



Evolution of Maotai Wine Packaging Design in Maotai Town Guizhou China

Kang Zongshe¹ & Dahlan Bin Abdul Ghani²

¹Faculty of Creative Industries, City University Malaysia, Malaysia.

²Faculty of Creative Industries, City University Malaysia, Malaysia.

Corresponding Author: Kang Zongze, Email: 1162632143@qq.com

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ABSTRACT

Packaging design has become a critical tool for marketers and producers in the wine industry. Consumer behavior is influenced by the effectiveness of design and development strategies, and therefore the study focuses on the changes in the packaging design of Maotai wine. This study intends to explore the evolution of Maotai wine packaging design in Maotai Town, Guizhou, China, known as the production site of Maotai wine. To satisfy the objectives of the study, a qualitative study was developed so that researchers could gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with designers and marketers in Maotai Town, Guizhou, China. This flexible approach allowed the evaluation of the perceptions of key stakeholders in the design and marketing of Maotai wine can be captured. The findings of the study offer substantial insights and strategies which can be applied to the design of culturally significant products. The findings offer insights into the overall strategy and vision used by Maotai in the packaging and preparation of Maotai wine. This study, therefore, intended to contribute to a broader understanding of the significance of packaging design along with shedding light on the factors that have impacted Maotai wine packaging design over the years, such as innovation, tradition, and consumers.

Keywords: *Wine, Design, Packaging design, Maotai wine, China*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years wine demands and customer aptitude modified the production and consumption style. Apart from quality, huge attention has been paid to the cultural or emotional factors associated with the purchase of wines. The packaging design of wine brands, therefore captures the attention of contemporary scholars. From the casks, different packaging designs have been used by notable brands to capture the attention of the target customer market (Celhay & Remaud, 2018). Moreover, the packaging is an essential part of brand identity. On this basis, the vintage and the traditional wine brands are now retaining their brand identity by balancing the modern marketing labels and historical personal context of the wine brands (Orlowski et al., 2022). The consumers have sensitive purchasing behavior as they are critical towards the material and immaterial characteristics of the wine. The careful choices are made by the companies to bring packaging alternatives to the market that retain the attention of potential purchasers (Chamorro et al., 2021).

Due to the growing sustainability issues in production and packaging of the wine, the brands are looking for alternative packaging choices that can impact the consumer's purchase rate and interest. As identified by Chamorro et al. (2021), the brands with the traditional history of wine are confronting environment challenges and looking up for the alternative packaging that retains consumer acceptance. Managing the brand prestige with the pack format and alternative packaging is therefore a major challenge that demands investigation in order to find appropriate solutions. At the same time, it is providing massive opportunities to the wine industry in exploiting the new wine product packaging in meeting consumer's sustainability expectations. The integration of new features and designs according to the customer categories can provide an sustainable and suitable way for the wine brands in managing packaging innovations (Ferrara et al., 2020; Orlowski et al., 2022). The eco-innovation in wine production and packaging therefore has pros and cons that need to be addressed in case of traditional wine brands (Rabadán & Bernabéu, 2021).

The Chinese wine market pays significant attention to the visual aspects of the packaging designs. As highlighted by Celhay et al. (2020) the packaging graphic design i.e. typeface, color, imagery, ornaments, and patterns embodies the cultural significance and transfers symbolic meaning to the consumer. The packaging design is therefore a symbolic language that communicates brand message to the consumers. The study by Galati et al. (2018) provided empirical insights into the packaging design transitions in the Chinese wine market. The

researchers (Pickering et al., 2022; Vecchio et al., 2018) investigated the labeling characteristics and quality attributes on the perception and purchasing behavior of the consumers. As the wine marketing and production differs across culture, the packaging design is a complex process that considers national brand context and package development (Huiru et al., 2018). Indicating the symbolic meaning of design elements, and cultural factors, the packaging design innovation is challenging and demands investigation of consumer's aptitude and perception regarding package design.

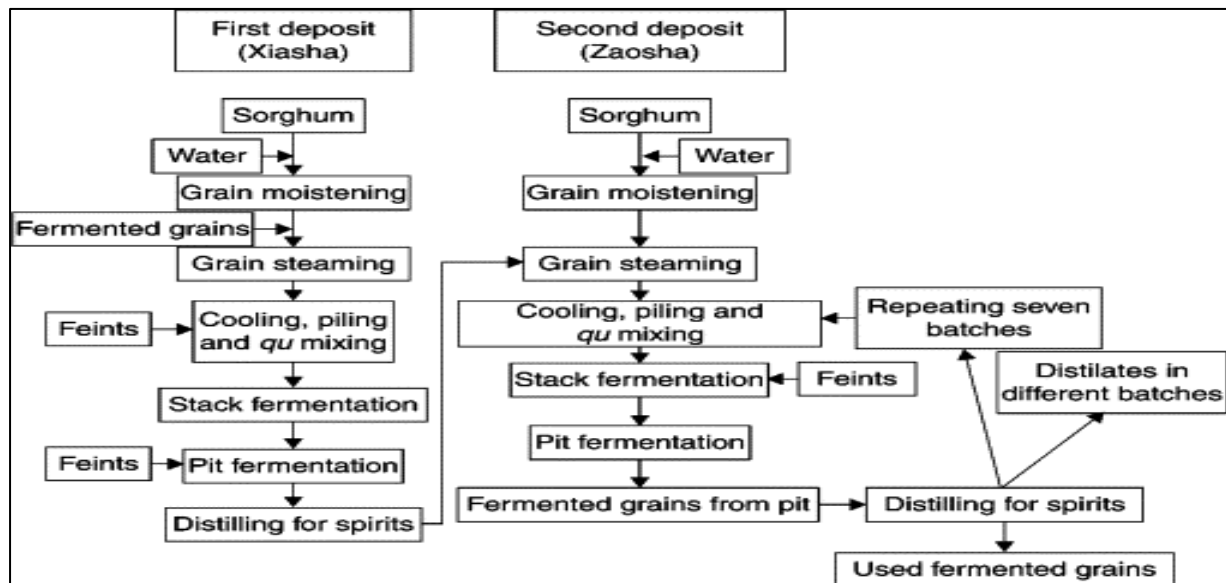


Figure 1: Moutai (Maotai): production and sensory properties

Source: (Xu & Ji, 2012)

The paper focuses on the Maotai wine packaging and the cultural significance of the brands having massive production in the respective areas. The study by Zhou et al. (2023) highlighted that wine history of Moutai, and the environment or technological factors that influence the product and process of the wine culture and production in China. The case study demonstrates that the wine brands in Maotai region confronting production and packaging challenges that need to be addressed in order to retain the customer market. Although massive literature is produced in context of wine production and design packaging, the lack of studies regarding wine packaging in China paved a way for the present study. By qualitative research design, the researcher intends to explore the evolution of Maotai packaging design and the cultural design factors that impact the purchase attitude of consumers. The findings of the study are valuable as they offer sustainable solutions to the packaging challenges. Moreover, it can facilitate the traditional wine brands in maintaining packaging history and innovations without triggering the consumer's negative behaviors. The paper is organized properly. The introduction section

is followed by detailed review of past studies and methodological choices of the researchers. Lastly, the findings and conclusions are drawn on the basis of novel data gathered through qualitative research approach.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. History of Wine Packaging

A fascinating journey spanning generations, the history regarding wine packaging reflects both advances in technology as well as cultural shifts (de la Cruz et al., 2020). Wine transportation as well as storage presented many difficulties in the past (Badenhorst-Weiss & Naudé, 2020). Ancient societies, like the Greeks along with Romans, used clay containers for preserving wine (Harutyunyan & Malfeito-Ferreira, 2022b). These sizable terracotta containers shielded the alcohol from outside impurities while also offering an ideal atmosphere for fermentation (Pecci et al., 2020). Wax as well as resin were used to close the containers to stop oxidation and spoiling while in transit (Nevares & del Alamo-Sanza, 2021). The techniques used to package wine changed along with societies (Escursell et al., 2021). Wooden barrels became commonplace in Europe during the Middle Ages as a way to store as well as transport wine (Harutyunyan & Malfeito-Ferreira, 2022a). The utilization of barrels contributed to the establishment of local wine characteristics by giving the wine distinctive flavors and making handling easier (Liang et al., 2021). When glassblowing became popular in the seventeenth century, wine packaging underwent a dramatic change (Buglass, 2022). Since glass bottles had an airtight sealant, they could age for extended periods of time without going bad. This invention was made at the same time that the idea of vintages as well as wine aging gained popularity (Linsenmeier et al., 2022).

The invention of cork stopper in the nineteenth century marked yet another advancement. The process of aging was greatly aided by the slow transmission of oxygen made possible by the application of cork, which also provided a secure sealant. For many years, cork was the industry norm for wine container closures. However, issues with cork taint plagued the sector in the last years of the twentieth century, which led to a pursuit for substitute closures (Wilton & Howland, 2020). The development of bag-in-box wrapping in the second half of the twentieth century offered a more sensible and affordable option for regular consumption of wine. This design allowed wine to remain fresh for longer because it minimized oxidation as well as offered convenience. It was made of plastic enclosed in a box made of cardboard (Chidiac & Lundquist, 2023). Furthermore, screw caps obtained popularity as a substitute closure,

especially for wines that are suggested to be drunk young (GLANCE). The wine sector has adopted long-term viability in the past few years, which has resulted in advancements in environmentally friendly packaging. As consumers look for environmentally friendly options, thin bottles made from glass, reused supplies, and alternative containers like Tetra Paks as well as cans have become more popular (Hunter & Kumar, 2021). The dynamic story of wine containers history reflects shifting consumer preferences, technological advancements, along with a strong ties to tradition (Piñeiro et al., 2022). Wine packaging has changed over time to suit the demands of different eras, from antiquated amphorae to contemporary eco-friendly options that have shaped the wine business to the position it is at present (Meira, 2020).

2.2. Significance of Packaging in the Wine Industry

In a beverage sector, packaging is crucial because it does more than simply carrying and safeguarding the product (Thompson-Witrick et al., 2021). Beyond its practical uses, wrapping in a beverage business is crucial for forming consumer opinions, swaying consumer choices, as well as enhancing the overall experience of the brand (Faro, 2021). A wine vessel's aesthetic appeal, label layout, as well as the caliber of the substances utilized in the container, all communicate a feeling of sophistication as well as craftsmanship, building a bond between the customer and the company that produces it (Leskinen, 2022). Packaging is an effective promotional tool in the fiercely competitive wine marketplace, where a plethora of options compete for consumers' attention (Chidiac & Lundquist, 2023). An alcohol brand stands out with a creative and eye-catching label that draws customers in and encourages them to learn more about the wine (Khan, 2023). The identity of the company is frequently reflected in its container design, which tells a tale about the company's history, core principles, as well as the distinctive qualities of the alcohol inside (Canziani et al., 2020). Packaging affects the perceived worth of the alcohol and adds to the general image of the company, whether it has a contemporary and sleek layout or an older-fashioned and rustic style (Leskinen, 2022).

Additionally, packaging is essential for shielding the alcohol from outside factors that might lower its quality. Temperature changes, light exposure, as well as air infiltration all affect how wine tastes and smells (Thompson-Witrick et al., 2021). Good packaging helps protect the alcohol from damaging elements, maintaining its integrity along with guaranteeing a satisfying shopping experience. Examples of this include dark bottles made of glass (Carlin et al., 2023). Convenient choices for storage along with easy-to-open closings are examples of practical factors that enhance customer satisfaction (Escursell et al., 2021). Since consumers are

becoming more conscious of environmental issues, environmentally friendly packaging has become more important in the alcohol industry than just serving protective as well as aesthetic purposes (Trigo & Silva, 2022). Eco-friendly products and packaging techniques not only reflect the values of the buyer but also show a brand's dedication to ethical behavior, which improves a company's reputation and draws in environmentally sensitive customers (Fiorineschi et al., 2022).

2.3. Evolution of Maotai Wine Packaging Design

Maotai wine, a well-known Chinese liquor with a long history, has changed not just in terms of its manufacturing but also in terms of the style of its packaging (Zhu & Liu, 2022). Maotai's packaging has changed to reflect not just shifting consumer tastes in design but also company's flexibility in responding to contemporary marketing strategies (Wang et al., 2023). Maotai packaging's initial years were defined by tradition as well as simplicity (Wang & Naeim, 2023). The wide range of cultures of the area where the alcohol was produced was reflected in the elaborate Chinese calligraphy that was frequently used to adorn containers. Authenticity was emphasized, and the container tried to evoke a feeling of history and timeless appeal. Customers who were looking for a way to become familiar with China's long-standing traditions were drawn to this traditional strategy (Howson & Ly, 2020).

Maotai reacted to the expansion of the international market along with the shift in customer choices by bringing contemporary factors into its container design. The brand adopted sleeker container shapes and modern label styles in the latter half of the twentieth century. Though slight, the change signaled a break from the conventional style in order to appeal to a wider range of multicultural and diverse customers. With this change, Maotai was able to establish its identity as a representation of both modernity as well as tradition (Zhu & Liu, 2022). Maotai's wrapping has changed more dramatically in the past few years in reaction to the growth of e-commerce as well as the significance of aesthetics in the age of technology (SHAOXUAN, 2019). To draw in online buyers, the company has embraced cutting-edge materials, holographic impacts, and interactive elements in the packaging (Ma et al., 2022). Moreover, Maotai's packaging has evolved with sustainability as a key focus (Peredy et al., 2023). In line with modern ecological awareness, the company has embraced minimalist designs as well as moved toward materials that are sustainable. This environmentally conscious strategy appeals to an expanding market of customers who place a high value on long-term

viability in addition to reflecting a dedication to ethical business practices (Wang & Naeim, 2023).

2.4. Innovations in Maotai Wine Packaging

Renowned Chinese liquor, Maotai wine, has a long and illustrious history that dates back centuries (Peredy et al., 2023). Although Maotai's distinctive flavor and fine craftsmanship are what define it, the company has recently made changes to its wrapping to improve both the aesthetic appeal as well as the general experience for customers (C. Li et al., 2019). The use of eco-friendly as well as sustainable substances in Maotai liquor containers is one noteworthy innovation (Wang & Naeim, 2023). The makers of Maotai wine have moved to more aesthetically pleasing as well as ecologically friendly packaging materials as a reaction to the increasing emphasis on sustainability around the world. Materials that are recyclable as well as biodegradable have been added, bringing the packaging into line with current sustainability practices and encouraging consumer responsibility (Zhang et al., 2023). In addition, technological developments have been crucial in changing Maotai wine wrapping (Zhang et al., 2021). Packaging styles have incorporated augmented reality as well as virtual reality methods to offer consumers immersive along with interactive experiences (Çöl et al., 2023). Buyers are able to discover the complex production process, take virtual visits of Maotai brewery, and even get personalized messages by the expert producers by detecting the container with a smartphone. This enhances the entertainment value while strengthening the bond between the customer and the company (D. Li et al., 2019).

Maotai wine wrapping has undergone a change in style that is more elegant and minimalistic (Wang & Naeim, 2023). Slick and contemporary patterns involve traditional Chinese cultural elements like calligraphy as well as traditional motifs, creating a harmonious blend of history and modern appeal (Huang, 2021). A feeling of grandeur that matches the high standard of Maotai alcohol is created by the incorporation of metal finishes, stamping, and complex ornamentation, which add to the container's premium feel (Ma et al., 2022). Customization has also been embraced by Maotai wine wrapping in response to changing consumer preferences. Individuals can now customize their experience with options such as engraved initials, custom packaging, or even tailored labels. This presents Maotai as an elegant and exclusive present choice for special events in addition to being a means of self-expression (Zhang & Xiong, 2023). Apart from aesthetic improvements, useful developments have been implemented to streamline the consumption procedure. Modern packaging designs prioritize user-friendly

features like pour spouts as well as easy-to-open covers to give customers a smooth and pleasurable experience. These improvements render the spirit easier to grasp for beginners as well as for seasoned Maotai users (Zhu & Liu, 2022). Maotai Town, China, has a fascinating history of designing wine packaging that combines marketing tactics, aesthetics, as well as cultural heritage. This research study adds to the body of literature by offering a thorough examination of the development of Maotai alcohol packaging over time, demonstrating the mutually beneficial relationship among traditional craftsmanship as well as contemporary design trends. This research study illuminates the cultural importance contained within the wrapping by scrutinizing the minute details of every design iteration, thereby illustrating the ever-changing relationship between tradition as well as innovation. In addition, this research study emphasizes how packaging affects consumer perceptions as well as brand identity, providing both professionals and scholars with insightful knowledge about the relationship between iconic marketing of goods, design, along with cultural heritage.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. The Adopted Research Approach

The researcher has adopted a deductive approach for conducting research on the Maotai wine industry and used a qualitative research strategy and collected qualitative primary data from the respondents. The researcher has adopted the qualitative research approach to get in-depth knowledge about the influence of different dimensions that have participated or participate in the

3.2. The Target Sector and Population

The study has enrooted its objective of evaluating the evolution of the packaging design of Maotai wine and exploring the perception of the stakeholders of the Maotai wine on its changing packaging designs. Based on the objective, the researcher has targeted the Maotai wine sector or industry as the target population. The researcher has accessed the designers and the marketers existing in the wine industry and collected qualitative data. The researcher exclusively targeted the designers and the marketers because these are the main prominent figures and persons in the designing and marketing of the wine products.

3.3. The sampling techniques.

In research, there are two types of sampling methods i.e., probability sampling and non-probability sampling (McCombes., 2023). Both techniques have their own characteristics and

features of strategy, however, when the sample size is unknown, the non-probability sampling technique is practiced. In the same myriad, the researcher has used a combination of purposive and convenience sampling techniques and has targeted the respondents of the study. The purpose of using these sampling methods was to access the most valid and effective respondents of the study.

3.4. The Data Collection Tool

The researcher has used the interview-based data collection method and has collected data from the designers and marketers. The researcher designed a semi-structured interview in which the researcher used open-ended questions for the interview. The researcher designed the following interview questions by acknowledging the literature knowledge:

1. Can you describe the key factors that have driven the evolution of Maotai wine packaging design in Maotai Town over the years?
2. How do you perceive the influence of consumer behavior on the changes in Maotai wine packaging design?
3. In your opinion, what role does innovation play in the evolution of Maotai wine packaging design?
4. How do designers and marketers in Maotai Town balance the integration of traditional elements with contemporary trends in the packaging design of Maotai wine?
5. Can you discuss the challenges faced in designing and marketing Maotai wine packaging, and how these challenges have been addressed or overcome?
6. How does Maotai wine packaging contribute to the overall brand strategy and vision of Maotai?
7. Looking ahead, what trends or changes do you anticipate in the future of Maotai wine packaging design?

3.5. Data Analysis and Ethical Considerations

The researcher has used a framework-based analysis technique for results compilation. The researcher used this technique because this technique has the quality of generating the themes based on the most repetitive discussed terms in the interviews. The researcher used this technique and formulated different themes after thematic analysis that have been comprehensively discussed in the next section of results. Few of the themes were role of innovation, and challenges in the designing of the Maotai wine and others.

From the aspect of ethical considerations, the researcher has followed all the guidelines and regulations that come under the head of research ethics (Scribber, 2023). During the interviews and even before the interview, the researcher ensured the confidentiality, anonymity, and privacy of the personal information of the respondents.

4. FINDINGS

The qualitative data collected through the semi-structured interviews with the wine-packaging designers and marketers was analyzed through the framework-based thematic analysis. The interview was transcribed, which was later analyzed to delineate recurring themes. Moreover, the unique and similar responses of the interviewees were distinguished as shown in Table 4.1. Figure 4.1 indicates the main themes as identified from the transcript.

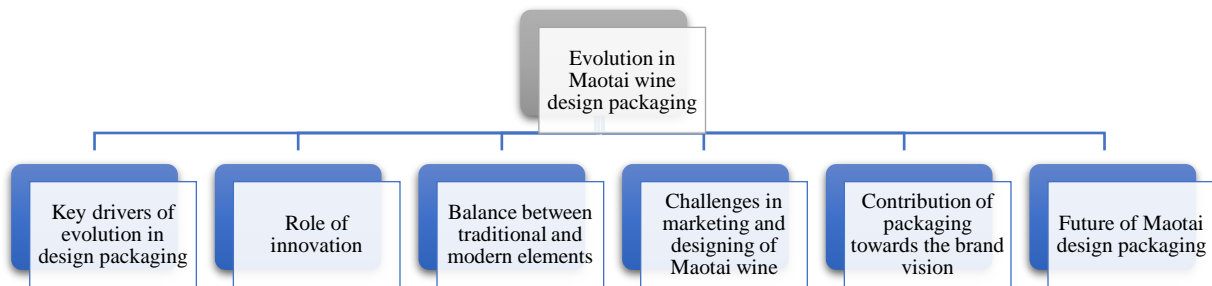


Figure 4.1: Main themes and sub-themes

Table 4.1: Framework for thematic analysis

| Theme | Similar response | Unique response |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Key drivers of evolution in design packaging | Interviewees emphasized the significant role of market globalization, technology integration and brand identity as the key drivers of evolution in design packaging. | In response to the growing environmental concerns and aesthetic sensitivity of consumers, the design of packaging has evolved. |
| 2. Role of innovation | Interviewees identified functional innovation, artistic collaboration, and | One of the interviewees highlighted the role of eco-conscious concerns of |

| | | |
|---|--|---|
| | technology as primary companies in the design of innovative influences on packaging design packaging. | |
| 3. Balance between traditional and modern elements | The balance is achieved through a harmonious fusion of cultural elements and a dynamic packaging structure. | The balance can be achieved through seasonal trends while preserving the traditional elements. |
| 4. Challenges in marketing and designing of Maotai wine | Designers often have to face challenges such as cultural sensitivity, sustainability concerns, and consumer preferences. | Sometimes, educating the consumers about the heritage and production of Maotai wine can be challenging. |
| 5. Contribution of packaging towards the brand vision | Maotai wine conveys a sense of prestige and exclusivity and serves as a symbol of the cultural heritage of the region. | The packaging design facilitates consumer engagement through interactive labels. |
| 6. Future of Maotai design packaging | Maotai Wine will keep on expanding its smart packaging by focusing on its minimalist aesthetics. | Future trends may include limited-edition packaging designs. |

4.1. Key drivers of evolution in design packaging

The interviewees highlighted the role of the deep-rooted cultural significance of Maotai wine as a significant influence on its design packaging. The designers tend to reflect the local traditions and cultural elements through the design of packaging. In China, the Maotai liquor is regarded as the national liquor of the country due to its long history dating back to 400 years. The bottles of this liquor often exhibit traditional motifs such as dragons, phoenixes, and other cultural icons. These motifs are deeply rooted in Chinese culture and traditions and reflect the richness of the region's cultural heritage. One of the interviewees highlighted the cultural resonance of the liquor's design packaging:

The inherent cultural significance of Maotai wine in the Maotai town has a significant influence as it inspires the designers to create packaging that reflects the local traditions and heritage.

Figure 4.2 represents the use of traditional Chinese zodiac elements in the wine packaging.



Figure 4.2: Zodiac design of liquor bottle

In addition, the influence of consumer behavior also emerged as a significant influence on the design of the liquor's packaging. Maotai wine packaging prioritizes a consumer-centric approach to cater to the individual preferences of consumers. As a result, the design process has now been focusing on extensive market research to identify consumer preferences. The designs of liquor bottles attempt to cater to the aesthetic sensitivity of consumers as highlighted by one of the interviewees:

Consumer aesthetics are influential in the design process as the wine packaging incorporates various visually appealing elements to attract the target audience.

4.2. Role of innovation

The designers of Maotai wine packaging often introduce innovative designs to meet the evolving standards of the contemporary market. Some of the recent innovations include functional elements such as the introduction of features that indicate temperature sensitivity or interactive labels to enhance consumer interactions. Moreover, contemporary artists are also invited for collaborations, which results in creative and unique designs of packaging. In addition, technological advancements have been incorporated into the design of the liquor packaging by introducing smart packaging options as emphasized by one of the interviewees:

Smart packaging solutions help incorporate technology into the design process. For example, incorporating interactive QR codes has been a smart move.

Over the recent years, the design process of liquor packaging has catered to the eco-conscious concerns and sustainability goals of the country. The use of biodegradable and eco-friendly elements for the packaging of liquor bottles has emerged as a reflection of the brand's commitment to the country's sustainability goals. One of the interviewees said in this regard:

Innovations in Maotai wine packaging also emphasize the focus on sustainability principles to show a commitment to environmental concerns.

4.3. Balance between traditional and modern elements

When asked about the strategies to attain a balance between the traditional and the contemporary elements of design packaging, the interviewees highlighted the focus on achieving a harmonious balance between traditional elements and contemporary trends. Such an approach helps introduce designs that resonate with the cultural heritage and incorporate modern trends. Designers often incorporate traditional Chinese motifs into a contemporary design of the liquor bottle, which reflects cultural authenticity as well as appeals to the modern audience as highlighted by one of the interviewees:

Traditional motifs are integrated into contemporary designs to convey cultural authenticity and attract the modern audience.

In addition, the balance between traditional and modern trends is also achieved by fusing traditional color palettes with modern vibrant trends. Such an approach helps target both the traditional audience and the modern audience. Moreover, the traditional styles of calligraphy are combined with modern techniques of typography, which gives a perfect blend of traditional and modern elements through a dynamic packaging structure.

4.4. Challenges in marketing and designing of Maotai wine.

The manufacturers of Maotai wine often have to face various challenges while designing the packaging of the liquor. The interviewees highlighted various challenges, which included cultural sensitivity, regulatory compliance, and sustainability concerns. The design processes of Maotai wine also involve extensive research on cultural authenticity to avoid any concerns regarding cultural sensitivities. The manufacturers have to keep the cultural elements authentic while meeting the standards and needs of a diverse global market. However, this challenge can be overcome by collaborating with local cultural experts as suggested by one of the interviewees:

Collaboration with local experts can help the manufacturers ensure the culturally sensitive and inclusive packaging designs of the liquor.

One of the biggest challenges for designing and marketing liquor had arisen due to the growing sustainability concerns and focus on environmental responsibility. The manufacturers often have to face backlash for their unsustainable choices in the design process of the liquor packaging. However, this challenge can be faced by exploring eco-friendly options, which reflect the brand's commitment to sustainability goals as suggested by one of the interviewees:

Designers and marketers can address sustainability concerns by introducing eco-friendly options and committing to the principles of sustainability.

4.5. Contribution of packaging towards the brand vision

Maotai wine packaging is designed while keeping the overall vision of the brand, therefore, it reflects the brand's prestige and cultural heritage. Designers use high-quality materials and pay attention to every minute detail to sustain the brand image and vision. This leads to the positioning of the brand in the global market as a premium liquor. The packaging of Maotai wine reflects its status as the national liquor of China and its regional and global significance. However, above all, the packaging design of the liquor serves as a visual representation of the brand's commitment to preserving the richness of the culture of Maotai and celebrating the local traditions, as emphasized by one of the respondents:

The packaging design serves as a visual icon of the rich local culture and traditional elements, which enhances its cultural authenticity.

In addition, the design process of Maotai wine has evolved over time and no longer relies on traditional elements. Instead, the designers focus on adopting a dynamic approach that helps them combine tradition with modernity.

4.6. Future of Maotai design packaging

The interviewees were also asked about their opinions regarding the future of Maotai design packaging. They shared their diverse opinions regarding the changes in the packaging that they anticipate in the near future. One of the interviewees expressed his anticipation regarding the integration of smart packaging technologies to introduce interactive labels and other consumer-centric technological interventions. These smart packaging techniques would enhance the

consumer experience by enhancing their interaction with the product as highlighted by one of the interviewees:

The integration of smart packaging technologies has the potential to enhance the consumer experience and enhance the target market of the liquor.

In addition, the introduction of limited-edition packaging designs was also suggested by one of the respondents. This would enhance the market appeal of the liquor and the exclusive editions would also enhance the excitement of the public to buy the liquor.

5. DISCUSSION

The present study offers valuable findings regarding the evolution of the design packaging of Maotai wine. The focus of the present study on the role of innovation and consumer behavior in packaging design reflects the significance of market research for an inclusive design process. The consensus among the interviewees regarding the significance of cultural resonance of the packaging design of Maotai wine emphasizes the cultural significance of the liquor. The interviewees emphasized the influence of the inherent cultural roots of Maotai wine and highlighted their influence on the packaging design of the liquor. Thus, it can be induced from this finding that the packaging of this liquor serves as a visual representation of the cultural richness and traditional heritage of the Maotai town. These findings align with the findings of Zhou et al. (2023) who also regarded Maotai wine as the symbol of the national heritage of China. Moreover, the packaging design celebrates the rich history and cultural traditions of China by infusing traditional elements with contemporary aesthetics, which enhances its visual appeal for the modern audience. This reflects the commitment of Maotai wine to preserving the cultural elements of China through the incorporation of various traditional motifs. This serves as a bridge to connect modern consumers with the rich cultural heritage of the region. Moreover, the findings suggested that the packaging of Maotai wine is not only for a static visual representation of traditions; rather it keeps on undergoing evolution, which represents its dynamic nature. Designers and marketers are continuously making efforts to keep a perfect balance between tradition and modernity, which results in the creation of a packaging design that is culturally authentic as well as relevant to the contemporary landscape. Interviewees showed consensus regarding the efforts of packaging designers to attain a harmonious fusion of cultural authenticity and modern relevance in the packaging design of Maotai wine to appeal to the continuously changing preferences of consumers. Another notable finding from the study is the focus of the packaging designers on consumer behavior. Interviewees suggested that the

packaging design did not solely serve as an artistic expression; rather it helped the manufacturers to impact consumer behavior. The findings highlighted the use of extensive market research by wine manufacturers to identify consumer preferences for acting accordingly and addressing those preferences. This helped the designers keep pace with the changing consumer expectations and preferences.

The interviewees also agreed regarding the significant efforts of packaging designers to introduce innovative interventions in the design process of Maotai packaging. They highlighted the use of personalized packaging elements and other interactive features, which enhanced the consumer experience as well as the visual appeal of the liquor. These findings align with the findings of Fing (2021) who regarded the evolution of Maotai wine as an embodiment of interaction between product and people. The focus of designers on innovative interventions reflects their commitment to enhancing the consumer experience in terms of packaging aesthetics and going beyond the expectations of consumers. In addition, these innovative interventions also serve as a critical factor in the evolution of the packaging design. The use of smart packaging, artistic collaborations and advanced printing techniques emerged as the key elements of these innovative interventions. Peredy et al. (2023) also highlighted the role of innovation in the traditional liquor industry. Thus, the role of innovative interventions in the packaging design enhances its visual appeal as well as its functionality. The integration of modern technology helps the brand meet the preferences of modern consumers and positions itself at the forefront of technological evolution in the wine industry.

Another significant finding of the present study is the focus of Maotai wine packaging design on the principles of sustainability. The interviewees acknowledged the growing concerns regarding environmental sustainability in the eco-conscious consumer market. They also highlighted the efforts of packaging designers to use eco-friendly materials and sustainable practices, which reflects the commitment of Maotai wine manufacturers to environmental responsibility. The integration of sustainable practices helps wine manufacturers align their design processes with the global standards of corporate social responsibility and fulfil the demands of an eco-conscious consumer market. Furthermore, the findings of the study also delineate the challenges faced by designers and marketers while designing the packaging of the liquor. Cultural sensitivity and consumer education emerged as significant challenges faced by packaging designers. To curb these challenges, designers had to collaborate with local cultural experts, which helped them enhance the cultural authenticity of the wine. In addition, the interviewees shared the challenges faced by designers to meet the sustainability principles.

Maotai manufacturers had to go the extra mile to incorporate sustainability practices in their design processes. In addition, the interviewees had a consensus regarding the significant impact of Maotai wine packaging on the overall brand strategy and vision. They were of the view that the packaging did not only serve to fulfil the aesthetic commitment of the brand but also to communicate its values and vision to the target consumer market. The packaging ensures the status of the wine as an exclusive and premium liquor. Moreover, it represents the commitment of the brand to celebrating and preserving the cultural heritage of the region of its origin. In addition, the interviewees also shared their visions regarding the anticipated future trends in Maotai wine packaging design. They all agreed that the packaging design would keep on undergoing transformations to keep pace with technological advancements and the changing consumer preferences. Some of them suggested the need to extend smart packaging design to enhance consumer experience. Thus, the findings of the study highlight the factors behind the evolution in the packaging design of Maotai wine and also present valuable insights into the anticipated future trends in the packaging.

5.1. Conclusion

The present study offered valuable findings regarding the evolution of Maotai wine packaging design in Maotai Town, Guizhou, China. The study revealed the design approach of the brand to blend tradition with modernity, which enhanced the cultural authenticity of the wine. The study affirmed the status of Maotai wine as a cultural emblem of China's rich tradition and the national liquor of the country. Moreover, the study also highlighted the commitment of the liquor brand to sustainability principles and technological advancements to meet consumer demands and enhance the consumer experience. Thus, the present study highlighted the rich cultural and marketing significance of the packaging design of Maotai wine.

5.2. Research Implications

- **Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical implications of the present study offer valuable insights into the understanding of the impact of design processes and marketing of liquor packaging on consumer behavior. By highlighting the cultural significance of the packaging design of Maotai wine, the present study enhances the existing literature on cultural marketing. The study's findings affirm the role of cultural elements in the marketing of a product and the subsequent role of the product in the preservation of cultural heritage. Moreover, the study also enhances the theoretical literature concerned with design innovation and dynamic packaging design. The study extends

the ongoing discourse on the role of innovative interventions in the packaging design of traditional liquor by highlighting the role of innovation in the packaging design of Maotai liquor.

- **Practical Implications**

The practical implications of the study offer actionable strategies to enhance the impact of the packaging design of traditional liquors on its marketing. The study suggests strategies to enhance the cultural authenticity of packaging design while keeping it relevant to contemporary trends. Designers can achieve this balance by blending traditional motifs with contemporary trends. This serves as a guideline for other brands striving to achieve a balance between tradition and modernity. In addition, the present study also highlights the significance of innovative interventions in packaging design to enhance the consumer experience. Furthermore, the study also emphasizes the significance of integrating sustainability principles in the design processes of liquor packaging to address the environmental concerns of consumers.

5.3. Limitations and Future Directions

One of the primary limiting factors for the present study is its geographical focus on Maotai Town, Guizhou, China. Though the study provides valuable insight regarding this specific cultural and geographical context, the findings of the study may not apply to other geographical regions. Future studies can focus on the traditional liquor industries in other countries and draw comparisons with the liquor industry in China. In addition, future studies can explore the packaging design procedures in other wine-producing regions and highlight the factors influencing their primary decisions regarding the packaging.

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