

Alternative wine packaging

The answer to a more sustainable wine industry?

Abstract

Personal motivation

Choosing this topic for my thesis is a result of my personal drive to contribute to a greener, and more environmentally conscious (wine)world. This drive stems from a deep desire to make an impact on the wine industry's sustainability efforts. By exploring the complexity of alternative wine packaging, I aim to investigate the potential benefits (and challenges) associated with adopting alternative packaging options. Additionally, I hope to provide valuable insights that can guide decision-making processes and drive positive change. With this thesis, I hope to contribute to a more responsible and sustainable future, not only for ourselves, but as a mother, also for our future generations. A world where both the enjoyment of wine and the preservation of our environment can coexist harmoniously.

Objective

The primary objective of my thesis is to conduct a comprehensive analysis of the environmental impact associated with alternative wine packaging and compare it to the traditional use of glass wine bottles. By evaluating different packaging options, such as bag-in-box, KeyKeg, or PET/cardboard bottles, this research aims to assess their carbon footprint, energy usage, waste generation, and resource utilization. This analysis will provide valuable insights into the potential sustainability benefits and challenges of alternative wine packaging methods.

In addition to the environmental analysis, this thesis seeks to contribute to the existing knowledge and understanding of alternative wine packaging as a means to achieve a more sustainable wine industry. By synthesizing relevant literature, academic research, and industry reports, this research aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge on this topic. This will help identify gaps in existing research and highlight areas where further investigation is needed to support the advancement of sustainable packaging practices in the wine industry.

Another objective of this thesis is to explore consumer preferences and perceptions of alternative wine packaging. Through both a survey and interview, information is gathered from both consumers and experts within the wine industry. This will enable examination of consumer attitudes towards sustainability, convenience, quality, and aesthetics in relation to different packaging options.

Methodology

The research design for this study is a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods. It involves an analysis of environmental impact and exploration of consumer preferences and perceptions regarding alternative wine packaging. This mixed-methods approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives. Data for the environmental impact analysis will be collected through a combination of primary and secondary sources. Primary data will be collected through a survey and interviews with industry experts. These will focus on gathering information on packaging materials, energy consumption, waste generation, and transportation logistics. Secondary data will be obtained from industry reports, literature, website, and life cycle assessment databases.

Content

The content of this thesis is divided into several chapters. The first of these is a comprehensive study of glass bottles, purposefully included to provide a point of comparison with alternative wine packaging options. This section addresses pivotal questions such as why glass has remained a favoured choice for such a lengthy period, as well as the specific advantages and disadvantages its use. Subsequent chapters go deeper an array of different wine packaging options, discussing their unique characteristics and referencing research studies that support these observations. A particular emphasis is placed on the current market trends and the factors driving these changes. Sustainability and adherence to the new ESG regulations is a key theme that underpins these discussions.

In addition, this research encompasses several interviews that have been conducted to gather qualitative data. Furthermore, it includes the findings of a survey that has been carried out, and extracts data from various reports, such as Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs).

Key findings and future research

This research explores alternative wine packaging options and their contributions to a more sustainable wine industry. All options share key traits, such as lighter weight and easy recyclability, leading to reduced transport costs and lower CO₂ emissions. Yet, there are perceptual barriers as consumers often associate good wine with glass bottles. Despite this, Life Cycle Assessments show alternative packaging uses less energy, fuel, material and space.

Notably, because most wines are made for immediate consumption, alternative packaging is particularly suitable for seasonal wines, opening up a new market segment. Besides that, the wine industry leans towards wines with less alcohol, made from higher quality and made with sustainable practices. This presents a potential opportunity to produce higher quality wines in superior packaging, incorporating the sustainable features that consumers increasingly seek.

Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand how to facilitate the shift towards these more sustainable solutions, especially given the perceptual barriers among consumers. Despite such challenges, the benefits of alternative packaging, such as extended shelf life, greater convenience, easier recycling, and alignment with ESG regulations and sustainable farming trends, underscore the significance of this transition for the future of a sustainable wine industry.