
White Wine	0.23	0.25	0.90	0.372
Modern Label	0.11	0.25	0.45	0.656
Traditional Label	0.48	0.26	1.84	0.067
Score_wl	0.13	0.057	2.04	0.042 *

Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The same trend holds for willingness to buy, where a one unit increase in their rating results in a 0.15 point increase in WTB ( $p = 0.009$ ). Notably, the effect of the corresponding label style and wine type on purchase intent is even stronger than its effect on liking, reinforcing that perceived alignment plays a crucial role in driving sales decisions.

In contrast, wine type (red, white, or sparkling) does not significantly impact either likeness or willingness to buy. Label style (traditional, modern, or bold) does not have a significant effect on consumer decisions. However, there is a slight positive trend for traditional labels in the likeness model ( $p = 0.067$ ), suggesting that consumers may have a small preference for traditional designs over modern or bold styles.

Table 5.11 Regression Model on Willingness to Buy

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
(Intercept)	2.80	0.32	8.68	6.51e-16 ***
Sparkling Wine	0.32	0.26	1.25	0.213
White Wine	0.24	0.25	0.98	0.330
Modern Label	0.09	0.25	0.38	0.708
Traditional Label	0.33	0.26	1.26	0.208
Score_wl	0.15	0.06	2.65	0.009 **

Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Marketing efforts should focus on reinforcing the connection between a wine's label personality and the type of wine. Consumers are more likely to like and to purchase a wine when they perceive the label as a strong representation of the wine itself. This insight can be valuable for firms aiming to enhance consumer appeal, by ensuring that the label carries the cohesive vision that aligns with the wine's character.

After the analysis on all types of wine, the label association scores were evaluated. As mentioned previously, participants found traditional label to be traditional, however the other two labels were less straightforward. The modern label was mixed between being rated traditional and modern, and even less clear was the bold label. Since the bold label was most often considered modern, the analysis that follows removed modern from the sample, and

considered just the traditional and bold data. The results indicate that the word association score remains a significant predictor of likeness ( $p = 0.001$ ), with a one unit increase in score for association leading to a 0.24 point increase in likeness. This reinforces the earlier finding that more participants perceive a label descriptor (traditional or bold) as aligning with their expectations, the more they tend to like the bottle of wine. Traditional labels show a marginally positive effect on likeness ( $p = 0.083$ ), suggesting a potential preference for them over bold labels. However, this effect does not reach conventional significance levels. Meanwhile, wine type continues to have no significant impact on likeness, with white and sparkling wines showing no meaningful difference from red wine in terms of likeness ratings.

Table 5.12 Regression on Likeness with Traditional and Bold Labels

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
(Intercept)	2.76	0.38	7.21	2.4e-11 ***
Sparkling Wine	0.11	0.30	0.37	0.715
White Wine	0.18	0.33	0.55	0.587
Traditional Label	0.45	0.26	1.74	0.083 .
Score_wl	0.24	0.07	3.26	0.001 **

Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

Table 5.13 Regression on Willingness to Buy with Traditional and Bold Labels

	<b>Estimate</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>	<b>t value</b>	<b>p-value</b>
(Intercept)	3.34	0.28	11.98	< 2e-16 ***
Sparkling Wine	0.30	0.26	1.15	0.253
White Wine	0.26	0.26	1.00	0.320
Modern Label	0.11	0.25	0.44	0.663
Traditional Label	0.37	0.26	1.43	0.154
Conc_wl	0.36	0.25	1.41	0.159
Disc_wl	-0.27	0.26	-1.06	0.291

Significance levels: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

## 6. Discussion

This study provides valuable insights into how wine label design influences consumer perception and purchasing behavior. The results confirm that labels play a crucial role in shaping consumer expectations, but their impact is most significant when they align with the perceived characteristics of a given wine. When a label's design matches consumer expectations (e.g., red wine with a traditional label), it enhances consumer appeal. Conversely, when label styles deviate from expectations, the effect is more pronounced, either drawing attention in a positive way or creating a disconnect that reduces purchase intent.

Across all wine types, traditional labels were the most preferred. This preference was especially strong for red and white wines, reinforcing the idea that traditional designs convey heritage, quality, and authenticity. Sparkling wine, on the other hand, was more associated with modern aesthetics. These findings align with previous research, such as the research by Boudreaux and Palmer (2007), which found that classic visual elements enhance a brand's identity and consumer trust. However, while traditional labels were the most liked, the study found that label type alone did not have a statistically significant effect on willingness to buy. This suggests that while label aesthetics shape initial perceptions, purchasing decisions are also influenced by additional factors such as price, brand recognition, and previous experience with a particular wine. This supports the findings of Lockshin et al. (2009), which emphasized that price and brand are often the dominant drivers of purchase decisions.

Another important finding is the role of contrast in consumer perception. Labels that deviated from the expected category norms, like a bold label on a red wine bottle, had a stronger impact on perception than those that aligned with expectations. This suggests that label

choices can be strategically used to differentiate a wine in a competitive market. However, this approach carries risks, as it may alienate consumers who associate specific wines with certain visual identities. These findings build upon Celhay and Remaud (2018), who noted that visual cues in packaging are typically interpreted in a consistent manner across consumer groups.

Consumer demographic factors, such as age and gender, did not significantly influence label preferences or willingness to buy. While some prior research (Tang, 2015; Tempesta et. al, 2010) suggested that younger consumers might prefer contemporary or minimalist label styles, this study found no strong evidence to support that claim. Instead, the results indicate that consumers across age groups and genders respond similarly to label designs, reinforcing the idea that perceptual alignment is more critical than demographic targeting in label strategy. Again aligning with Celhay and Remaud (2018), who reported that packaging interpretations are largely consistent across consumer demographics.

The study also highlighted the differences in how consumers associate certain label styles with wine characteristics. Traditional labels were clearly identified as traditional, with an average rating on 5.54. However, modern and bold labels were less straightforward. The modern label, rather than being perceived as distinctly modern, was sometimes rated as more traditional. The bold label was most often associated with modernity rather than boldness. These findings suggest that while traditional label cues are well understood, more contemporary designs may be open to interpretation. In the original research with these labels, the consumers were French (Celhay, 2018) and Portuguese (Chamorro et. al, 2021). The cultural context is another element contributing to how the labels are interpreted.

The regression analysis further emphasized the importance of perceptual alignment between a wine's label and its expected characteristics. When a label aligned with consumer expectations, it significantly increased both liking and willingness to buy. Specifically, a one unit increase in the perceived word association score resulted in a 0.12 point increase in liking ( $p = 0.042$ ) and a 0.15 point increase in willingness to buy ( $p = 0.009$ ). Notably, the effect on purchasing intent was even stronger than its effect on liking, reinforcing the role of label consistency in driving sales.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. The sample size, while sufficient for identifying key trends, limits the generalizability of the findings to broader populations. Additionally, the reliance on self-reported data introduces potential biases, as stated preferences do not always align with actual purchasing behavior (Podsakoff, 2003). Future research should incorporate real world purchasing data or experimental studies to measure consumer engagement with different label styles. Additionally, exploring cultural influences on label perception could provide further insights, as preferences for wine label styles may vary across regions and markets.

## **Conclusion**

This study reinforces the significant role of wine label design in shaping consumer perception and purchase intent. The findings confirm that traditional labels are generally preferred, particularly for red and white wines, while sparkling wine is more associated with modern aesthetics. However, the most critical factor in label effectiveness is association between the label and the characteristic of the wine type. This insight has practical implications for firms seeking to best reach their target segment.

From a marketing perspective, the results suggest several key takeaways. First, traditional wineries should preserve classic label elements that reinforce heritage and authenticity, as these cues build consumer trust. Second, brands aiming to differentiate themselves in the market may experiment with bold or modern label designs, though they should do so with caution to avoid alienating traditional wine consumers. Third, demographic segmentation may be less critical in label design strategy, as preferences did not vary significantly by age or gender. Instead, wineries should focus on ensuring that their label designs align with the perceived identity of their wines.

While this study provides these insights, future research should explore how these findings apply across different contexts and consumer markets. Investigating the long term effects of label design on brand loyalty and repeat purchasing would also be beneficial. Additionally, studies incorporating real world, experimental methods could provide a deeper understanding of how label design influences consumer decisions in retail settings.

Ultimately, this research highlights the importance of visual branding in an increasingly competitive wine market. By strategically aligning label design with consumer expectations, wineries can strengthen their market positioning and foster greater consumer engagement. As the industry continues to evolve, the ability to balance tradition with innovation in label design will remain a key factor in influencing consumer behavior and driving long-term success.

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