THE QUALITY WINE PACKAGING
A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS OF THE BOTTLES IN THE TOP 100 OF THE WINE SPECTATOR FROM 2008 TO 2012

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2. The two discursive orientations of the packaging in the corpus of the TOP 100 and their underpinning brand architecture
3. Discussion of the findings, limits and new perspectives

THE PACKAGING AND BRANDING ISSUES AND THE SEMIOTIC METHODOLOGY

- Packaging and branding: a key issue for commercial success
- But still a permanent headache for practitioners and a big challenge for academic research:

"Different approaches to measure the relative importance of packaging compared to other extrinsic cues such as brand name, origin and price yield deviating results. Verbal methods directly asking consumers about wine packaging relevance usually result in low packaging importance ratings contradictory to what we know from the market place."
Simone Mueller and Larry Lockshin, 2008

- Why this discrepancy?

Because packaging and branding are not only attributes/ stimuli of a wine product but first and foremost components of a story-telling of the wine by a bottle considered as a medium.

We propose to switch from a “verbal and visual information” approach to an “embottled” attributes to the relevance and the performance of a discourse and to the content of meaning of a narrative.

From a psychological process (consumer-reader side) to a semiotic analysis of corpus (sender side)
The semiotic theoretical framework: how to understand the story-telling of the wine in the bottle by the bottle itself (in brief in 6 points).

A- The shapes, labels, colours, illustration system, linguistic signs, are parts of a text (utterance) expressed by the bottle of a text (utterance) expressed by the bottle.

B. This syncretic (visual and verbal) utterance supposes a sender (enunciator) and a receiver (enunciatee).

C. This discursive framework shows orientation(s) of a dialogue between the sender and the receiver through the unfolding of a narrative.

D. The narrative is analyzed according to the Hjelmslev theory of “planes of language” (1943): “plane of the expression” which extend the Saussure theory of signifier—signified to a complete text.

E. Each narrative of a bottle utterance is broken down in “forms of expression” which are interlinked with “forms of content” (meanings).

F. Then, all elements of content (significations) are deemed according to their contribution to a global meaning (system of values of the narrative).

**Exemple:** how to understand the system of value of the wine narrative (step 1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Forms of expression (signifier)</th>
<th>Forms of content (extraction of meaning)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>the label background</td>
<td>Meaning of black in consumption goods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in wine tradition in this packaging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the border rule</td>
<td>Meaning of the gold colour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tion (1)</td>
<td>Meaning of the mosaic/stain-glass window</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tion (2)</td>
<td>Meaning of the red grapes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure of brands (components)</td>
<td>Meaning of Schild Estate, Barossa, Shiraz</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>structure of brands (visual organization and graphic effects)</td>
<td>Meaning of the visual hierarchy and graphic effects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>allegation and claim</td>
<td>Meaning of Premium Wines</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

THE “OBJECT OF VALUE” of the narrative

- interconnection of the different meanings (narrative level): signs of luxury, of lightness, of deep sensations
- emerging themes (thematic level): exceptionality of the Estate, discourses oriented
- underpinning values of the themes (axiological level): exceptionality of the experiences, discourse oriented
THE PACKAGING AND BRANDING ISSUES AND THE SEMIOTIC METHODOLOGY

To understand the story-telling of the wine: overview of the two orientations of the corpus (about 400 bottles)

- Discourse of a sender (enunciator) figuring a dialogue with the receiver (enunciatees) through the narrative of an “Object of value(s)” to share together
- The Object of Value is mainly the know-how-competences of the sender
- The Object of value is mainly emotion and the pleasure of the receiver

385-ENDO-ORIENTED DISCOURSES

115 EXO-ORIENTED DISCOURSES

THE DISCURSIVES ORIENTATIONS AND THE BRAND ARCHITECTURES

From 2008 to 2012, the corpus highlights the dominance of the Endo-oriented discourse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of the TOP 100</th>
<th>endo-oriented discourses</th>
<th>exo-oriented discourses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The producers and marketers of quality wines prefer to tell their own story than to mention the pleasure of the drinkers and to suggest their emotions and sensations.

The core values expresses TRUST in the sender-enunciator more than SATISFACTION for the receivers-enunciatees

From 2008 to 2012, the corpus highlights the dominance of the Endo-oriented discourse first expresses itself by the brand architectures, then by governing the visual system of the labeling: Example in France

- Sender enunciator brand in a major role and position (coat of arms)
- Range brand as a qualification and amplification of the sender “power” and know-how
- Brand of “cuvée” combined with the name of the send a parcel increasing the value of the Perrin’s Estate

The visual system highlights the brand hierarchy and glorifies the sender

THE DISCURSIVES ORIENTATIONS AND THE BRAND ARCHITECTURES

The dominance of the Endo-oriented discourse first expresses itself by the brand architectures, then by governing the visual system: Example in Italy

- Brand of “cuvée” increase the status of the wine-maker like a fashion-creator/artist,
- Sender enunciator brand in a minor position but governing the illustration, featuring the landscape of the estate

The visual system highlights the brand hierarchy and glorifies the sender
Endo-oriented discourses increase importance and visibility of all categories of senders-enunciators: Estates, Merchants, Individual or family of wine-makers, etc. Often associated with a Geographical Indication.

ESTATES AND WINERIES: the same orientation from France to “New World” producers.

DIVIDUAL AND FAMILY WINE-MAKERS: “you can trust their know-how.”

THE DISCURSIVE ORIENTATIONS AND THE BRAND ARCHITECTURES

oriented discourses increase importance and visibility of the brand of the cuvée, because it points out the wine and prefigures the emotional satisfaction of the drinker and taster.

TYPICAL WINE VALUES IN ENDO-ORIENTED DISCOURSE

1. This wine is a bouquet of tastes and sensations (organoleptic dimensions)

2. This wine is a source of positive emotions (hedonistic dimension)

3. The pleasure of this wine deserves to be shared (social dimension)

4. Drinking this wine is sharing a better way of life (cultural dimension)

Finally, Endo-oriented and Exo-oriented discourses design two different “Object of values” of the wine.

THE DISCURSIVE ORIENTATIONS AND THE BRAND ARCHITECTURES

The cuvée brands govern the visual system.

TYPICAL WINE VALUES IN EXO-ORIENTED DISCOURSES

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The dominance of the Endo-oriented discourses of quality wines must be challenged by observations of other segments of consumption, on the global wine market.

The ascendancy of the story-telling of the competences and of the exceptionality of the enunciators-producers-marketers is questionable for more common wines, targeting simpler consumption for drinkers just looking for a small moment of pleasure, for good “value for money” and not in search of a status or a particular positive self image.

In the same vein, the discursive and narrative semiotic analysis should be deepened to understand the inter-type variations of the discourses, endo OR exo-oriented.

On the other hand, the content of each packaging narrative should be scrutinized to have a better understanding of the role of the qualification brands, especially the G.I and grape variety brands/marks, with their signification rely on their links with an enunciator brand or a cuvee brand.

MANAGERIAL KEY LEARNINGS:

The efficiency of the packaging-branding of the bottle does not rely on a single, isolated variable, like a colour, or number of brands, or a specific brand, or a kind of illustration, etc.

Managers have to check and test how each chosen element, or SIGN, contributes to the narrative of the wine and to a discursive orientation in line with a desired positioning targeting identified segments of the market.

NEW PERSPECTIVES FOR ACADEMIC RESEARCH:

How relevant is a discursive orientation, on a particular market, taking into account a strategic segmentation?

How the wine narrative is able to express differentiation from the competition for consumers belonging to the same segment?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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