Title
Impact of wine bottle shapes on consumers’ sensory evaluations and willingness to pay: Evidence from an experimental study

I want to submit an abstract for:
Conference Presentation

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Keywords
bottle; bottle shape; experiment, sensory evaluation, willingness to pay

Research Question
Does bottle shape have an impact on wine consumers’ sensory evaluation as well as on their willingness to pay?

Methods
The study uses a within-subjects experimental design. Two different bottle shapes (one “modern” and the other “traditional”) were presented to participants with an identical wine in each bottle.

Results
Results suggest significant differences between the two different bottle shapes in terms of participants’ sensory evaluations and willingness to pay.

Abstract
The impact of packaging on consumers’ buying decisions has been extensively studied. In general terms, packaging serves as a differentiating factor for the product that can add to its distinctiveness and appeal in the eyes of consumers (Thomas, 2000). Several studies related to wine bottles have emphasized different features of packaging. For instance, Rocchi &
Stefani (2006) found that customers judge the innovativeness of wine bottles through attributes such as glass color (light or dark colors), label descriptiveness and visibility and capsule anonymity/innovativeness. Existing research on the impact of bottle shapes on buyer perceptions and buying decisions is still somewhat inconclusive. Studies by Mueller & Lockshin (2008) and Grahl et al. (2012) did not find significant main effects for bottle shape. Conversely, in an experimental study, Masset & Raub (2022) found evidence for the impact of bottle shapes on participants’ evaluations of product features related to “traditional” vs. “modern” aspects. These various studies focus primarily on general design preferences, without analyzing individual variables (e.g., expertise or gender) that might affect, reinforce, or moderate these preferences.

In their study, Masset & Raub (2022) investigated eight different bottle shapes – ranging from very traditional to very modern – and found significant differences in how participants evaluated the aesthetic appeal of these bottle shapes as well as for their willingness to pay. However, their design relied purely on visual cues and did not investigate any relationship between bottle shape and the actual sensory evaluation of the wine. The present study attempts to fill this gap. It extends previous research on the impact of bottle shapes on consumer perceptions to the domain of sensory evaluation. We presented participants with identical wines served in two different bottle shapes. The wine bottles were hidden in opaque wine tasting cover bags made out of elastic fabric. The cover bags allowed for a clear identification of the bottle shape without providing any other information about the wine. Simultaneously, pictures of the silhouettes of the two bottles were projected via a beamer on the front wall of the lab.

Participants were instructed to serve each wine to their neighbor, given an additional opportunity for them to appreciate the bottle shape by touching the bottle. They were then allowed to taste the two wine served from the two bottles into identical tasting glasses.

After the tasting, participants were asked to complete a questionnaire with adjectives describing the quality of the wine, an overall quality assessment as well as an indication of their willingness to pay for the bottle (measured in Euros).

Preliminary results suggest significant differences between the two different bottle shapes in terms of participants’ sensory evaluations and willingness to pay. The profile of the participants and their experience play a role. Male and more experienced participants tend to prefer more traditional bottle designs. Female participants have less pronounced preferences.

References


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