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FEMINIZED ALCOHOL PACKAGE DESIGNS: ROLE IN PRODUCT CHOICE

Bachelor Thesis

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I have written this Bachelor Thesis independently. Any ideas or data taken from other authors or other sources have been fully referenced.

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Introduction

In recent years, the design of product packaging has gained recognition as a significant driver of consumer behavior, particularly in competitive industries like alcohol. The alcohol sector presents a unique case for examining packaging due to its multifaceted social, cultural, and economic dimensions. Alcohol is not merely a consumer product, it is a cultural artifact that conveys symbolic meanings, such as social status, lifestyle aspirations, and identity. This thesis focuses on alcohol packaging, specifically feminized designs, because of their growing prominence as a marketing strategy targeting female consumers. These designs often utilize soft pastel colors, elegant typography, floral motifs, and delicate shapes to evoke traditional notions of femininity and appeal to aesthetic preferences (Jones et al., 2021). However, their effectiveness and broader implications remain a matter of debate, as they raise questions about gender-specific marketing practices and their influence on consumer behavior (Atkinson et al., 2021).

The alcohol industry's reliance on packaging as a primary communication tool underscores its importance. Packaging has evolved from a functional necessity to a sophisticated medium that conveys brand identity, values, and emotional (Jones et al., 2021). Feminized packaging, in particular, leverages cultural and psychological cues associated with femininity to create a tailored consumer experience. While this strategy can effectively engage certain market segments, it risks perpetuating traditional stereotypes and alienating consumers who do not identify with these representations (Kersbergen & Field, 2017). In this context, I argue that feminized alcohol packaging serves as both a powerful marketing tool and a subject of ethical scrutiny, necessitating a closer examination of its impact on consumers.

Existing literature highlights that packaging features significantly influence consumer perceptions and purchase decisions. Notably, up to 72% of consumers report that a product's packaging design often influences their purchase choice (Liu et al., 2025). Moreover, an estimated 73–85% of purchase decisions are made at the point of sale, where packaging is often the key differentiator between products (Liu et al., 2025). These statistics underscore packaging's crucial role as a "silent salesman" on the retail shelf. Indeed, packaging is the only marketing medium that 100% of purchasers interact with, delivering a higher return on investment than many other branding efforts (Liu et al., 2025). This influence is particularly pronounced in the alcohol sector, where brand choice can be swayed by bottle appearance, label

design, and overall aesthetic appeal. Feminized packaging, in particular, leverages visual cues (color, shape, imagery) that align with stereotypical femininity to attract a target audience of women. The question remains: how do such gendered design strategies affect product choice, and through what psychological mechanisms? This thesis addresses that question by drawing on consumer behavior theories and decision-making models to analyze how feminized alcohol package designs influence consumers' choices.

The aim of this research is to examine the role of feminized alcohol package designs in product choice. To achieve this aim, the following tasks have been identified:

- Define and categorize the distinctive characteristics of feminized alcohol package designs.
- Analyze the role of consumer behavior theories in shaping perceptions of feminized packaging
- Investigate consumer interpretations of feminized alcohol package designs.
- Examine the relationship between product choices and feminized packaging through a theoretical lens.
- Assess the ethical and societal implications of feminized packaging in marketing strategies.

While extensive research has explored the general role of packaging in consumer behavior, the specific effects of feminized alcohol packaging remain underexamined. Studies like those by Atkinson et al. (2020) and Kersbergen & Field (2017) offer valuable insights into the broader dynamics of packaging design but fall short of addressing the nuanced interplay between gender-specific design elements and consumer decision-making processes. Furthermore, the ethical implications of feminized packaging, including its potential to perpetuate stereotypes or alienate non-targeted groups, have received limited attention in academic discourse. Jones et al. (2022) emphasize the promotional potential of alcohol packaging but call for deeper analyses of its societal impact. The topicality of this research lies in its potential to inform ethical and inclusive marketing practices. By investigating these gaps, this research contributes to academic discourse on gendered marketing and provides actionable insights for industry practitioners. The findings will inform how packaging strategies can align with contemporary values of inclusivity and diversity, especially given the growing market share of female consumers and broader

societal scrutiny of gender-specific marketing. The following sections establish the theoretical foundations for this study, review relevant literature, and present an empirical study of consumer responses to feminized alcohol packaging.

Keywords: feminized packaging, product choice, elaboration likelihood model, self-congruity, stimulus–organism–response.

1. Theoretical Foundations of Feminized Alcohol Package Designs: Role in Product Choice

1.1 Feminization in Marketing and Packaging Design: A Consumer Behavior Perspective

This section explores the concept of feminization in marketing and package design. It discusses how products (like alcoholic beverages) are styled with feminine cues to attract female consumers, and clarifies core marketing concepts that underpin this phenomenon. An overview of packaging design, brand identity, and consumer appeal is provided to ensure a common understanding of how feminized designs might shape consumer reactions

In contemporary marketing, feminization refers to the deliberate use of design elements and branding cues traditionally associated with femininity to target female consumers (Atkinson et al., 2024). This practice is a form of gendered marketing wherein products (such as alcoholic beverages) are “pinked” or packaged with soft colors, floral motifs, elegant typography, and other symbols of femininity in order to appeal to the female market (Atkinson et al., 2024). For example, the prevalence of pink packaging in alcohol marketing is explicitly designed to signal a feminine aesthetic and attract women drinkers. Such strategies tap into cultural stereotypes of “girliness” – the color pink, fashion, or beauty imagery – to make products feel aligned with traditional female identities (Atkinson et al., 2024). In the alcohol industry, these feminized package designs attempt to construct an inviting female-oriented brand image, yet they also risk reinforcing gender binaries and stereotypes (Pettersson McIntyre, 2018). As Pettersson McIntyre (2018) observes, even ostensibly neutral products are often designed to appeal specifically to either men or women, meaning gender segmentation is embedded in product design itself. Recognizing this feminization phenomenon is crucial for analyzing how marketing tactics might influence consumer perceptions and choices along gender lines.

To effectively examine the role of feminized alcohol packaging in consumer choice, it is essential to clarify several key marketing concepts that underpin this research. Clear definitions

of these core terms provide a foundation for discussion and ensure a common understanding of how packaging influences consumer behavior. Package Design, Brand Identity, and Consumer Appeal are especially relevant concepts in this context.

Package design refers to the visual and structural design of a product's packaging – the combination of graphics, colors, shapes, and materials into an integrated form that both protects the product and creates a desired impression. Scholars define packaging design as the blend of various elements into a holistic sensory experience and as the process of developing a container that not only contains and protects a product but also promotes it. In other words, packaging design is a strategic creative effort to communicate a product's essence and attract attention on the shelf. For example, an alcohol bottle's shape (e.g. sleek vs. stout), label typography (elegant script vs. bold font), and color scheme (pastels vs. dark tones) all work together to form a coherent identity that can appeal to a target audience.

Brand identity denotes the unique characteristics and image a brand presents. It encompasses the consistent visual look, messaging, and values that a brand communicates. In the context of feminized alcohol packaging, brand identity might involve aligning product imagery with feminine lifestyles or values (such as elegance, fun, or empowerment). A strong brand identity helps a product stand out and ensures it is recognizable to consumers. Aligning that identity with feminine cues could attract the target demographic (female consumers who identify with those cues) or, conversely, alienate others who do not.

Consumer appeal concerns the overall attractiveness of a product to its intended audience – essentially, how strongly the product “draws in” potential buyers. High consumer appeal results from appealing aesthetics, perceived quality, and alignment with consumer needs or tastes. In packaging terms, this means a feminized product must deliver not only stereotypically feminine imagery but also genuine value and quality cues. Studies have shown that packaging structure, imagery, color, and font work synergistically to evoke positive emotions that influence purchase decisions (Amoozad Mahdiraji et al., 2024). Thus, consumer appeal is enhanced when the package design resonates emotionally with the consumer.

Table 1. Comparative Definitions of Key Marketing Concepts (drawn from academic literature) highlights how scholars define these concepts and provides an original synthesis for each. By defining these terms, we establish the conceptual framework for understanding how a “feminized” package design might influence product choice. The table compiles multiple

academic definitions for each concept and a synthesized definition in the context of this thesis. This approach underscores the multidimensional nature of each concept – for example, showing that package design involves holistic sensory strategy, that brand identity entails a consistent image in consumers’ minds, and that consumer appeal relates to perceived attractiveness and value from the consumer’s perspective. These aligned definitions will guide the subsequent analysis of how feminine packaging elements (color, form, imagery, etc.) influence brand identity and consumer appeal in the alcohol market.

Table 1

Comparative Definitions of Key Marketing Concepts

Concept	Academic Definitions (from literature)	Synthesized Definition
Feminization	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “The pinking of alcohol products and marketing (i.e. the (over)use of the colour pink as a feminine aesthetic) is a form of gendered marketing used by the industry to target and appeal to the female market.” (Atkinson et al., 2024) 2. “Gender segmentation is often added by marketing departments, but objects too are designed to appeal to either men or women.” (Petersson McIntyre, 2018) 3. “Alcohol brand marketing [uses] traditional stereotypes associated with ‘girliness’ (e.g. makeup, the colour pink, shopping)... to segment the market [and] attract female consumers.”(Atkinson A.M. et al., 2021) 	<p>Feminization in marketing is the practice of endowing products or campaigns with qualities culturally labeled as feminine (e.g. pink color schemes, delicate imagery, “girly” stereotypes) in order to appeal to women. It involves gender-targeted design and messaging that align a product with femininity to attract female consumers.</p>
Package Design	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “‘Package design’ is defined as the various elements chosen and blended into a holistic design to achieve a particular sensory effect.” (as cited Orth, U. R., & Malkewitz, K. 2008) (Wallace, 2001) 2. “Packaging design is the process of designing and developing a container (package) to contain, protect, transport, dispense, store, identify, and promote a product.” (as cited Klimchuk & Krasovec, 2018) (Srivastava et al., 2022) 3. “Packaging design provides product 	<p>Package Design refers to the strategic creation of a product’s container and visual appearance – combining graphics, colors, shapes, and materials into an integrated form that both protects the product and creates a desired sensory/immediate impression. It is a holistic design effort to communicate the brand and influence</p>

	category information, positioning a product within a category (as cited Ampuero & Vila, 2006), attracting attention to a product on the shelf.”(Petersson McIntyre, 2018)	consumer perceptions at first glance.
Brand Identity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Brand identity is seen as a unique set of brand associations that the brand strategist aspires to create or maintain.”(Amoozad Mahdiraji et al., 2024) 2. “Art directors define visual brand identity as the holistic look and feel of a brand, manifest as consistency among the brand, its strategy, and all its individual visual elements, ongoing over time.” (Sumelius, 2010) 3. “Brand identity stands for defining what makes a brand unique and valuable.” (Kapferer, 2004) 	Brand Identity is the distinctive characterization of a brand – the collection of visual, verbal, and value elements that the company crafts to portray its personality. It includes the name, logo, design style, and core values that differentiate the brand and ensure a consistent, recognizable image in the minds of consumers.
Consumer Appeal	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Perceived value is defined as the value or attractiveness of a product or service in the minds of consumers.” (Peng & Oh, 2024) 2. “An enhanced appeal and attractiveness of the product make the selection process easier for consumers.”(Srivastava et al., 2022) 3. “Package structure, imagery, color, and fonts work synergistically to appeal to consumers...evok[ing] positive emotions that influence purchase.”(Mininni, 2014) 	Consumer Appeal denotes the overall attractiveness of a product or service to its intended consumers. It is the degree of desirability a product attains through its design, features, and value proposition, essentially, how strongly it draws potential buyers. High consumer appeal results from appealing aesthetics, perceived quality/usability, and alignment with consumer needs or tastes, thereby positively influencing purchase decisions.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources in the table

In summary, feminization in package design can be understood as a specialized application of these core concepts. A feminized alcohol bottle, for example, leverages package design elements (color, shape, imagery) deliberately chosen to signal feminine cues, thereby crafting a brand identity that appeals to a certain segment of consumers, and ultimately aiming to

enhance consumer appeal for that segment. The next part of this chapter will discuss the theoretical frameworks that explain why and how such feminized designs might influence consumer perceptions and choices.

One foundational theory relevant to packaging's influence is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) of persuasion. According to Petty and Cacioppo's (1986) ELM, consumers process marketing messages via two routes: a central route (careful, content-based evaluation) or a peripheral route (relying on superficial cues). Packaging design elements often function as peripheral cues in low-involvement purchase situations (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). For example, a consumer browsing a liquor store may not engage in deep analysis of every new drink, but the visual appeal of a bottle, like its colors, shape, and overall aesthetic can catch the eye and influence decision-making without extensive deliberation. When motivation or ability to process information is low, consumers tend to rely on such cues in forming attitudes. A bright, elegant label might imply "this wine is high quality" or "this liqueur suits me," even in the absence of substantive product information. Thus, from an ELM perspective, feminized packaging (with its feminine color palettes and stylized graphics) can persuade via the peripheral route by generating a favorable impression or emotional resonance. This mechanism is related to the "halo effect" in consumer psychology: attractive packaging creates an overall positive impression that can spill over into perceptions of the product's quality. Empirical research shows that consumers often associate aesthetically pleasing packaging with higher product quality, even when no other information is available. Alcohol marketers leverage this by designing feminine-themed bottles and labels that suggest luxury and exclusivity – for instance, limited-edition rosé champagne bottles adorned with floral patterns may prompt impulse buys as collectibles. However, ELM also reminds us that peripheral cues alone may not secure a lasting or strong attitude change if the consumer later engages in more critical thinking or if the product itself must live up to expectations. In other words, an eye-catching feminine bottle might draw initial interest, but consumers could still change their mind if the product doesn't align with their tastes or values upon further consideration.

Another important framework is the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model from environmental psychology. In the S-O-R paradigm, an external stimulus (S) influences an individual's internal state (O), which in turn drives a behavioral response (R) (Pan et al., 2024). Applied to our context, the packaging design is the stimulus that consumers encounter, which

provokes certain internal organism states, such as cognitive interpretations and affective reactions. These internal states then shape the consumer's response, namely the decision to purchase or not purchase the product (Pan et al., 2024). For example, seeing a pink, glittery vodka bottle might trigger a young female consumer's thought, "This looks fun and made for someone like me," and create feelings of excitement or indulgence – an internal state that makes her more inclined to purchase it for a girls' night event. Conversely, the same stimulus might trigger a negative internal reaction in a different consumer who dislikes stereotypical "girly" marketing, leading to avoidance. Those internal reactions then influence the response, namely the decision to purchase or not purchase the product. The S-O-R model helps explain why the effect of feminized packaging can vary widely among consumers: it depends on how the individual organism (the consumer's mind) interprets and feels about the stimulus. A highly feminine design may excite one consumer but repel another. As Mehrabian and Russell (1974) described, individuals make choices based on their internal emotional states induced by environmental cues, and they respond accordingly (Pan et al., 2024) The S-O-R model thus provides a structured way to understand how packaging as a stimulus can reinforce certain perceptions (organism) and elicit corresponding behaviors (response) in a retail setting. In summary, the S-O-R framework suggests that feminized packaging is the stimulus that triggers internal cognitive/emotional states, which then drive the behavioral outcome (purchase or avoidance). This perspective will be useful when interpreting consumer survey responses, as it underscores the role of individual psychological reactions in translating package design into behavior.

The third theoretical lens is Self-Congruity Theory, which clarifies why feminized packaging may be effective for certain consumer segments. The self-congruity framework posits that consumers prefer products that match or reinforce their self-concept – their perceptions of who they are (or who they aspire to be) (Sirgy, 2018). In other words, a person is more likely to choose a product if they feel that "this product is me." In the context of feminized alcohol packaging, Self-Congruity Theory suggests that women who identify with traditionally feminine traits will respond more favorably to products packaged in a feminine way, because those products align with their self-image or ideal image (Hosany & Martin, 2012).

In the alcohol market, feminized packaging explicitly attempts to create this alignment for female consumers by incorporating design elements associated with femininity. For instance,

a bottle of rosé adorned with delicate rose-gold foil and cursive lettering might appeal to a buyer who takes pride in her femininity or wishes to project elegance. Conversely, consumers who identify as gender-neutral or reject traditional gender roles may experience self-incongruity with overtly feminized designs, feeling that "this product is not for someone like me." Self-Congruity Theory thus helps explain the polarized reactions that feminized alcohol packaging can provoke: some consumers are delighted to find a product that "speaks to them," while others are deterred by what they perceive as reductive or exclusionary branding (Malär et al., 2011). Sirgy (2018) emphasizes that marketers must carefully navigate these effects, ensuring that self-congruity is effectively utilized to appeal to the target segment while avoiding the risk of alienating other consumer groups. This thesis will pay special attention to self-congruity, as the empirical study includes survey items that directly assess whether respondents feel the product suits them. We expect that higher self-congruity (feeling the feminized package "matches me") will correspond to higher purchase intention, consistent with prior research showing that alignment of brand image with personal identity fosters positive attitudes and buying intentions.

The psychological influence of specific visual elements in packaging design is also well-documented. Research on visual perception and marketing design indicates that certain colors, shapes, and layouts carry implicit meanings. For example, color psychology finds that pink and pastel hues are commonly associated with sweetness, femininity, and warmth, whereas darker or bolder colors like black or navy are linked to masculinity, strength, or formality (Marketing Week, 2002). These associations are not arbitrary, they stem from cultural conditioning and perhaps even innate responses. Shape semantics similarly play a role: studies have shown that angular shapes tend to evoke perceptions of energy, toughness, and strength, whereas rounded shapes convey approachability, friendliness, and harmony (Ruumpol, 2014). Thus, a whiskey bottle aimed at men might have a sharp, square-shouldered form with a dark label (signaling power and boldness), while a liqueur targeting women might use a curvy bottle silhouette and soft label designs (signaling softness and elegance). By aligning packaging design elements with the gendered expectations of their intended audience, brands attempt to non-verbally communicate that "this product is made for you." In essence, packaging becomes a form of visual communication that can quickly tell a story about the product's identity. A consumer scanning a store shelf may instantly recognize a feminized package through its color and form, processing those cues in split seconds to form judgments about the drink's taste and the user

image it projects. This rapid visual appraisal is often subconscious, a testament to the power of design in shaping consumer behavior.

It is worth noting that while attractive packaging draws attention and can enhance perceived value, the design must also meet functional expectations. If a beautiful bottle is hard to open, fragile, or non-eco-friendly, it may deter repeat purchases despite initial appeal (World Health Organization, 2024). Consumers today balance aesthetics with practicality and values like sustainability. Indeed, recent years have seen growing consumer awareness of the environmental impact of packaging. Sustainable packaging solutions (recyclable materials, reduced plastic, eco-friendly inks) are gaining attractiveness in the alcohol industry. Feminized packaging, however, has sometimes prioritized ornate aesthetics (like intricate decorations or non-recyclable embellishments) over sustainability, potentially clashing with the values of environmentally conscious consumers (Lunnay & Foley, 2024). This presents an opportunity: brands that integrate eco-friendly practices into feminized designs (for instance, using biodegradable glitter or recycled glass in a feminine-styled bottle) can align with both the style preferences of their target demographic and their ethical values. By communicating these efforts on the package, through symbols or brief text, companies can enhance brand reputation and consumer trust.

Figure 1 illustrates how feminized alcohol packaging operates as a system of visual and structural design cues that guide consumer perception and behavior. These cues—such as pastel colors, elegant typography, floral motifs, curved bottle shapes, and glossy finishes—are deliberately integrated into packaging to signal femininity. Once perceived by consumers, these features initiate specific psychological responses: they capture attention and shape impressions through heuristic visual processing, evoke emotional and cognitive reactions, and, when aligned with the consumer's self-image, increase the likelihood of product selection. This schematic model serves as a foundation for analyzing how feminized design affects consumer decision-making throughout the empirical section.

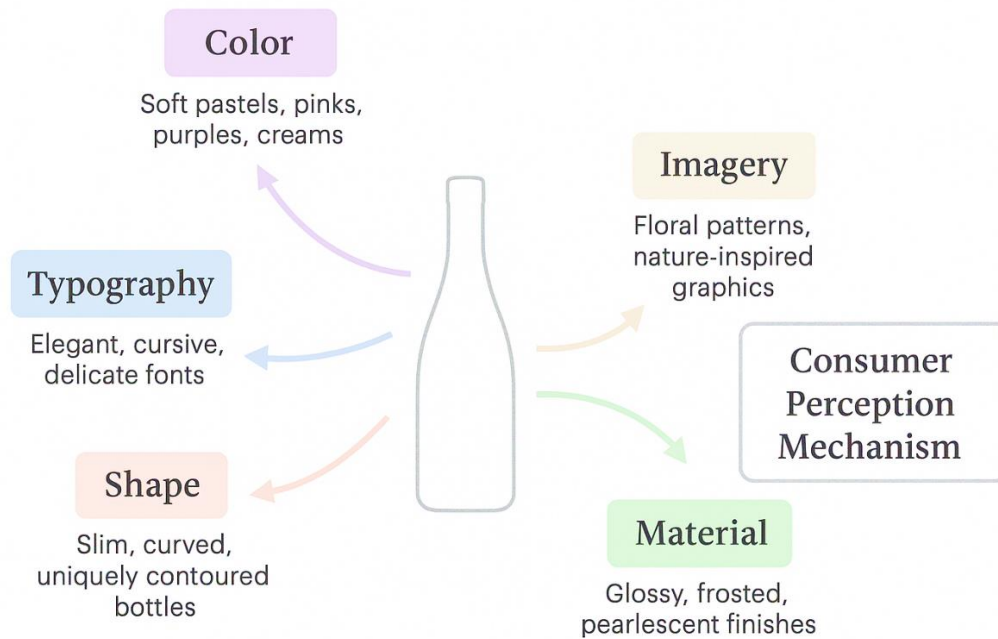


Figure 1. Conceptual model of feminized alcohol packaging and its influence on consumer response.

Source: Compiled by the author.

To sum up, in this section, we defined key terms and introduced major theories to frame our study. Feminized marketing in the alcohol industry involves using design cues culturally associated with femininity to attract female buyers. We clarified what package design entails and how it contributes to brand identity and consumer appeal. We then linked these ideas to three theoretical frameworks. The ELM highlights that feminized package designs often act as peripheral cues influencing consumers' snap judgments. The S-O-R model contextualizes the packaging as a stimulus that can generate varying internal reactions (organism states) and thus different behavioral responses. Self-Congruity Theory emphasizes the importance of identity alignment, predicting that feminized packaging works best when it resonates with the consumer's self-image. Together, these theories provide a comprehensive lens for examining how and why a "pretty" bottle might affect someone's decision to buy. They also foreshadow potential outcomes: for example, that mere attractiveness might not be enough to guarantee a

purchase (as ELM suggests, deeper factors matter if involvement increases), and that personal identity will moderate responses (per Self-Congruity). In the next sections, we will consider how the alcohol industry specifically employs gendered strategies and review prior research, before turning to our empirical test of these ideas.

1.2 Gender-Specific Marketing Strategies in the Alcohol Industry

This section examines how gendered marketing manifests in the alcohol sector, providing context for feminized package designs. It looks at the strategies alcohol brands use to target consumers by gender – for instance, creating “for her” product lines or tailoring advertising messages – and discusses real-world examples relevant to our study. By understanding industry practices, we can better appreciate the reasoning behind feminized packaging and identify the theoretical criteria (such as design elements or messaging tone) that define a package as “feminine.”

Marketers in the alcohol industry have long segmented their approaches by gender. Marketing directed at men frequently relies on themes of dominance, power, and camaraderie, aligning with ideals of traditional masculinity. For example, beer and whiskey advertisements have commonly depicted male protagonists in scenarios emphasizing physical strength, competition, or adventurous camaraderie – from rugged outdoorsman motifs to sports bar settings (Lyons et al., 2024). Such imagery reinforces associations of alcohol with maleness, confidence, and “earning” one’s drink after a hard day’s work. Lyons et al. (2024) note that these portrayals center on hegemonic masculinity, where traits like strength and leadership are foregrounded. The influence is twofold: it appeals to men who identify with these ideals, and it subtly suggests that drinking certain alcohol, like a stout beer or a fine scotch, is a way to affirm one’s manhood. This kind of marketing can normalize heavy drinking as a component of male bonding or prowess. Indeed, research indicates that when men see alcohol tied to proving masculinity, it can encourage higher consumption or risky drinking as a form of social performance (Atkinson et al., 2021). Conversely, what is often missing in these campaigns are representations of men showing vulnerability or choosing low-alcohol or sweet drinks, as those choices are stereotypically deemed “unmasculine.” This has started to shift in recent years with more diverse portrayals of men in media, but the alcohol industry has been slow to evolve these tropes (Whiteley et al., 2023). Critics argue that clinging to a narrow image of male drinkers not

only limits the market (overlooking men who might prefer lighter or stylish beverages) but also perpetuates unhealthy gender norms.

In contrast, marketing strategies aimed at women typically draw on themes of sophistication, indulgence, self-care, and social celebration, often emphasizing feminized alcohol packaging designs as key visuals. The tone of these campaigns differs markedly from their masculine counterparts: instead of rugged or competitive imagery, they feature elegance, refinement, or playful relaxation. For instance, advertisements for champagne, rosé wine, or flavored vodka might depict women dressed stylishly at a dinner party or enjoying a quiet “me time” moment with a drink. The message frequently positions the product as an indulgent reward or a symbol of sophistication that the female consumer “deserves” (Lunnay & Foley, 2024). This is reflected in the packaging of products targeted at women: sparkling wines and liqueurs may use elaborate typography, decorative floral labels, or slender, ergonomic bottle shapes to give the impression of exclusivity and grace (World Health Organization, 2024). One example is the prevalence of rosé wine in clear bottles with blush-pink liquid and gold foil accents (see Appendix A), the whole package telegraphs elegance and femininity at a glance. Another example is cream liqueurs like Baileys Irish Cream (see Appendix B), which historically have been packaged in elegant bottles and marketed as a treat or comfort drink for women. These visual cues are often complemented by marketing copy that emphasizes treating oneself, unwinding from stress, or celebrating small moments of joy (Lyons et al., 2024). By aligning alcohol consumption with self-care and lifestyle aspirations (“you’ve managed a long week, you deserve this cocktail”), marketers tap into a narrative that resonates with many women.

Feminized alcohol packaging is a central component of these female-oriented campaigns. The visual appeal and structural features of the package work together with emotional messaging. A slim, contoured bottle might be easier for a woman to hold, or simply look more graceful on a vanity or bar cart, so enhancing the product’s appeal as a lifestyle accessory. Lunnay and Foley (2024) observe that even structural elements like a bottle’s shape can carry gendered signals, with slim and delicate designs perceived as more feminine. From the marketer’s perspective, these designs successfully attract a segment of female consumers who appreciate the overt cues of femininity and luxury. However, there is a trade-off: overly feminized branding can alienate consumers who do not identify with such cues. Not all women are drawn to pink labels and cursive fonts. Women who prefer bold, intense flavors or who reject

traditional gender labels might feel that these “overtly girly” presentations are not for them. In some cases, female consumers have voiced that they find such targeted marketing patronizing or limiting, as if the industry assumes all women want the same type of sweet, pretty drink. This highlights a need for more inclusive approaches even within female-targeted marketing: expanding the emotional narratives to include themes of strength, independence, adventure, or other traits beyond the narrow set traditionally used (Lunnay & Foley, 2024). By broadening the portrayal of women in alcohol marketing (for example, showing women enjoying a craft beer on a hike, or a female mixologist savoring a smoky whiskey), brands could potentially attract a wider female audience and modernize their image.

Emotional appeal is a powerful tool in feminized marketing. Brands often frame alcohol consumption for women as linked to relaxation, bonding, or empowerment. A common trope is the idea of wine or cocktails as a form of self-care: “wine-o’clock” after a long day, or a celebratory drink for personal achievements. Advertisements might depict tranquil scenes of women sipping wine in a bubble bath or a group of girlfriends toasting with champagne to celebrate friendship. These narratives tap into broader cultural stories about femininity: that women are multitaskers who deserve a break, or that sharing a drink with friends is an important social ritual for women. For example, Lyons et al. (2024) note that wine ads frequently show serene settings where women enjoy a quiet moment of relaxation, reinforcing the idea that a glass of wine is a genteel way to unwind. Similarly, the design elements on packaging, such as floral motifs or soft pastel tones, can convey tranquility, romance, or sophistication, amplifying the emotional resonance of the marketing (Atkinson et al., 2021). While these strategies are effective for many consumers, they run the risk of reinforcing a limited conception of femininity (i.e. women as those who love flowers, calmness, and sweet flavors). Women who have different preferences may feel excluded. For instance, a woman who enjoys bold, hoppy craft beers or strong whiskey might see the dominance of feminized alcopops and wines in female marketing as a sign that she is not the “typical” female consumer being courted by the industry. This underscores a tension in gendered marketing: effectiveness vs. inclusivity. The emotional themes used (care, reward, elegance) certainly resonate with a substantial segment, but there is growing recognition that not all female consumers want to be addressed in a one-dimensional way.

In recent years, alcohol brands have also started to consider intersectionality – recognizing that “female consumers” are not a monolith, and factors such as age, ethnicity, and

social class intersect with gender in shaping preferences. Premium alcohol brands, for example, might use feminized packaging specifically crafted to appeal to wealthy women by incorporating cues of luxury (metallic accents, ornate typography). These touches signal exclusivity and status, aiming to attract consumers who see high-end spirits or wines as lifestyle symbols. In another example, cultural motifs might be used to appeal to women of specific backgrounds: a gin brand might use cherry blossom imagery to appeal to an East Asian aesthetic, or a tequila might use certain color palettes to resonate with Latin American art, thereby trying to feminize the product in a culturally relevant way. However, such approaches can be double-edged. If done without genuine understanding or respect, using cultural symbols can appear tokenistic or even exploitative (World Health Organization, 2024). For instance, simply slapping an ethnic pattern on a bottle targeted at women from that culture, without engaging that community or reflecting authenticity, can backfire. Consumers today, especially younger generations, are quick to call out brands for cultural appropriation. Thus, while tailoring feminized packaging to sub-demographics (rich women, young adult women, women of certain cultures, etc.) can broaden appeal, it must be approached carefully. Authenticity and inclusivity are key, brands are increasingly finding that engaging diverse consumer groups in product design (through focus groups, co-creation, etc.) yields better results than top-down assumptions.

Underlying all these gendered strategies are ethical considerations that are drawing more attention. One concern is that feminized alcohol package designs may reinforce outdated stereotypes by promoting a narrow, idealized portrayal of femininity (Whiteley et al., 2023). Every product “for women” is pink, sparkly, and sweet, the industry is implicitly suggesting that women are homogeneous in their tastes and that traditional femininity is the default. This not only perpetuates unrealistic expectations (that women should always be gentle, beauty-oriented, etc.), but it can also alienate those who don’t conform to these norms (Lunnay & Foley, 2024). Another ethical issue is the so-called “pink tax”. Often, products marketed to women, including alcohol in special feminine bottles or smaller servings, are priced higher per unit than equivalent products for men, essentially charging women a premium for the packaging or the concept. Moshary et al. (2022) have documented such gender-based pricing disparities in consumer goods, highlighting how marketing differentiation can lead to economic inequality. In the alcohol realm, this might manifest as a fruity bottled cocktail costing more than a can of beer with the same alcohol content, or a “ladies’ night” drink promotion that in effect encourages more

spending on supposedly female-preferred beverages. From an ethical marketing standpoint, these practices are questionable because they exploit gendered preferences for profit and can reinforce the notion that women are a niche to be capitalized on.

The industry has begun to face pushback over these issues. Critics argue for more inclusive and transparent marketing. For example, designing packaging that celebrates femininity without stereotyping, and pricing products fairly regardless of the target gender. Some brands have responded by adopting gender-neutral or unisex packaging designs (often minimalist, with balanced color schemes) to broaden their appeal. Others have launched campaigns that parody or violate gender norms. As an example is BrewDog's "Pink IPA" (see Appendix C) which satirically repackaged its beer in a pink label and sold it at a discount to women to highlight pay inequality (Zahuranec, n.d.). While that campaign was tongue-in-cheek, it reflects a wider recognition that younger consumers especially are looking for brands to move beyond binary marketing. Additionally, there's a movement to highlight women in the alcohol industry (as producers, mixologists, connoisseurs) which can help break down stereotypes. By showcasing real diversity in who makes and enjoys alcohol, marketing can evolve to be more empowering and less patronizing. For instance, the Johnnie Walker brand introduced a limited "Jane Walker" edition (see Appendix D), featuring a woman on the label, as a nod to female whiskey drinkers, a move that sparked conversations about whether it was a genuine step or a gimmick (Zahuranec, n.d.).

In crafting our empirical study, we take into account the industry context. The alcohol packages selected for evaluation (detailed in Chapter 2) reflect some real-world instances of feminized design. By analyzing consumer reactions to these, we can infer whether the strategies used (color changes, imagery tweaks, etc.) have their intended effect. We also ground our expectations in theory: for example, based on ELM, a beautifully designed alcohol bottle might attract a buyer's attention (a peripheral effect), but based on Self-Congruity, that buyer will proceed only if she feels the product "fits" her self-image. Thus, the industry examples highlight what feminized packaging looks like in practice, and our theoretical framework suggests how consumers might process those cues.

In this section, we discussed the gender-specific marketing tactics prevalent in the alcohol industry, with a focus on packaging. Companies often create female-targeted versions of products – altering design elements (like color and imagery) and branding to signal femininity.

Examples such as Jane Walker whisky and BrewDog's Pink IPA illustrate the trend of tailoring alcohol products for women via packaging cues. These strategies are aimed at tapping into the female market by offering products that women might find more approachable or relatable. However, they also raise concerns about reinforcing gender stereotypes and potentially alienating consumers who don't identify with the portrayed image. The insights from this chapter underscore why studying feminized package designs is important: it's a growing marketing practice that could have both commercial benefits and social ramifications. This provides a backdrop for our research, justifying the need to empirically assess how consumers actually respond to such designs. We now turn to existing research to see what is already known about feminized alcohol packaging and where gaps remain

1.3 Analysis of the previous research works on feminized alcohol package designs

This section reviews prior studies and literature on gendered packaging in the alcohol context (and related consumer goods). The goal is to summarize key findings from past research – such as how packaging features influence perceptions or how consumers of different demographics react to gendered marketing. We highlight what has been learned and identify gaps that the present thesis will address. This subchapter begins with an overview of relevant studies and ends with a brief summary of insights and remaining questions.

Feminized alcohol packaging frequently employs visual elements like pastel colors, floral motifs, and sleek typography to appeal to female consumers. These design choices are highlighted across studies, reinforcing the connection between packaging aesthetics and consumer perceptions. For example, packaging that embodies traditional femininity tends to enhance perceived aesthetic value, creating a sense of sophistication and exclusivity (Jones et al., 2021). However, these design choices can evoke polarizing responses, with some consumers appreciating the visual appeal while others view them as reinforcing outdated gender stereotypes. This duality underscores the complexity of consumer reactions and the need for careful balancing in design strategies (Jones et al., 2021).

Consumer perceptions of quality and brand identity are heavily influenced by packaging design, as demonstrated in studies examining branding and warning labels. Structural and visual elements, such as bottle shape, label design, and color schemes, not only differentiate products but also communicate implicit messages about quality and target audience (Kersbergen & Field, 2017). While this research provides valuable insights into the broader dynamics of alcohol

branding, it reveals an underexplored area: how feminized design specifically impacts product choice by shaping consumer engagement with inclusivity or exclusivity.

The economic implications of feminized packaging are another critical dimension. Studies on gender-based pricing reveal that products marketed to women often carry higher price tags than comparable products for men, a phenomenon commonly referred to as the "pink tax" (Atkinson et al., 2021). This disparity highlights how feminized packaging contributes to economic inequalities within consumer markets (Moshary et al., 2022). Although these findings provide robust statistical evidence, they also call for further exploration into consumer attitudes toward such pricing strategies and their ethical implications.

Gender ideologies deeply influence consumer behavior, as revealed in qualitative research that examines the societal expectations tied to femininity. Feminized alcohol packaging often aligns with traditional gender norms, creating a sense of familiarity and comfort for some consumers. However, for others, particularly those seeking more inclusive or gender-neutral options, these designs may alienate and even stop purchase decisions (Gangadharbatla & Khedekar, 2021). This highlights the importance of understanding the cultural and ethical contexts in which feminized packaging operates.

A comparative analysis of these studies reveals several critical patterns. Qualitative research, such as that conducted by Atkinson et al. (2021), Jones et al. (2021), and Gangadharbatla & Khedekar (2021), provides rich narratives that delve into the emotional and cultural dimensions of consumer behavior. These studies are highly effective in uncovering the subjective experiences of consumers, offering invaluable insights into the affective and ideological impact of feminized packaging. However, their findings often lack the statistical breadth necessary for generalization, suggesting a need for extra quantitative research.

In contrast, quantitative studies, such as Moshary et al. (2022), provide robust statistical validation of trends, particularly regarding economic outcomes like the "pink tax". These findings add a critical layer of objectivity to the discussion, but they can sometimes overlook the nuanced, subjective experiences of individual consumers. Mixed-methods approaches, like those employed by Kersbergen & Field (2017), attempt to bridge this gap by integrating qualitative and quantitative insights. While effective in capturing a broader spectrum of consumer behavior, such approaches often lack the depth needed to fully explore the cultural and ethical dimensions of feminized packaging.

Table 2 below provides a synthesized summary of the methodologies, focus areas, and findings of the reviewed studies. This table helps illustrate the diverse contributions of each study while highlighting opportunities for further research.

Table 2

Comparative analysis

Study	Methodology	Focus Area	Key Findings
Atkinson et al. (2021)	Qualitative analysis	Gender-specific marketing on social media	Feminized packaging reinforces gender norms while appealing to female consumers.
Jones et al. (2021)	Focus groups	Promotional role of alcohol packaging	Feminized designs attract attention but evoke polarizing consumer opinions.
Kersbergen & Field (2017)	Focus groups	Interaction with branding and warning labels	Packaging shapes perceptions of quality and brand identity, providing a general understanding of consumer engagement.
Moshary et al. (2022)	Quantitative analysis	Gender-based pricing in consumer goods	Feminized designs contribute to higher product pricing, raising ethical concerns about economic disparity.
Gangadharbatla & Khedekar (2021)	Interviews	Gender ideologies and consumer behavior	Feminized packaging aligns with traditional gender norms but may alienate consumers seeking inclusivity.

Source: Compiled by the author based on the sources in the table.

Despite these contributions, there are gaps in the literature. One gap is the limited focus on how feminized packaging interacts with broader identity factors such as ethnicity, age, or cultural background. Most studies have concentrated on gender in isolation. This points to a need for more intersectional research that considers diverse experiences – for instance, do younger vs. older women respond differently to feminized cues? Another gap is methodological: many prior works employed either purely qualitative methods (rich detail, but with small samples) or purely quantitative surveys/experiments (broader patterns, but often without depth of understanding *why* consumers feel a certain way). A mixed-method approach could combine these strengths. Additionally, ethical and societal implications are sometimes acknowledged but not deeply explored. There is a room for examining how gendered marketing in alcohol might reinforce stereotypes or influence social norms around drinking.

In reviewing previous research, we find evidence that feminized alcohol packaging can indeed influence consumer perceptions: attractive, feminine designs often catch attention and can make products seem tailored to female consumers, which may increase their appeal. However, prior studies also highlight that not all consumers react positively – a subset finds overt gendered marketing off-putting. Key theoretical themes from past research align with our frameworks: the importance of visual attention (supporting ELM's emphasis on peripheral cues) and the role of personal identification (Self-Congruity Theory). The literature, however, leaves certain questions open. We have limited knowledge about how different segments of respond, and about the long-term effect of such packaging strategies on brand loyalty or on societal perceptions. Moreover, the ethical dimension – whether these marketing tactics are progressive or regressive – is not conclusively addressed. These gaps set the stage for our study. By employing a mixed-method empirical approach, this thesis aims to provide both breadth and depth: statistical analysis to gauge general patterns, and qualitative insight to understand individual feelings. The next chapter will detail how the research was conducted, including how we incorporated the theoretical criteria of feminized design into our survey and how we attempted to fill the gaps identified here.

Figure 2 below provides a visual summary of how alcohol packaging can be “feminized” and how this may influence consumer decision-making, based on the theories discussed. The stimulus (feminized packaging design with cues like soft colors and floral patterns) can influence the consumer's organism (internal response, such as emotional reaction or identification with the brand), which in turn affects the response (consumer's purchase intention or choice). The figure

also shows how ELM conceptualizes the packaging as a peripheral cue at the stimulus stage, and how Self-Congruity (identity alignment) moderates the internal response – when self-congruity is high, the internal response is more positive, increasing the likelihood of a favorable behavior.

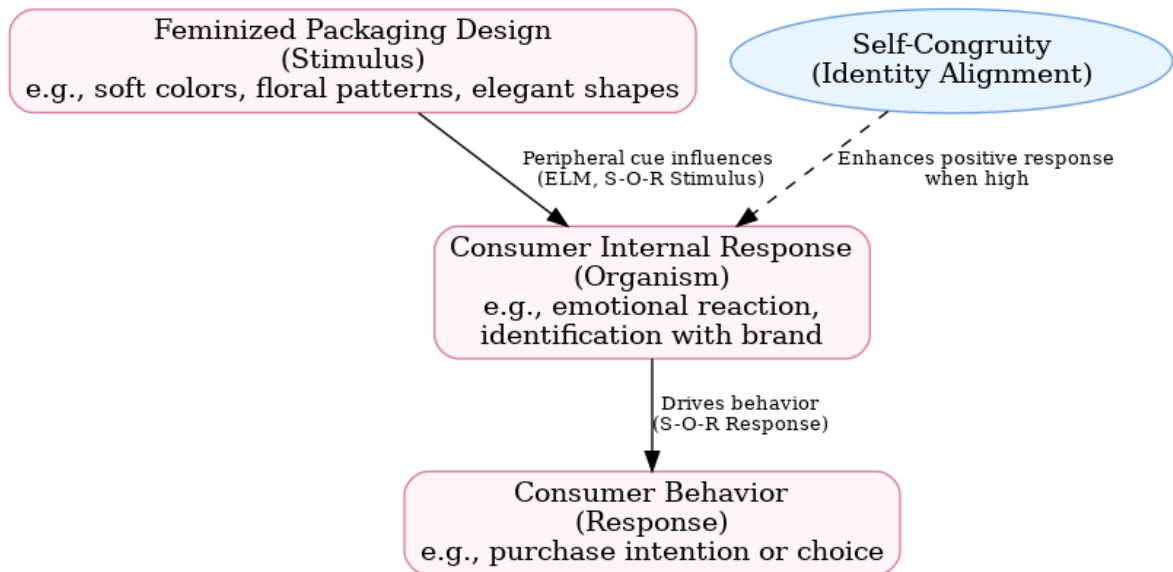


Figure 2. Conceptual model of how feminized alcohol packaging influences consumer choice, integrating theoretical frameworks (ELM, S-O-R, Self-Congruity)

Source: Compiled by the author

2. Empirical Study on Feminized Alcohol Package Designs: Role in Product Choice

2.1 Data Collection and Methodology

In this section, we present the methodology of the empirical study in a step-by-step manner. We explain the survey design, the sampling procedure, and the data analysis techniques used. By detailing these aspects, we ensure the study's approach is transparent and reproducible. This subchapter starts by describing the overall research design (a mixed-method online survey) and ends with a note on ethical considerations and data quality.

The thesis adopted a mixed-method empirical approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative analysis. This decision was guided by the need to gain a comprehensive understanding of how feminized alcohol packaging influences consumers. Quantitative data (from closed-ended survey questions) allow for statistical analysis of key variables such as

perceived femininity of the packaging, self-congruity, and purchase intention. Qualitative data (from open-ended responses) provide nuanced insights into personal interpretations, emotions, and social perceptions that structured scale ratings alone might not fully capture. Integrating both methods enhances the depth, validity, and explanatory power of the findings. The overall process followed several stages, as outlined in the methodology flowchart (see Figure 3).

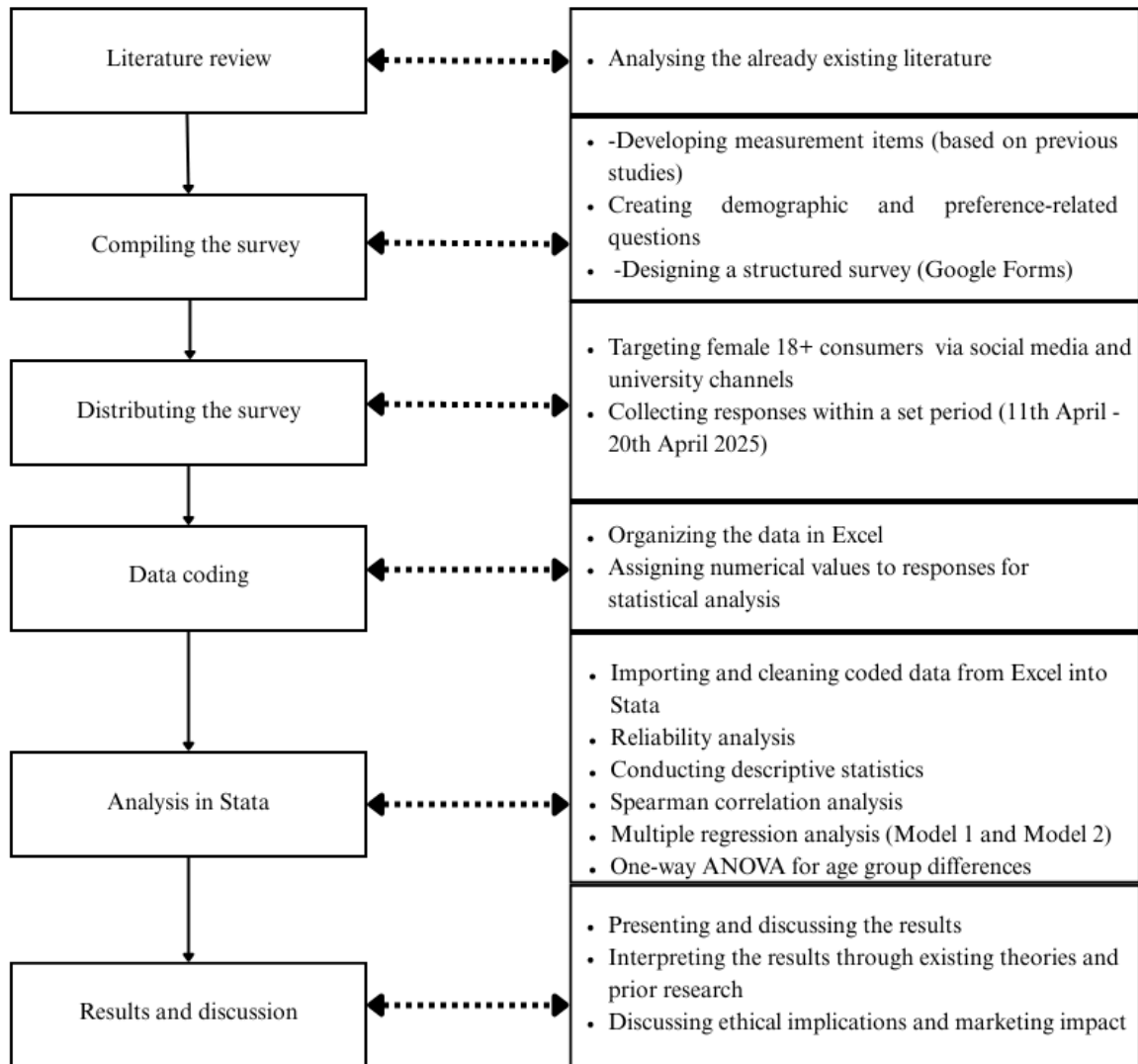


Figure 3. Methodology flowchart

Source: Compiled by the author.

What follows is an explanation of how data were collected and analyzed, including the survey instrument development, sampling procedure, data processing techniques, and ethical considerations. This comprehensive approach ensured that both numerical data and personal insights were captured, providing a rich basis for understanding consumer responses.

The primary data collection tool was a structured online questionnaire created with Google Forms. Survey compilation began after an extensive literature review identified the key constructs and measures for the study. Drawing on previous studies and established theories, the author developed measurement items for each construct of interest, including packaging perception, self-image alignment, stereotypes, emotions, and purchase intent. The questionnaire consisted of mostly close-ended items (for quantitative data) and a few open-ended questions (for qualitative insights), ensuring a balance of measurable metrics and rich commentary. All question items were carefully formulated based on prior research to ensure content validity and reliability of the measures.

The survey was organized into sections, each targeting a specific variable derived from the theoretical framework. Participants first answered basic age and alcohol consumption habits. They then proceeded to evaluate statements related to five main themes grounded in the literature. All scale-based questions in the survey used a consistent a five-point agreement Likert scale response format, as Gangadharbatla & Khedekar (2021) used in research, which facilitated coding and comparison across responses. In addition, the questionnaire ended with open-ended questions that gave respondents an opportunity to elaborate on their opinions in their own words. These free-response questions provided qualitative depth, allowing the researcher to capture nuances and personal stories that fixed-choice questions might miss. By incorporating both structured scales and open-ended prompts, the survey ensured a rich data set: numerical data for statistical analysis, alongside personal insights for thematic analysis. The complete list of survey questions and scales is provided in Appendix F of this thesis for reference.

In terms of the survey layout, respondents first saw an introduction explaining the study's purpose, assuring confidentiality, and confirming that participation was voluntary. After giving informed consent, participants proceeded to the main questionnaire. The survey was organized into logical sections. It began with basic demographic questions (age group) and a question about alcohol consumption habits, to contextualize the responses. Next, participants were presented with visual stimuli: images of alcohol product packages that exemplify feminized design (see

Appendix F for the product images used). For each scenario, participants were asked to imagine a purchase context (e.g., choosing a drink for a celebration) and then answer questions. The core of the survey included statements related to the five main themes grounded in the literature (identified in Chapter 1): perception of the packaging’s femininity, self-congruity (whether the product suits them), and purchase intentions, among others. Each statement corresponded to one of the key theoretical frameworks (ELM, S-O-R, or Self-Congruity). Figure 4 summarizes how each question was linked to its respective model to ensure theoretical alignment. After the Likert-scale items, the survey ended with the open-ended questions where respondents could describe in their own words what they thought about the packaging and how it influenced (or did not influence) their interest in the product. Screenshots and a more detailed description of the survey layout are provided in Appendix E.

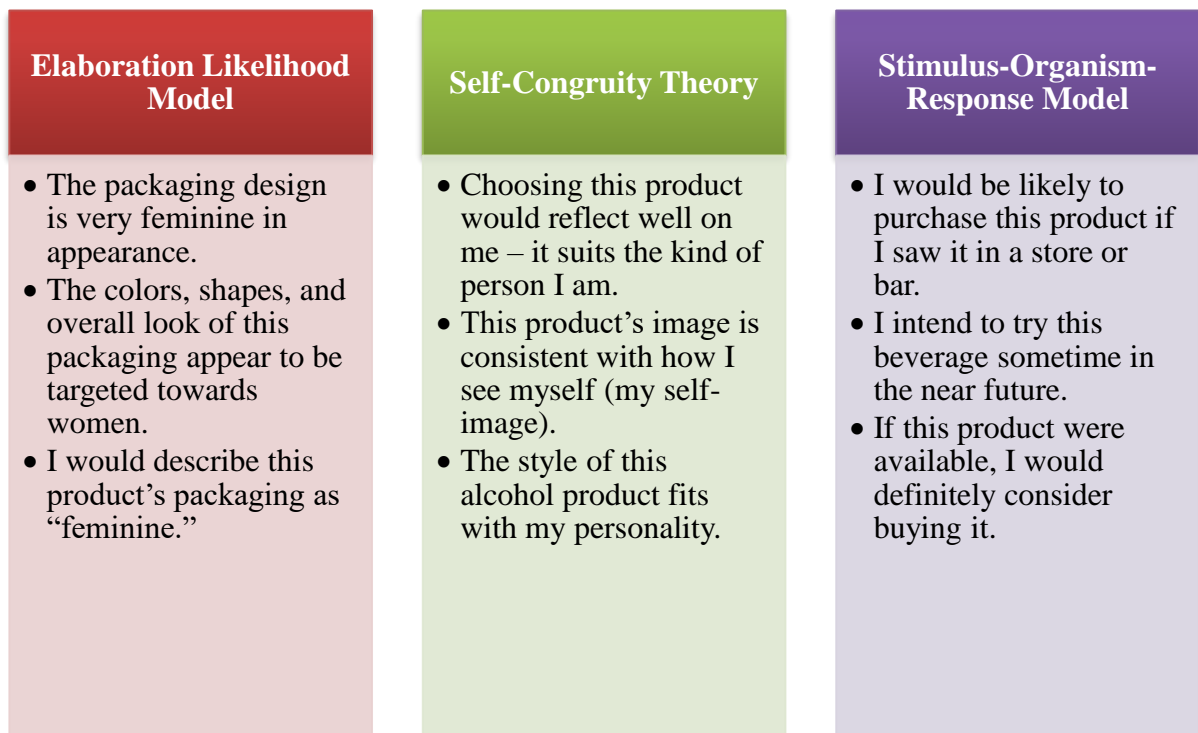


Figure 4. Survey questions mapped to theoretical frameworks (ELM, Self-Congruity, S-O-R)

Source: Compiled by the author

A crucial aspect of our methodology was the selection of alcohol package designs used as stimuli in the survey. We purposefully chose three product pairs and one standalone product with distinctly feminized packaging characteristics, based on theoretical criteria from the literature – including color palette, imagery, typography, and overall aesthetic targeted at women. These stimuli are documented in Appendices A–D:

Moët & Chandon Rosé Impérial vs. Veuve Clicquot Rosé Champagne – two well-known champagne brands with elegant, premium packaging designs. While both exhibit feminized elements (e.g., pink foil, soft tones, floral motifs), Moët’s more minimalistic and stylized aesthetic contrasts with Veuve Clicquot’s use of a warm pink-peach label and ornate script. This comparison allowed us to assess how subtle versus overt feminization affects perceived appeal and self-congruity in luxury products often purchased as gifts or celebratory items.

Taurus Cloudy Lemon Cider vs. Thatchers Cloudy Lemon Cider – two canned cider products designed with similar fruit-forward visuals but diverging in stylistic tone. Taurus uses curved typography, a bull logo, and spacious lemon illustrations with soft accents, presenting a more gender-neutral to slightly feminine feel. In contrast, Thatchers opts for structured text, bold font, and zesty visual cues that might evoke a more traditional or neutral tone. This pair was used to examine whether feminine-coded visual language in affordable, casual drinks subtly influences product preference.

Billson’s Strawberry Gin – a standalone liqueur product featuring strong feminized cues such as a pink bottle, delicate botanical illustrations, and handwritten-style fonts. It is marketed as a craft gin infused with strawberries and botanicals, aligning with feminine indulgence themes identified in the literature. The design prominently emphasizes artisanal and seasonal appeal, presenting a highly aestheticized image likely to appeal to female consumers seeking elegant, lifestyle-driven products.

These examples span three product categories (champagne, cider, and gin) to explore whether feminization effects are consistent across various alcohol types. All products were selected to reflect real-world marketing practices that embed femininity in packaging design – whether through the use of soft color palettes, floral/fruit motifs, gentle typography, or emotionally evocative messaging.

Participants were shown one product pair at a time (or a single item, in the case of Billson’s Gin) and asked to choose which they would prefer in a hypothetical purchase context.

Follow-up questions probed their reasoning and perception of the packaging's femininity, alignment with self-image, and influence on purchasing intentions. This ensured that theoretical concepts such as perceived femininity and self-congruity were not only abstractly measured but applied in realistic decision-making scenarios.

The selection criteria were directly informed by previous research on gendered packaging, which identifies visual elements (color, shape, illustration, typography) as critical cues that construct a feminine product identity (Atkinson et al., 2021; Petersson McIntyre, 2018). By using actual market products rather than mockups, we aimed to replicate real consumer contexts, increasing the ecological validity of the responses. Moreover, by contrasting varying degrees and styles of feminization, the study could examine whether subtle cues or explicitly gendered branding had stronger effects across different alcohol segments.

After compiling the survey instrument, the next step was distributing the survey to gather responses. A purposive sampling strategy was employed to reach the target demographic identified by the research problem. Specifically, the study focused on women consumers aged 18 and above who have experience with alcohol products, since their perceptions of feminized packaging are most relevant. The survey link (Google Forms URL) was disseminated online via social media and university channels. The researcher shared the questionnaire through platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram, including groups and communities frequented by female students and alumni, and also via university chat groups. This online distribution approach was chosen for its convenience and broad reach, enabling quick collection of data from a geographically and socially diverse sample. Participation was completely voluntary – the posts and messages invited anyone meeting the criteria to contribute to the study by filling out the form. To encourage participation, the survey was kept reasonably short, taking about 10–15 minutes, to complete time, and was introduced with a brief description of the study's purpose.

Data collection took place over a defined period of April 11 to April 20, 2025, aligning with the academic timeline for the thesis. Within this 10-day window, the survey accumulated a total of 119 valid responses. Each respondent confirmed at the start that they were female and at least 18 years old, which served as a screening criterion. This sample size was deemed sufficient for an exploratory study of this nature, balancing manageability with enough data points to observe meaningful patterns. The respondents represented a mix of ages (from 18 through mid-50s), owing to the broad online distribution. However, it should be noted that younger women

were likely overrepresented in the sample, given the channels used (many respondents were university students or recent alumni in their 20s and early 30s). This skew toward younger demographics is common in online surveys and will be considered when interpreting the results, especially regarding generalizability. All responses were automatically recorded in a Google Forms spreadsheet, ready for processing in the next stage.

Once the survey closed on April 20, the raw data were downloaded from Google Forms into a Microsoft Excel file for data coding and cleaning. The dataset was first examined for completeness and quality: responses were checked to ensure all required questions were answered; any obviously invalid entries (such as nonsense text in open-ended answers) were reviewed, though none had to be removed in this case. Each survey item was then coded with numerical values to facilitate statistical analysis. For instance, the Likert-scale responses “Strongly Disagree” to “Strongly Agree” were coded from 1 to 5, and multiple-choice questions were assigned numeric labels for each category. Text responses for qualitative questions were kept in their original form but moved to a separate sheet for content analysis. The coding also involved labeling the variables clearly, consistent with the conceptual model. This organizational step in Excel made it easier to identify and select the appropriate columns for different analyses later on. The fully coded spreadsheet effectively transformed participants’ inputs into a structured dataset ready for import into statistical software.

With a cleaned and coded dataset, the study proceeded to the analysis stage using Stata (a statistical analysis program). The Excel file was imported into Stata, and additional data cleaning was performed. Both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed to address the research questions.

First, basic descriptive analyses were run to summarize the data. This included calculating frequencies and percentages for categorical data and computing means and standard deviations for scale variables. These descriptive results provided an overview of the sample characteristics and general attitudes toward feminized packaging.

Before testing, we assessed the internal consistency of multi-item scales. As presented earlier, we grouped survey items into three conceptual scales: feminine packaging perception (three items), self-congruity (three items), and purchase intention (three items). We computed Cronbach’s alpha for each scale.

To examine the relationships between key variables, a correlation matrix was generated. Because many survey items were ordinal Likert-scale measures and not guaranteed to be normally distributed, the Spearman rank-order correlation coefficient was used (Spearman's ρ). This non-parametric approach is appropriate for detecting monotonic relationships between variables like perceived femininity, self-congruity, emotional appeal, and purchase intention. The analysis checked, for instance, whether higher perceived packaging femininity is associated with higher purchase intention, and how self-congruity correlates with emotional appeal, etc. Identifying significant correlations helped validate the hypothesized links in the conceptual model. It also informed the subsequent regression by indicating which variables had the strongest pairwise associations.

To test the predictive power of the identified factors on consumers' purchase intention, a multiple linear regression was conducted. Purchase intention (dependent variable) was regressed on a set of independent variables including perceived femininity of packaging, self-congruity, stereotype perception, and emotional appeal ratings. This allowed the study to see which factors significantly influence the likelihood of purchase when controlling for the others. The regression was run in two models: Model 1 included the core perception variables (femininity, self-congruity, emotional appeal) as predictors, while Model 2 added the stereotype perception variable and a couple of demographic controls (age and frequency of alcohol purchase) to assess any changes in explanatory power. The stepwise modeling was designed based on the theoretical framework – Model 1 representing more direct S-O-R links (visual stimulus and internal responses predicting behavior), and Model 2 accounting for the possible moderating effect of stereotype-related attitudes and basic demographics. The Stata output provided coefficients and significance levels for each predictor. The regression results thus helped identify which aspects of feminized packaging have the strongest influence on consumer choice in this sample.

In addition to overall correlations and regressions, the study performed a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to explore differences in responses across age groups. The sample was divided into age brackets (18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, and 55+) and their mean scores on key variables were compared. This test was motivated by the question of whether younger and older women respond differently to feminized alcohol packaging. Past research hints that consumer perceptions can vary by generation – for instance, younger consumers might be more attuned to or critical of gendered marketing practices (Lyons et al., 2024)The ANOVA

focused on purchase intention and perception scores between age groups to see if any significant disparities emerged. If significant, post-hoc tests (Tukey's HSD) would identify which groups differ. In our results, this analysis would reveal, for example, if the 18–25 age group had a statistically lower purchase intention for very feminine packaging compared to older groups, suggesting a potential generational shift in preferences. No other subgroup analyses were planned, but the age factor was deemed particularly interesting for this topic.

For the open-ended responses, we employed a thematic coding approach. All qualitative comments were exported and read thoroughly. Using a coding framework influenced by the S-O-R model, we identified recurring themes in what participants mentioned (e.g., themes like “Attractive appearance draws me in,” “Feels gimmicky,” “Matches my style,” etc.). We developed a coding scheme where each distinct idea was a code and we marked each response with the relevant codes. Another researchers, such as Atkinson A.M. et al., (2021) and Gangadharbatla & Khedekar (2021), independently coded a subset of responses to ensure reliability of the coding. The codes were then grouped into broader categories corresponding to our theoretical constructs: for example, comments about appearance and “cute” design were linked to peripheral appeal (ELM), comments about “this suits me” were linked to self-congruity, and comments about how the design made them feel were linked to organism reactions (S-O-R). The final coding table (see Appendix G) outlines the identified themes and illustrative quotes from participants. This qualitative data not only enriches our understanding of the numbers but also serves as a validity check – if participants explicitly say a design influenced them or not, it helps interpret the quantitative findings.

Throughout the data collection and analysis process, ethical considerations were rigorously observed. At the start of the Google Forms survey, an informed consent statement briefed participants about the purpose of the research, what participation entailed, and their rights as respondents. Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they could skip any question or exit the survey at any point. They had to explicitly agree that they consented to participate before proceeding to the questions. The survey was designed to be anonymous – no names, contact details, or any direct identifiers were collected. Instead, respondents were only identified by non-identifiable attributes like age or general background information. This anonymity and lack of personal data ensured confidentiality: individual responses cannot be traced back to any person. All data have been stored securely and reported

only in aggregate form (summary statistics or anonymized quotes), in line with academic ethics guidelines. The study also took care to avoid sensitive or invasive questions: aside from age and gender (which were central to the sampling criteria), other demographic questions were kept broad, and respondents could opt out of answering if they felt uncomfortable. By adhering to these ethical standards – including obtaining informed consent, guaranteeing respondent anonymity, and ensuring the right to withdraw – the research upheld the principles of respect and integrity in human-subject research. Moreover, the content of the survey itself was reviewed to avoid any biased or leading language, aiming for objectivity especially on potentially sensitive topics like gender stereotypes. Participants were debriefed at the end of the questionnaire with a message thanking them and providing contact information for the researcher, should they have any questions or wish to know the results once the study is completed.

In this methodology section, we detailed how the research was designed and carried out. We used a mixed-method approach, deploying an online survey that captured both quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback from a purposive sample of 119 adult female consumers. The survey instrument was carefully constructed to align with theoretical frameworks (ELM, S-O-R, Self-Congruity), with each question serving a specific analytical purpose. We justified key choices, such as using a 5-point Likert scale for its commonality and reliability in attitude measurement. The alcohol package stimuli were selected based on real-world examples of feminized design to ensure authenticity and relevance. We collected data over a defined period and then applied rigorous analysis techniques: checking scale reliability, computing descriptive and inferential statistics, and coding open-ended responses for themes. The methodology was designed to be robust, marrying breadth and depth – statistical power with interpretive insight. With this foundation, we now turn to the results of the study, where we present what we found and discuss what those findings mean in light of the theories and prior research.

2.2 Results and discussion of the empirical study on the feminized alcohol package design: role in product choice

This section presents the findings from the survey and interprets them in the context of our research questions. We first report quantitative results (descriptive statistics, correlations, regression analyses, ANOVA) followed by insights from qualitative responses. Throughout, we connect these results back to the theoretical frameworks (ELM, S-O-R, Self-Congruity) to explain the patterns observed. To maintain clarity, each portion of results is followed by a brief

discussion before moving to the next set of findings. We begin with an overview of how the survey questions mapped to our theoretical constructs to remind the reader of the alignment between what was measured and our conceptual model.

The survey results reveal a nuanced picture of how feminized alcohol packaging influences consumer perceptions and choices. Both the quantitative data and qualitative responses are considered here in tandem, providing a comprehensive view. To ensure theoretical alignment with the study's objectives, the survey items were deliberately designed based on the three key frameworks: the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), Self-Congruity Theory, and the Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model. Each item in the questionnaire reflects a specific theoretical construct, allowing for a structured empirical examination. Figure 4 (see subchapter 2.1) summarizes how each question corresponds to its respective model and the conceptual focus it represents. This alignment ensured that the data collected not only reflect participant perceptions but are also theoretically grounded and analytically useful, enabling us to test the ideas outlined in Chapter 1 against real consumer feedback.

Firstly, the author has assessed the reliability of the measurement tools, given that some of the items were adapted or newly formulated for the purpose of this study. As shown in Table 3, all three subscales demonstrated Cronbach's Alpha values above 0.7, indicating an acceptable to high level of internal consistency. Specifically, the feminine packaging perception, self-congruity, and purchase intention scales all exceeded the threshold commonly used in social science research (Cho & Kim, 2014). This confirms that the constructs measured by the survey items are internally coherent and reliable for further analysis.

Table 3

Reliability analysis of measurement tools

Factor	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Feminine packaging perception	,92	3
Self-congruity	,90	3
Purchase intention	,88	3

Source: Compiled by author based on survey results

Next, we examine the descriptive statistics of the studied variables (each survey item). These statistics provide a general overview of how respondents rated the feminized packaging and their reactions to it. The detailed descriptive results for each item are provided in Table 4.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of studied variables

Variable	Mean	Median	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Feminine appearance	3.84	4.00	1.02	1	5
Targeted at women	3.73	4.00	1.17	1	5
Feminine label	3.70	4.00	1.23	1	5
Self match	3.15	3.00	1.05	1	5
Self image	2.89	3.00	1.10	1	5
Personality fit	2.97	3.00	1.20	1	5
Likely to purchase	3.47	3.00	0.92	1	5
Intent to try	3.20	3.00	1.09	1	5
Consider buying	3.33	3.00	1.02	1	5

Note: N=119

Source: Compiled by author based on survey results

In summary, respondents on average agreed that the packaging looked feminine: for example, the statement “The packaging design is very feminine in appearance” had a mean rating around 3.8 out of 5 (with a median of 4, indicating many agreed) and a standard deviation of about 1.0. Similarly, they agreed that the packaging appeared targeted at women (mean

roughly 3.7–3.8). These high means (on a 5-point scale) confirm that the stimuli successfully conveyed a feminine aesthetic as intended.

On the self-congruity items, the average ratings were closer to the midpoint of the scale. Participants were more neutral to moderately positive about statements like “Choosing this product would reflect well on me” (means in the range of ~3.0–3.3). This suggests a split: some women saw the feminized product as a good match for them, while others did not particularly identify with it. The spread (standard deviations around 1.0) indicates considerable individual differences in self-congruity perceptions, which is consistent with our expectation that this is a personal factor likely varying by individual values and style.

For the purchase intention items, averages were also around the midpoint to slightly above. For instance, “I would be likely to purchase this product if I saw it in a store” had a mean of roughly 3.4–3.5, and “I would definitely consider buying it” had a similar mean (~3.5). Medians for some intention items were 4 (e.g., many said they “agree” they would consider buying), reflecting a generally positive inclination, but not an overwhelmingly strong one. This indicates that while the feminine packaging was appealing, not everyone was ready to commit to a purchase unequivocally. There was some hesitation or ambivalence, as also seen in the qualitative comments. In all cases, the minimum and maximum values spanned the full range (1 to 5), showing that every response option was used by at least one participant – again highlighting the diversity of opinions. These descriptive findings already hint at our main questions: the packaging is clearly perceived as feminine by most, but does that translate to actual willingness to buy? To answer that, we turn to the correlational and regression analyses.

Before examining specific relationships, it is noted that not all participants answered every item. The effective sample for some analyses is slightly smaller, $N=111$ for the correlation analysis in Table 5. This is due to a few incomplete responses, but the sample size remains robust for detecting medium-sized effects. Given the ordinal Likert-scale data and slight deviations from normality in some item distributions, Spearman’s rank-order correlation was used instead of Pearson’s, as noted in Table 5. This choice ensures a more appropriate assessment of monotonic relationships between the constructs. The correlation matrix (Table 5) provides insight into how perceptions co-vary.

Table 5

Spearman Correlations Between Studied Variables

Factor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Feminine appearance	1.00								
2. Targeted at women	0.73**	1.00							
3. Feminine label	0.72**	0.81**	1.00						
4. Self match	0.25*	0.22*	0.21*	1.00					
5. Self image	0.23*	0.25*	0.20*	0.77**	1.00				
6. Personality fit	0.21*	0.28**	0.23*	0.71**	0.81**	1.00			
7. Likely to purchase	-0.02	0.13	-0.00	0.42**	0.33**	0.33**	1.00		
8. Intent to try	0.02	0.13	0.08	0.44**	0.41**	0.39**	0.64**	1.00	
9. Consider buying	0.07	0.27**	0.18	0.42**	0.36**	0.39**	0.71**	0.74**	1.00

Note: N = 111. Spearman's rank correlation used. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Source: Compiled by author based on survey results.

As expected, the three measures of perceived packaging femininity (appearance, “targeted at women” look, and feminine label) are strongly intercorrelated ($r \approx 0.72\text{--}0.81$, $p < .01$), essentially confirming they tap a single underlying factor of “feminine packaging perception.” Likewise, the three self-congruity items (self-match, self-image, personality fit) correlate highly with each other ($r \approx 0.71\text{--}0.81$, $p < .01$), forming a distinct cluster. These

patterns indicate good internal consistency within each set of measures (packaging femininity and self-congruity respectively). The three purchase intention items also show substantial inter-correlation ($r \approx 0.64\text{--}0.74$, $p < .01$), suggesting they capture a unified construct of purchase propensity. Notably, the between-construct correlations were more muted. Perceiving the packaging as very feminine showed essentially no linear association with one's likelihood of purchase (for "feminine appearance," $r = -0.02$ with purchase likelihood). The majority of correlations between the femininity indicators and the intention measures were small and non-significant. The only statistically significant linkage was a modest positive correlation between the packaging being seen as aimed at women and the item "would consider buying" ($r \approx 0.27$, $p < .01$). This hints that when participants felt the branding was explicitly targeting them as female consumers, they were slightly more open to considering the product – but overall, the direct impact of perceiving a design as feminine on purchase intent appears limited.

In contrast, the self-congruity perceptions demonstrated moderate, significant correlations with purchase intentions. For example, feeling that "choosing this product would reflect well on me (suits the kind of person I am)" was moderately associated with likelihood to purchase ($r \approx 0.42$, $p < .01$), as well as with intentions to try and to buy the product in future (all r 's in the $0.33\text{--}0.44$ range, $p < .01$). In short, respondents who saw the product's image as matching their self-image or personality tended to express a higher willingness to purchase. These correlational patterns suggest that personal relevance (self-congruity) is more strongly linked to behavioral intention than merely noticing a feminine design. The feminized packaging by itself did not guarantee desire for the product. What mattered more was whether that packaging and product resonated with the consumer's identity or not. This is a critical point to which we will return later.

To further probe causality and control for overlap between predictors, regression analyses were conducted. Table 6 presents a multiple regression (Model 1) predicting the composite purchase intention (an index combining the three intention items) from five key independent variables. These predictors included two measures representing perception of the packaging's femininity ("feminine appearance" and "feminine label" – the third was excluded to avoid multicollinearity due to the high intercorrelation) and three measures of self-congruity ("self-match," "self-image," and "personality fit").

Table 6

Regression Analysis – Model 1

Variable	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t
Feminine appearance	-0.014	0.124	-0.12	0.90
Feminine label	-0.087	0.102	-0.86	0.39
Self match	0.295*	0.126	2.35	0.02
Self image	0.013	0.144	0.09	0.93
Personality fit	0.106	0.114	0.93	0.36
Constant	2.534**	0.351	7.22	0.000

Note: Model summary: $R^2 = .202$, Adjusted $R^2 = .165$, $F(5, 108) = 5.47$, $p = .0002$

Source: Compiled by author based on survey results.

The regression results reinforce the bivariate findings. Model 1 was statistically significant overall ($F(5,108) = 5.47$, $p = .0002$) and explained about 20% of the variance in purchase intention ($R^2 = .202$), indicating a decent model fit for a consumer behavior study.

However, most of that explanatory power came from the self-congruity domain. Out of the five predictors, the only significant predictor was “self-match” – the belief that choosing the product suits the kind of person one is ($\beta = 0.295$, $p = .02$). Participants who felt the product aligned with their identity were significantly more likely to intend to buy it, holding other factors constant.

None of the packaging-femininity indicators showed a significant effect; for instance, perceived feminine appearance had a near-zero coefficient ($\beta = -0.014$, $p = .90$), and a highly feminine label design also had no significant impact ($\beta = -0.087$, $p = .39$) once self-congruity was accounted for. In fact, the negative signs on those coefficients suggest that if anything, extremely feminine styling might slightly dampen purchase probability for some, though we cannot be confident in that given $p > .3$.

The other self-congruity items (“consistent with my self-image” and “fits my personality”) likewise did not reach significance when self-match was in the model, likely due to multicollinearity – these three self-related predictors are conceptually overlapping.

Model 2 (Table 7) presents a streamlined regression including only the strongest predictor (self-match) and one packaging-perception variable (“feminine label”) to see if a more parsimonious model yields any different insight.

Table 7

Regression Analysis – Model 2

Variable	Coefficient	Std. err.	t	P> t
Self match	0.382**	0.075	5.10	0.000
Feminine label	-0.092	0.064	-1.43	0.156
Constant	2.590**	0.308	8.40	0.000

Note: Model summary: $R^2 = .187$, Adjusted $R^2 = .172$, $F(2, 114) = 13.07$, $p < .001$,

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Source: Compiled by author based on survey results.

The outcome was that self-match remained a highly significant predictor ($\beta = 0.382$, $p < .01$), while the packaging femininity term remained non-significant ($\beta = -0.092$, $p = .16$). This two-predictor model explained about 18.7% of variance (adj. $R^2 = .172$), virtually all of it attributable to the self-congruity effect.

In summary, the regressions confirm that a consumer’s identification with the product (“does it match me?”) is far more influential in driving purchase intention than merely perceiving the packaging as feminine or not. The feminized design elements by themselves did not significantly induce people to want the product once personal alignment was considered. This finding is important: it suggests that feminized packaging works primarily by creating or enhancing a sense of self-congruence for the consumer, rather than as an independent driver of desire. In practical terms, a pretty bottle might get a shopper’s attention, but the shopper will

decide to buy if — and only if — she feels that product is “for her” in a deeper sense. This nuance might explain why some gendered marketing campaigns succeed (they resonate with their intended audience’s identity) while others fail (consumers see them as superficial or irrelevant to who they are).

It is important to clarify that our regression analysis, while useful for identifying relationships, does not establish causality. The wording in our plan to “probe causality” was metaphorical; as this is a cross-sectional survey, we can only infer associations, not prove cause-and-effect. The regression coefficients show how variables move together when controlling for others, but they do not mean that increasing someone’s self-congruity will cause a higher purchase intent in a strict sense – it could be that women already inclined to buy are also likely to say it suits them (reverse influence), or both could be influenced by a third factor. That said, the theoretical framework and temporal logic (perceptions and identity leading to intent) give us some confidence in a directional interpretation, but caution is warranted. Ultimately, these statistical models support our theoretical reasoning but should not be over-interpreted as causal proof.

In addition to the primary analyses, this study also explored whether demographic characteristics, particularly age, moderated consumer responses to feminized alcohol packaging. To investigate this, a one-way ANOVA test was conducted to examine whether purchase intentions significantly differed across various age groups (see Table 8). Participants were divided into five distinct age brackets (18–24, 25–34, 35–44, 45–54, and 55+). The aim was to determine whether younger or older respondents were more receptive to feminized packaging cues. This analysis provided insights into potential generational differences in perception and responsiveness, contributing to a more segmented understanding of packaging effectiveness.

The analysis found no statistically significant differences in purchase intention across age categories ($F(4,113) = 0.72, p = 0.58$). Younger adults in the sample were about as likely as older adults to say they would purchase or try the product. This non-finding persisted even though one might expect generational differences in attitudes toward gendered marketing.

Table 8

ANOVA Summary of Purchase Intention by Age Group

Dependent Variable	Grouping Factor	F	df (between, within)	p-value	Bartlett's test (p)
Purchase intention	Age group	0.72	(4, 113)	0.58	0.841

Note: N = 119. Differences between age groups were not statistically significant. Bartlett's test confirmed homogeneity of variance ($p = .841$).

Source: Compiled by author based on ANOVA test

Notably, the assumption of equal variances was met (Bartlett's test $p = 0.841$), so the lack of difference is not due to high variance or unequal spread. Rather, it appears that within this sample of primarily female consumers, age was not a determining factor – the appeal (or lack thereof) of the feminized packaging transcended age boundaries. This could imply that cultural exposure to gendered marketing has been pervasive enough across recent generations that women of various ages respond in similar ways. Alternatively, it may reflect the sample's composition (the survey, being online, skewed towards younger respondents, with fewer in older categories, possibly limiting power to detect differences). In any case, we did not observe any significant generational split in how feminized alcohol packaging influenced purchase propensity. Similarly, (as checked via post-hoc tests, not tabulated) there were no notable differences by self-reported drinking frequency – frequent and infrequent drinkers did not significantly differ in their pattern of responses to the packaging, suggesting the results are broadly applicable across different consumer segments within the sample. All these results are integrated and interpreted below through the lens of the theoretical frameworks and prior literature discussed earlier.

Having covered the quantitative outcomes, we now turn to the qualitative findings to gain deeper insight into why respondents reacted as they did. The open-ended responses in the survey were illuminating. A detailed coding table is provided in Appendix G, but here we discuss the key themes that emerged and relate them back to our theoretical framework and quantitative results.

All qualitative responses were systematically coded, and several recurring themes were identified:

Attraction to Aesthetics. Many participants commented on the visual appeal of the feminized packaging using words like “eye-catching,” “cute,” “pretty,” or “stylish.” For instance, one respondent wrote, *“I picked the rosé because the bottle looks so elegant and feminine – it’s just more attractive to me.”* This theme corresponds to the ELM notion of peripheral cues and the Stimulus in S-O-R: the stimulus was generating a positive affective reaction (organism state) of liking. These comments help explain the moderately high agreement on packaging being attractive and the initial impulse to choose it in the scenario. Some described the packaging as “premium-looking”, linking it to perceived quality – an example of the halo effect where a nice design made them assume the product was better. As one noted, *“It looks more expensive and classy, so I’d rather bring that one.”* This aligns with what our quantitative results showed: many were drawn in by the packaging (ELM’s peripheral effect), though as we saw, that alone didn’t ensure they’d buy it without self-congruity. Still, on a surface level, the aesthetic attraction theme confirms that the feminized packages did succeed in capturing interest.

Personal Identification. Another set of comments dealt with whether the respondent felt the product was “for me.” Some explicitly mentioned self-congruity, saying things like *“This drink fits my style”* or *“I could see myself buying this because it matches my personality – fun and feminine.”* These statements come from those who had high self-congruity, which quantitatively drove their purchase intention. Conversely, a number of participants expressed the opposite, along the lines of: *“This packaging is cute, but it’s not really me. I prefer more neutral designs.”* Or even stronger, *“I find it too girly; I’m not that kind of person, so I wouldn’t buy it.”* These remarks map directly to Self-Congruity Theory – they demonstrate how crucial identity alignment is. They also illustrate why the correlation and regression highlighted self-congruity’s role: if a consumer didn’t see herself in the product, the attractive design alone fell flat or even repelled her. This division in the responses (some feeling it suits them, others feeling it doesn’t) explains the only moderate average ratings on self-congruity items and why self-congruity has variation that predicts outcomes.

Perceived Marketing Motive (Skepticism). A noteworthy theme was skepticism or cynicism about the marketing tactic. A subset of respondents saw the feminized packaging as a marketing ploy and reacted negatively because of that. For example, one said, *“They just made it*

pink to get women to buy it – that annoys me because it feels forced.” Another mentioned, *“It’s a bit patronizing; I don’t need a pink cider.”* These sentiments echo criticisms in marketing literature that gendered packaging can backfire by seeming reductive. From an S-O-R perspective, for these consumers the stimulus (feminine design) triggered a negative organism state (annoyance or skepticism), leading to a negative response (avoidance). This theme helps contextualize why not everyone who recognized the femininity of the design was swayed positively – some were put off precisely because they recognized the strategy and didn’t like it. It’s an important qualitative insight that complements the quantitative finding of no overall strong effect of feminine design on purchase intention: the positive influence for some may have been canceled out by negative reactions from others. As one participant succinctly put, *“I see what they’re trying to do, but it doesn’t make me want it more – if anything, less.”*

Situational Use and Social Impression. Some responses highlighted that the appeal of the feminized design depended on context. For example, a respondent noted she would choose the feminine bottle *“for a girls’ night or as a gift to a girlfriend, because it looks fun and girly,”* but maybe not for other occasions. Others said the design *“would look nice on a party table”* or *“on Instagram,”* implying a social/display value. This suggests that the social context can mediate the response: the same person might appreciate the packaging in one scenario but not care in another. This nuance doesn’t fully appear in the quantitative data (since the scenario was somewhat generalized), but it’s useful for interpretation – it implies that marketers might succeed with feminized packaging particularly in products meant for social, gift, or celebratory contexts. It also ties to Self-Congruity in a collective sense: some women might align with the product when envisioning certain social roles (like being a good friend who brings a pretty bottle to an event).

Attention to Detail vs. Ignoring Information. Another interesting theme was that visual design dominated attention. Very few participants mentioned anything about product details like flavor, alcohol content, or price. As one noted, *“I didn’t even check what kind of wine it is, I just liked the bottle.”* This reinforces prior research (Coomber et al., 2015) that packaging visuals often overshadow textual or informational content. This was consistent across many responses: the stimulus (visual cues) drove their organism reactions, whereas factual details were secondary or unnoticed. This theme underscores the power of packaging aesthetics in shaping first impressions and supports the notion that packaging acts as a “silent salesman” at point of sale (it

speaks through design, not words). It also justifies why our focus on visual perception in the survey was warranted.

Quality and Taste Assumptions. Several participants made assumptions about quality or taste based on the feminized design. For example, one associated the elegant design with a higher-end product: *“The bottle looks premium, so I assume it tastes better.”* Another assumed a pink bottle indicated a sweet, fruity taste (which she liked or disliked depending on the person). These assumptions show that packaging can create an expectation halo, which can be positive or negative. Some who liked sweet drinks were drawn in thinking “this will be sweet and I like that,” whereas others who prefer dry drinks might avoid it for the same reason. Such effects are part of the organism response – cognitive interpretations triggered by the stimulus. They are a reminder that packaging can serve as a proxy for product attributes in consumers’ minds, rightly or wrongly.

To illustrate these qualitative insights with a specific example from our data: in the scenario question where respondents chose between two products, a majority chose the one with the more feminized, attractive packaging. One participant, choosing a rosé champagne with well-known packaging over an alternative, explained, *“It looks more attractive and expensive, which makes me think it’s better suited for a celebration.”* Here we see multiple layers: the aesthetic appeal (ELM peripheral cue) caught her eye, it created a perception of higher quality (halo effect), and she linked it to the occasion (perhaps aligning with her identity as a good host or someone who brings nice things to a celebration – a bit of self-congruity in a role sense). On the other hand, another participant who did not choose the this option said, *“The Moet bottle is cute but it feels a bit gimmicky to me; I’d rather choose something based on taste.”* This individual was less swayed by peripheral cues and perhaps more of a central-route processor, or simply someone who didn’t personally resonate with the feminine branding. These contrasting narratives from the qualitative data flesh out the aggregate statistical story.

Now, tying everything back to our theoretical frameworks: The ELM was evident in how the feminized packaging functioned as a peripheral cue – it drew attention and generated initial positive impressions (for many, though not all), consistent with the idea that in low-involvement situations packaging aesthetics can shape attitudes. However, as ELM would predict, those peripheral impressions alone were not always enough for a decisive effect on behavior; if the consumer’s motivations or deeper evaluations kicked in, they might override the peripheral

appeal. Our finding that packaging perception didn't strongly correlate with purchase intent supports this nuance – many noticed and liked the design, but other factors determined the final intention.

The S-O-R model provided a useful framework to interpret the divergent internal reactions (organism states). Our results and comments showed that the same stimulus (a very feminine bottle) led to different organism responses across individuals: some experienced positive emotions (excitement, delight) and identification, while others felt indifference or aversion (Atkinson et al., 2024). This aligns with S-O-R's premise that the effect of a stimulus is mediated by internal states which can vary by person. It explained why our overall effect of the stimulus was modest – the aggregate outcome was muted because positive and negative internal reactions coexisted and effectively canceled out when averaged (we saw weak net effects in stats). But when we segment by internal response type (via self-congruity measures), we saw clear differences: those with positive internal alignment went toward purchase; those without it did not. S-O-R also reminds us that environmental stimuli like packaging can be powerful, but context and individual mindsets determine the response. In our study, factors like the individual's personal style, her awareness of marketing tactics, and the use context all influenced the organism state provoked by the packaging, thus altering the behavioral outcome. This dynamic was evident in our qualitative data and in the self-congruity interaction.

Finally, Self-Congruity Theory came through as perhaps the most critical lens for our findings. It was quantitatively the strongest predictor and qualitatively a recurring theme. The theory was validated by our results: the alignment of the product's image with the consumer's self-concept was the pivotal factor in driving purchase intentions. Those participants who felt "this product is like me" exhibited far greater willingness to buy. This underscores a key point for marketers: feminized packaging will be effective primarily among those consumers whose identity aligns with what the packaging represents. It's not a one-size-fits-all solution – it appeals to a specific segment (which, indeed, might be large within the female demographic but is not universal). Our findings resonate strongly with prior research and Self-Congruity Theory's prediction that self-image congruence fosters positive attitudes and behavior. Gangadharbatla and Khedekar (2021) similarly noted that feminized packaging aligns with traditional female norms but may alienate consumers seeking more inclusivity. In our study, the women who did not see the packaging as fitting them could be interpreted as those seeking a broader, less gender-

prescriptive branding – they may have preferred a neutral or unisex appeal rather than one that felt “reductive or exclusionary” as Sirgy (2018) cautions. They also highlight a limitation: if a brand uses feminized design, it may need to accept that it will not appeal to all women (and certainly not to men, though they were outside our scope), but rather to those who identify with that feminine image. In fact, our data suggest it could alienate others, so it’s a double-edged sword – something we’ll discuss in limitations.

Before concluding, it’s important to discuss some limitations of our study and the application of the theoretical models. One limitation is the reliance on self-reported data. We interpreted responses through ELM and S-O-R, but we did not directly measure certain processes (we infer attention from what they said, but we did not use eye-tracking or physiological measures). The lack of direct attention measurement means we assume the packaging caught their eye based on outcomes, but a tool like eye-tracking could have confirmed exactly how long and where they looked. Without it, we rely on participants’ descriptions and our theoretical understanding. Another limitation is that our survey presented static images and hypothetical scenarios – real-world behavior might differ. For example, a respondent might say she intends to buy the product, but in a real store she could be swayed by price promotions or peer influence. Similarly, our measure of purchase intention is not the same as observing actual purchase behavior; it establishes correlation, not concrete causation.

In terms of model application, while we integrated three frameworks, we acknowledge that human behavior is complex and not fully explained by these alone. For instance, ELM in reality might involve more interaction between central and peripheral cues than we captured – a participant might have considered some product information (central route) that we didn’t present in detail. The S-O-R model in our study was somewhat simplified. We measured internal states via self-congruity primarily, but there could have been other internal responses (mood, arousal) at play we didn’t explicitly measure. Also, our Self-Congruity measure was focused on the individual’s self-image. We did not differentiate between actual self-concept and ideal self-concept. Some consumers might have been responding in terms of who they want to be (ideal self) rather than who they are, which is a nuance of the theory.

Our sample’s composition is also a limitation for generalizing: as noted, it skewed young and educated. This likely means the results are most applicable to a younger female demographic. Younger consumers might be more accustomed to or tolerant of modern marketing

tactics (or conversely, more sensitive to pandering – one can theorize either way). The overrepresentation of this group means we must be careful extrapolating to all female consumers. For example, older women might have different reactions that we simply didn't capture well due to small numbers in our sample (though we didn't find a difference, as discussed). This sampling bias (more than half of respondents were under 35) limits the generalizability of our findings to the broader population of female alcohol consumers. It suggests that marketers should be cautious; what seems to work or not work in a college-town environment might play out differently in other segments.

Additionally, while we attempted to select diverse product examples, all were within a fairly narrow cultural context (brands available in our region, Western marketing aesthetics). Cultural differences could mean that what is considered “feminine” in packaging varies globally – for instance, colors like gold or red might be seen as feminine and luxurious in some cultures, versus pink in others. Our theoretical conclusions should thus be considered within a cultural context. The fundamental ideas likely hold, but specific design elements might have different meanings elsewhere.

Despite limitations, the results yield valuable insights. For marketers in the alcohol industry, our study suggests that simply making packaging “girly” is not a guarantee of success. It can attract attention and can be effective if it resonates with the target consumer's identity, so brands should research their audience's self-perceptions carefully. A one-dimensional approach (e.g., just slapping a pink label) might be seen through and could backfire. Instead, marketers might focus on authenticity and brand storytelling that aligns with feminine values without stereotyping. For example, highlighting qualities like elegance or empowerment rather than just using superficial cues might foster self-congruity in a more genuine way.

From a theoretical standpoint, our integration of ELM, S-O-R, and Self-Congruity proved fruitful. It showed that these models are complementary: ELM explained the attention and initial attitude, S-O-R framed the process of internal reaction, and Self-Congruity pinpointed a key driver of final behavior. Researchers studying consumer behavior can benefit from using such a multi-lens approach. However, applying multiple models also reveals the complexity – one needs to be careful not to oversimplify (e.g., assuming a pretty package will always increase sales, which ELM alone might lead one to believe if context is ignored). Our findings advocate for a more segmented and psychological approach to marketing strategies: understanding not just the

“average consumer” but how different consumers (even within the same demographic group) might internalize a design in line with or against their self-concept.

In terms of societal implications, feminized packaging in alcohol raises questions about gender norms in marketing. Some of our participants clearly felt alienated by traditionally gendered cues. This suggests a growing segment of consumers, especially younger ones, who may prefer more inclusive or gender-neutral branding. Companies might consider that the future of marketing to women doesn't always have to be pink and floral – there could be subtler ways to signal understanding of female consumers without resorting to clichés. On the other hand, the popularity of some feminine-designed brands indicates that there is nothing inherently wrong with catering to traditionally feminine tastes – as long as it's done respectfully and as one option among many. The key is consumer choice: offering products that appeal to different identities without implying that one size fits all. Our research highlights that diversity even within a gender group; marketers who acknowledge that diversity may avoid the pitfall of alienation.

Conclusion

The present thesis set out to examine the role of feminized alcohol package designs in shaping product choice, with a particular focus on the mechanisms through which such packaging influences consumer perceptions and behaviors. Throughout this research, I have examined the distinctive characteristics of feminized packaging, analyzed the relevance of key consumer behavior theories, and considered both the marketing effectiveness and ethical implications of gendered design strategies in the alcohol industry.

The findings of this study confirm that packaging is a critical driver of consumer behavior in the alcohol sector, functioning as a “silent salesman” that communicates brand identity and values at the point of sale (Liu et al., 2025). Feminized alcohol packaging—characterized by soft pastel colors, floral motifs, elegant typography, and delicate shapes—has become a prominent marketing strategy aimed at attracting female consumers. These visual cues are not arbitrary; rather, they are deeply rooted in cultural associations with femininity and are deliberately employed to evoke emotional responses, create brand differentiation, and stimulate purchase intent.

Through the lens of the Elaboration Likelihood Model, this thesis demonstrates that feminized packaging often acts as a peripheral cue, shaping attitudes and decisions in low-involvement purchase situations. When consumers are not highly motivated to engage in detailed

evaluation, the aesthetic appeal and symbolic associations of feminized packaging can generate favorable impressions, leading to impulse purchases or brand preference. This effect is further reinforced by the “halo effect,” where attractive packaging elevates perceptions of product quality, even in the absence of substantive information.

The Stimulus–Organism–Response (S-O-R) model provides additional insight into the psychological mechanisms at play. In this framework, the feminized packaging serves as a stimulus that triggers internal cognitive and emotional states—such as feelings of excitement, indulgence, or identification with the brand—which then drive the behavioral response of purchasing the product. The research indicates that these internal organism states are highly individualized; while some consumers respond positively to feminized cues, others may feel alienated or even repelled by overtly gendered marketing.

Self-Congruity Theory further clarifies why feminized packaging is effective for certain segments. Consumers are more likely to choose products that align with their self-concept or desired identity. Feminized alcohol packaging, by mirroring traditional symbols of femininity, can foster a sense of self-congruity among women who identify with these traits. However, this same strategy can backfire among consumers who reject gender stereotypes or do not see themselves reflected in such imagery, resulting in self-incongruity and reduced purchase likelihood.

While the marketing advantages of feminized packaging are clear, this thesis also highlights significant ethical and societal concerns. Gendered packaging risks reinforcing traditional stereotypes and may inadvertently exclude non-binary individuals or those who do not conform to conventional gender roles. The perpetuation of such binaries through product design raises important questions about inclusivity and the social responsibility of marketers. As the literature review revealed, there is a growing call within both academia and industry for more ethical and inclusive marketing practices that reflect the diversity of contemporary consumers.

The empirical findings of this thesis, supported by both theoretical analysis and consumer insights, suggest that feminized alcohol packaging is a double-edged sword. On one hand, it remains a powerful tool for segmenting the market and appealing to specific consumer groups. On the other hand, its reliance on stereotypical gender cues can limit a brand’s appeal and contribute to broader societal issues related to gender representation. For alcohol brands seeking

to remain competitive and relevant, the challenge lies in balancing targeted marketing with a commitment to inclusivity and ethical responsibility.

Based on these findings, I offer several recommendations for further research. First, future studies should explore the role of non-binary and gender-neutral packaging designs to assess their effectiveness in appealing to a broader range of consumers. Second, cross-cultural research would provide valuable insights into how feminized packaging is perceived in different societal contexts, particularly in non-Western markets where cultural associations with gender may differ. Third, longitudinal studies tracking consumer attitudes over time could shed light on the long-term effects of exposure to gendered marketing. Finally, intersectional approaches that consider the interplay between gender, age, socioeconomic status, and other demographic factors would enrich our understanding of how packaging influences product choice across diverse consumer segments.

In response to the central research question — whether feminized alcohol packaging effectively influences product choice — the findings of this study reveal a nuanced answer. Feminized packaging does not directly drive purchase intention; instead, it functions effectively only when it resonates with the consumer's self-concept. In other words, feminized packaging "works" only if the consumer perceives the product as aligned with her identity and values. Without this alignment, even visually attractive packaging fails to translate into purchase behavior. This insight underscores the importance of identity-based segmentation and highlights the limitations of relying solely on gendered aesthetics in marketing strategy.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Barton & Guestier Reserve Rosé (75 cl) – Product Image



Source: Selver. (n.d.). *Barton & Guestier Reserve Rosé 75 cl*. Selver. Retrieved March 14, 2025, from <https://www.selver.ee/ru/barton-guestier-reserve-rose-75-cl>

Appendix B

Baileys Irish Cream Liqueur (70 cl) – Product Image



Source: Selver. (n.d.). *Liqueur Baileys Irish Cream 70 cl*. Selver. Retrieved March 14, 2025, from <https://www.selver.ee/ru/likoor-baileys-irish-cream-70-cl>

Appendix C

BrewDog Pink IPA – Product Image



Source: Hampton, R. (2018, March 7). *BrewDog's failed "satirical" Pink IPA shows why brands shouldn't try to be woke*. Slate. Retrieved March 14, 2025, from <https://slate.com/human-interest/2018/03/brewdogs-pink-ipa-shows-why-brands-shouldnt-be-woke.html>

Appendix D


Johnnie Walker The Jane Edition Black Label 12 Year Old – Product Image



Source: Wine-Searcher. (n.d.). *Johnnie Walker The Jane Edition Black Label 12 Year Old Blended Scotch Whisky, Scotland*. Wine-Searcher. Retrieved March 14, 2025, from <https://www.wine-searcher.com/find/johnny+walker+the+jane+edition+black+twelve+old+blend+scotch+whisky+cotland/1/estonia>

Appendix E

Visual Layout of the Online Survey




FEMINIZED ALCOHOL PACKAGE DESIGNS: ROLE IN PRODUCT CHOICE.

Dear Participant,

Thank you for your interest in this research study.

My name is Viktoriia Rieka, and I am a final-year Bachelor's student at the University of Tartu, School of Economics and Business Administration. As part of my thesis titled **"Feminized Alcohol Package Designs: Role in Product Choice,"** I am conducting a survey to explore how women perceive and respond to alcohol products that feature feminized packaging.

 **Confidentiality and Ethics**

Your responses are **anonymous** and will be used strictly for academic purposes. Participation is completely **voluntary**, and you may skip any question or stop at any time. No personal identifiers will be collected.


By continuing, you confirm that:

- You are **18 years or older**
- You **identify as female**
- You voluntarily agree to participate in this academic research

If you have any questions about this study, feel free to contact me at:
viktorii.rieka@ut.ee

Thank you for your time and contribution — your insights are essential to understanding how alcohol branding can become more inclusive, ethical, and consumer-friendly.

Imagine that you are shopping for an alcoholic beverage for yourself or as a gift. Please evaluate the product shown below — based only on the **visual design and packaging appearance** (not the content or brand name).



Source: Compiled by the author

Appendix F

Measurement Tools Used in the Survey

Measurement Tools

Category	Question	Answer Scale	Source
		Multiple-choice :	
		18-24	
Demographics	What is your age?	25-34	Self-designed
		35-44	
		45-54	
		55+	
		Multiple-choice :	
		Never	
Alcohol Consumption	How often did you consume alcohol in the past 12 months?	Less than once a month	(Moshary et al., 2022)
		1-3 times a month	
		1-2 times a week	
		3+ times a week	
Packaging Appearance	The packaging design is very feminine in appearance.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Atkinson A.M. et al., 2021)
Gender Targeting	The packaging appears to be targeted at women.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Coomber et al., 2015)
Feminine Label	I would describe this product's packaging as "feminine."	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Ozanne & Ozanne, 2016)

Self-Congruity (Self-image)	This product's image is consistent with how I see myself.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Sirgy, 2018)
Self-Congruity (Personality)	The style of this product fits with my personality.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Sirgy, 2018)
Packaging Appeal	The packaging is attractive / visually appealing / pleasing.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Atkinson A.M. et al., 2021)
Stereotype Reinforcement	This packaging reinforces stereotypes about women.	Multiple-choice:	
		The way this product is packaged relies on clichés or stereotypes about women.	
Stereotype Reinforcement	This packaging reinforces stereotypes about women.	This packaging design reinforces traditional feminine stereotypes (e.g., using "girly" features just because the target consumer is female).	(Atkinson A.M. et al., 2021)
		I feel the packaging is pandering to female stereotypes rather than being original.	
Purchase Intention	I would be likely to purchase this product.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Moshary et al., 2022)

Intent to Try	I intend to try this beverage in the near future.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Moshary et al., 2022)
Consideration	If available, I would consider buying it.	5-point Likert (1 = Strongly disagree, 5 = Strongly agree)	(Moshary et al., 2022)
Choice Comparison (Champagne, Cider)	Which of the two products would you choose and why?	Multiple-choice + open-ended	Self-designed
Qualitative Reflection	1. When you see an alcohol product with a feminine-looking package (e.g., pastel colors, floral patterns, elegant shapes), what are your first impressions?	Open-ended	Self-designed
	2. How do you feel about alcohol brands using feminine packaging to appeal specifically to women?		
	3. Do you think that feminized packaging reinforces stereotypes about women? Please explain.		
	4. Can you think of a specific alcohol product or brand whose packaging you really liked or disliked? Why did it stand out to you?		
	5. Is there anything else you'd like to share about alcohol packaging and how it influences your choices or impressions?		

Source: Compiled by the author.





Appendix G
Coding Table

Coding Table

Question	Theme	Code	Example Quotes
When you see an alcohol product with a feminine-looking package (e.g., pastel colors, floral patterns, elegant shapes), what are your first impressions?	Taste Expectation	Sweetness, Fruity	"It might taste sweet not bitter." "The first impression is that alcohol has a sweet taste". "It looks like it will be fruity."
		Artificial Flavors	"I always think that artificial flavors will be added."
	Visual Appeal	Cuteness / Attractiveness	"That is really cute, and maybe I need to try it." "Oh cute."
		Colorful	"Looks nice." "Bright colors attract attention."
		Modern / Minimalistic	"It looks minimalistic and nice." "More classic look is better, less colors."
	Neutrality	Indifference	"Don't really pay attention on feminine it is or not."
	Quality Doubt	No Gendered Perception	"I don't see them as feminine-looking."
Skepticism / Suspicion		"If we talk about strong alcohol I will feel suspicious."	

		Cheap / Not Reliable	"It looks more cheap, not reliable."
How do you feel about alcohol brands using feminine packaging to appeal specifically to women?	Acceptance	Neutrality	"I find it okay." "I feel Ok, just neutral."
		Fine if Tasteful	"I don't mind at all as long as it's done tastefully and not too cliché."
	Marketing Strategy	Good for Business	"I guess it is logical for them to do so, because it catches the eye." "I am ok with that, good for business, good for women."
	Indifference	Indifference	"I don't care." "I hardly look at alcohol from this perspective."
	Conditional	Conditional Acceptance	"If it works, then good. It shouldn't influence the quality and the price."
		Only if Not Overpriced	"It is OK to fit different clients unless it is charged more just because it was made for women."
Do you think that feminized packaging reinforces stereotypes about women?	Skepticism	Pandering	"I feel the packaging is pandering to female stereotypes rather than being original."
	Stereotype Reinforcement	Reinforces Stereotypes	"If they are pink, red etc then they definitely rely on stereotypes." "Yes, I do. Feminizing packages divides society."
	No Stereotype Effect	Does Not Reinforce / Neutral	"No, I do not think so." "I just think it's cute, nothing more."

Is there anything else you'd like to share about alcohol packaging and how it influences your choices or impressions?	Contextual	Conditional / Depends	"It depends..." "I think it only uses those stereotypes, people and influencers have more power."
	Packaging Influence	Importance of Packaging	"Packaging is important, but Taste is main." "Packaging gives the first impression, but I choose by taste."
	Functionality	Informative Design	"I like when the taste (e.g. cherry) is drawn, so I easily understand what it tastes like."
	Quality Focus	Quality Over Design	"I think it is better to pay for the quality of the alcohol rather than the design." "No, I'm ordering for taste."

Source: Compiled by the author.

Resümee

FEMINISEERITUD ALKOHOLI PAKENDID: ROLL TOOTEVALIKUS

Viktorii Rieka

Käesolev bakalaureusetöö uurib, kuidas feminiseeritud alkoholi pakendid mõjutavad tarbijate ostuotsuseid, eriti naistarbijate seas. Töö on ajendatud alkoholiturunduses üha enam levinud soopõhistest disainistrateegiast—nt pastelsed värvid, elegantne tüpograafia ja lillemotiivid—mille eesmärk on rõhutada traditsioonilisi naiselikkuse ideaale. Uurimistöö käsitleb nii nende strateegiade efektiivsust kui ka eetilisi tagajärgi, väites, et kuigi feminiseeritud pakendid võivad teatud sihtrühmi tõhusalt kõnetada, võivad need ühtlasi soodustada stereotüüpide püsimist ja tõrjuda teisi tarbijaid.

Teoreetiline raamistik tugineb kolmele olulisele tarbijakäitumise mudelile: Elaboratsiooni Tõenäosuse Mudel (ELM), Stimulus–Organism–Reaktsioon (S-O-R) mudel ja Enesekujutise Vastavuse Teooria. ELM selgitab, kuidas pakend toimib pindmise vihjena kiiretes ostuotsustes. S-O-R mudel kirjeldab visuaalsete stiimulite ja tarbijakäitumise vahelist seost psühholoogilise reaktsiooni kaudu. Enesekujutise Vastavuse Teooria rõhutab, kuidas toote identiteedi sobivus tarbija minapildiga mõjutab ostuvalmidust.

Empiiriline osa kasutab kombineeritud meetodit: kvantitatiivne veebiküsitlus (N=119) ja kvalitatiivsed avatud vastused. Uuringus kasutati reaalseid feminiseeritud alkoholitoodete pakendeid ning naissoost vastajad vanuses 18+ hindasid neid kujuteldavates ostusituatsioonides.

Kvantitatiivne analüüs hõlmas kirjeldavat statistikat, usaldusväärsete teste, Spearmani korrelatsioone, lineaarset regressiooni ja ANOVA-teste. Tulemused näitasid, et kuigi enamik osalejaid hindasid pakendit naiselikuks ja visuaalselt meeldivaks, mõjutas tegelikku ostuvalmidust tugevamalt enesekujutise vastavus kui pelgalt naiselikkuse tajumine.

Kvalitatiivsed vastused lisasid tulemuste mõtestamisele sügavust. Mõned osalejad pidasid feminiseeritud pakendeid atraktiivseks või jõustavaks, teised aga pealiskaudseks või stereotüüpseks. Esile tõusid teemad nagu emotsionaalne mõju, identiteediga sobivus ja kriitika soospetsiifilise turunduse suhtes.

Töö järeldab, et feminiseeritud pakend võib olla tõhus turundusvahend, kuid selle mõju sõltub tarbija identiteedist ja väärtustest. Töö käsitleb ka eetilisi küsimusi, sh stereotüüpide taastootmine ja nn “roosamaksu” nähtus. Tulemused viitavad, et kaasav ja identiteeditundlik disain võib olla pikaajaliselt tõhusam.

Töö annab panuse soopõhise turunduse akadeemilisse arutellu ja pakub praktilisi soovitusi brändidele, kes soovivad kõnetada naisostjaid ilma neid stigmatiseerimata.

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